Title: Migrating Children, Households, and the Post-Socialist State: An ethnographic study of migration and non-migration by children and youth in an ethnic Lao village

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Material Abstract:

Against a background of processes of rural change that are on the brink of unfolding in the Lao PDR and triggered by capitalist expansion and agendas of regional integration, the rural population has become increasingly mobile. Studies have shown that it is primarily the young population that is involved in migration, and a considerable proportion of these young migrants is below the age of 18 and, therefore, technically of child-age.

Through the theoretical lens of rural change these young migrants are depicted as actors of social change who through their involvement in migration rework their own social position but also contribute to wider processes of change. However, young people's involvement is mostly presented as an issue of human trafficking in which the young migrants are depicted as the victims of processes of capitalist expansion.

This study has broken down the binary representation of young migrants as either victims of change or agents of change. Detailed ethnographic accounts have revealed the various structuring relations shaping different forms of migration in which young Lao are involved. It has further illuminated how young villagers, as social actors, subtly negotiate the process of becoming and not becoming a young migrant, and, once at migration destination, exercise agency in the workplace, although often in a constrained manner.

These constraints, it is argued, are in part produced by the indigenisation of the modern notion of childhood and global migration discourses. The institutionalisation of a modern childhood contributes to bringing the young population within state spaces, allowing the state to impose itself on this politically important segment of the population for an increasing number of years. However, young people's involvement in migration undermines these efforts, thereby, contributing to making the political space for addressing the urgent issue of harm in migration, other than by removing minors from migration, a very narrow one.

Migrating Children, Households, and the Post-Socialist State

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An ethnographic study of migration and non-migration by children and youth in an ethnic Lao village

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Pictures

List of Text boxes

List of Abbreviations

ARTIP	Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EHDC	Events in the Household Developmental Cycle
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for the Asian Pacific
FGD(s)	Focus Group Discussion(s)
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-Region
Hh(s)	Household(s)
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LPRIC	[Lao] Law on the Protections of Rights and Interests of Children
LPRP	Lao People's Revolutionary Party
LRYU	Lao Revolutionary Youth Union
LWU	Lao Women's Union
MoLSW	[Lao] Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS Access	Microsoft Access
NEM	New Economic Mechanism
SCUK	Save the Children UK (United Kingdom)
TIP Reports	Trafficking In Persons Reports
UN	United Nations
UN-CRC	United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIAP	United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNRTF	United Nations Regional Taskforce on Mobility and HIV

YM(s)   Young migrant(s)

Statement of Copyright

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Roy Huijsmans   *The Hague, May 2010*

1 Setting the Case

1.1   Rationale

> Each year, young people head off to Thailand, both legally and illegally, with hopes of finding jobs and earning a high income. However, these young people often do not get what they are looking for and those who enter illegally face many problems. Some are cheated and become victims of human trafficking, working in factories where they are often beaten by employers, receiving only a very small income and subjected to dangerous working environments. Meanwhile other young men are lured to work in fisheries and risk losing their lives, while others work in sweatshops and many young women are forced into prostitution. Most are forced by their masters to work very long hours in poor conditions. If they refuse to comply with these demands, their employers may threaten to cut out their tongues, douse them with chemicals or pull their nails out, [ILO and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare] officials told a media workshop on the issue recently. Officials said many Lao people did not know how to protect themselves when travelling to Thailand because they did not receive enough information about the issues involved in human trafficking. (Viengsavanh Phengphachan 2007)

> Mrs Chandaeng of Ban Sawai in Sang Thong district was born and raised in Xieng Khouang province. Here she met and married her husband. They left the war-shattered province to settle in her husband's natal village and lived there until he died in 1988 when Mrs Chandaeng was 37 years old and her youngest daughter just two. A dispute with her husband's brother forced Mrs Chandaeng to move once again and she settled in Ban Sawai with her young family in 1991. Unable to secure any land beyond her house plot she struggled to raise her six children. Her ability to survive – and indeed finally to prosper – as a landless widowed mother of six was linked, ultimately, to the fact that four of her children managed to secure work in neighbouring Thailand. Together, at the time we interviewed Mrs Chandaeng at the end of 2001, they were remitting around 1,000 to 2,000 baht a month (250,000 to 500,000 kip, 25US$ to 50 US$). At the time her son was working as a labourer on a shrimp farm while her three daughters, Wan (19 years old), Lot (17) and Daeng (15) were employed as housekeepers in Bangkok. With these funds Mrs Chandaeng was financing the construction of a new, and impressive, house. She may have explained her children's sojourns in Thailand in terms of 'when you are poor, you have to go', but the outcome was a degree of economic prosperity, at least in village terms. (Rigg 2005a: 144)

The two excerpts above could well have been about the same young people; the migrant children of Mrs Chandaeng. Juxtaposing the two excerpts is also of interest since both excerpts relate the phenomenon of young Lao migrants to the ongoing process of market integration, which is transforming the Lao socio-economic, political and cultural landscape in various important ways (Evans 1999b; Rigg 2005a; Vatthana Pholsena 2006; Rehbein 2007).[1] Yet, the messages the two excerpts convey could not have been further apart. This difference stems only in part from the fact that the two texts serve very different purposes and address very different audiences. What primarily sets these two excerpts apart is how the phenomenon of young Lao involved in migrant work is framed. Young Lao migrants are depicted as either victims of change, or agents of change.

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[1] The phrase 'Lao migrants' refers here to Lao nationals from the Lao PDR. However, 'Lao' may also refer to ethnicity. In this regard it is important to note that many Lao nationals are not of Lao ethnicity, and that most ethnic Lao are Thai by nationality. See Appendix 1 for a detailed note on terminology as used in this dissertation.

In the Rigg excerpt, which is taken from the academic text *Living with Transition in Laos*, Mrs Chandaeng's children are the agents of change. They are the social actors exploiting, reworking, resisting and negotiating the various structural changes brought about by the overall process of transition towards market integration. The Rigg excerpt illuminates that it is through involvement in migrant child labour that Mrs Chandaeng's children have become the key pillars of this new form of rural livelihood. Since Mrs Chandaeng's rural livelihood is neither based on the land or agricultural activities nor tied into the local community Mrs Chandaeng's household exemplifies, for Rigg, a profound process of rural change that is on the brink of unfolding in the Lao PDR and in which young people are the prime agents of change. In contrast with the Rigg excerpt, the young people featuring in the *Vientiane Times* excerpt are depicted as victims of change. The overarching process of change is here also the expansion of capitalism. However, drawing on the human trafficking narrative it is the human cost of transition that is emphasised in the *Vientiane Times*. Young Lao feature in this trafficking narrative as relatively powerless, passive and naïve and appear unprepared for the adversities of migrant work into which they are lured, drawn or forced. Although this line of argument does not necessarily critique the overall process of change, it nonetheless suggests that children and young people should be protected from it as they lack the capacity to engage with these changing realities. These sentiments are especially strong in case the term 'children' is used, instead of the phrase young people (see MoLSW and UNIAP 2001; Wille 2001; UNICEF and MoLSW 2004; Charoensutthipan 2005).[2]

Despite the pivotal role both lines of argument attribute to young mobile Lao, the accounts are remarkably silent, or only suggestive, about young migrants' agency in the migration process. Important questions thus remain unaddressed such as, how precisely are young people, as social actors, situated in the various webs of social relations that comprise the migration process? And also, how does migration, and also non-migration, unfold at the level of the household? And, how are these processes shaped by local frames of meaning and relations of power, but also by extra-local forces and relations of influence? Addressing these questions is essential in order to overcome the artificial binary of young

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[2] Note that in this dissertation the phrase 'children and young people' is employed to refer in general to the young people studied who in terms of age range from around 10 years of age to their early 20s. The term 'child' is used to refer specifically to young children, who are generally of primary school age and pre-pubescent, unless the term 'child' is used in a legal sense, which is clearly indicated, and in which case it refers to all young people below 18 years. The term youth is used to refer in general to young people of post-pubescent age.

Lao migrants as either victims of change or as agents of change. This is particularly pertinent in the Lao context where it is especially children and young people who become involved in migration as Figure 1.1 illustrates, often destined for Thailand.[3] In addition to questions about young migrants' agency, the Lao context is also fertile ground for analysing childhood and youth as social constructs. As part and parcel of the overall process of transition, the very meaning of childhood and youth have become, at various scales, subject to change and negotiations, much affecting discursive representations of young people's involvement in migration.

Figure 1.1: Migration data from three Lao provinces (Khammuane, Savannakhet, and Champasack)
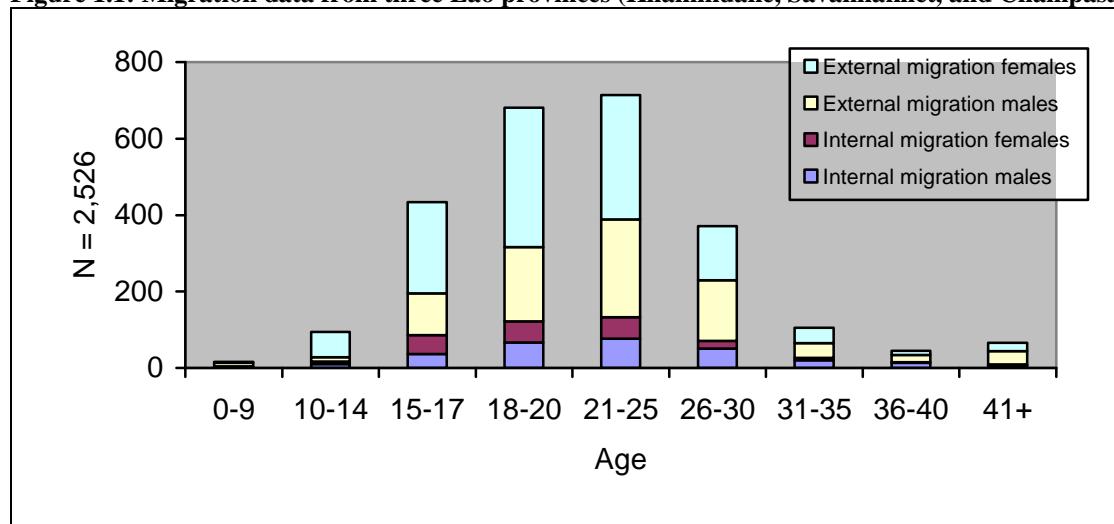
The binary representation of children and young people involved in migration as either victims of change or agents of change is not unique to the Lao context. It can be found in other research contexts as well, depending largely on whether the young migrants in question are presented as 'children' or as 'youth', and whether their mobile lives are situated in the discourse of trafficking or analysed through a migration lens (Bastia 2005; O'Connell Davidson 2005; Thorsen 2006). Breaking down this dichotomy empirically and discursively, the study of migration and non-migration by children and young people in the Lao context constitutes a rich case that contributes to wider debates on the role of children and young people as social actors in processes of development and change (Bourdillon 2004; Katz 2004; Ansell 2005; Honwana and De Boeck 2005).

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[3] Note that Figure 1.1 presents data from the 2003 Lao Migration Survey that was conducted in three Lao provinces using representative sampling techniques (MoLSW *et al.* 2003). The report fails to explain how migration was defined precisely and reports current age of migration rather than age of first migration.

1.2   Research questions

The broad research rationale set out above is translated into three sets of research questions:

1. How is the involvement of children and young people in migration and mobility constructed in the Lao context?

    a. How is childhood and youth constructed in the Lao context by young and old villagers, by international development agencies, and by the Lao State, and why do these constructs differ?

    b. What are the roles of children and young people in Lao peasant households and what roles does the Lao state attribute to its young population?

    c. How is migration understood at the level of the village and by the Lao state, how has this evolved historically, and what are the variations in this?

2. How is participation and non-participation of children and young people in migration and mobility shaped by the interplay between agency and structuring relations?

    a. How are children and young people positioned in the migration process and how does this affect their scope for exercising agency?

    b. How do the above vary through the social process of migration, by form of migration, between national and cross-border destinations, by household related factors, and by social characteristics of the young migrant such as gender and age?

3. How is the practice of involvement in migration at a young age shaped by discursive constructions of the phenomenon and vice versa?

    a. How do global forces shape Lao policies concerning migration and the young population, how are such forces indigenised by the Lao state and by Lao peasant households, and how does this affect the micro level practice and experience of migration by young villagers?

These three sets of research questions form the basis of the theoretical and conceptual foundation laid out in chapter two, underlie the methodology presented in chapter three, and shape the analysis presented in the empirical chapters. The final chapter, chapter nine, returns to the research questions by means of conclusion.

1.3   Contextualising the research

This dissertation is largely based on research conducted with adults, children and young people from one village in the Lao PDR. This section briefly sketches the contours of the wider research context. It introduces the research village and situates it in various processes of change taking place in the Lao PDR and the wider region, highlighting in particular how this has changed village life over the course of just one generation.

The Lao PDR is situated in the heart of the Southeast Asian peninsula and is in its contemporary political form and shape a relatively recent arrival in the international arena. Forged out of colonial interests and geo-political negotiations most of its present day borders were drawn just over a century ago. This mapping exercise collapsed several Lao kingdoms, assigned most ethnic Lao to Siamese (Thai) territory, and left French Laos with an ethnically diverse and hardly united population (Ivarsson 2008).

The 20th century witnessed the rise of Lao communism, the decline of French colonialism, and a brief Lao flirt with independence due to the Second World War power shifts. In the second half of the 20th century, Lao territory became increasingly internally divided and was drawn into the Vietnam War. In the concluding years of the Vietnam War, the ruling Vientiane government entered a peace agreement with the Lao communist 'patriotic forces' in 1973, paving the way for a joint 'Provisional Government of National Union' which was dissolved in 1975 when the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) was proclaimed (Brown and Zasloff 1986).

Most parents of the current cohort of Lao children and youth grew up in the decade that followed. This was a decade marked by failed attempts to implement a socialist economy, severe constrains on mobility (particularly to Thailand) and trade, continuation of internal violence, retreat into the communist bloc, and a consequent increase in politicisation of Lao-Thai relations and interactions. In contrast, the current cohorts of Lao children and youth have, since their birth, witnessed a series of continuous, albeit gradual, changes in all these respects. Following a global collapse of communism the Lao economy was reoriented towards the market and the Lao PDR has embarked on a gradual but steady process of regional integration. This process has received much support from Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) particularly in relation to creating the economic construct of the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) in which the Lao PDR is attributed the pivotal role of 'crossroads', as illustrated by Picture 1.1 (Jerndal and Rigg 1999; Oehlers 2006).

The developments described above have, however, taken place with the least of change in the political structure of the Lao PDR. The Lao PDR remains a one-party state with the Lao People's Revolutionary Party confidently in charge. And although the original revolutionary leaders may be rapidly thinning in numbers the political structure shows little signs of change. Moreover, the Lao PDR as a state is more firmly established than it has ever been before both as an agent in the international arena but also as a legitimate structure and agent within national borders (Thomas and Allen 2000: 191). A mass-education system, which has rapidly expanded over the past decade and which is bigger and more developed than ever before, has contributed to this national level legitimacy in no small way (Evans 1998: 167), despite the fact that educational attainment levels are still relatively low by international standards.

The Lao state attributes an important role to its young population in its developmental vision. This is, for example, illustrated by the prominent display of primary school students (lower part of Picture 1.1) on the front cover of a recent national Human Development Report (Bounthavy Sisouphanthong and Myers 2006).

Picture 1.1: The Lao PDR as a 'crossroads' state in the construct of the Greater Mekong Sub-Region[4]

The front cover of the Lao human development report also illustrates some further important developmental visions relevant for this study. In the contemporary Lao PDR, mobility and migration have remained sensitive and subject to policing (Ekaphone Phouthonesy 2007; Somsack Pongkhao 2008b). Yet, their potential benefits are gradually, albeit reluctantly acknowledged (2002c). Furthermore, migration and mobility are an intrinsic part of the overarching vision of the Lao PDR as a crossroads state within the Greater Mekong Sub-region, a developmental vision to which the Lao government has subscribed as is illustrated by the map and arrows in Picture 1.1. As part of bilateral and international commitments and with support from the international development community, the Lao government has, therefore, embarked on an agenda aiming to maximise the envisioned gains of migration and mobility whilst minimising the apparent costs. This agenda consists of efforts of redirecting irregular cross-border migration through state-controlled channels combined with efforts of combating irregular migration

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[4] This picture is lifted from the cover page of the 2006 United Nation's Development Programme's (UNDP) National Human Development Report of the Lao PDR (Bounthavy Sisouphanthong and Myers 2006).

and human trafficking. The vision of regularised, state-monitored migration flows is also depicted in Picture 1.1. On the upper right hand the Friendship Bridge is depicted, a main and symbolic border crossing point between the Lao PDR and Thailand, and on the left people are queuing for passport control before crossing this bridge.

This idealised developmental vision is set in an adult-child dichotomy in which only adults are appreciated as active actors in migration and development, whilst children and young people's role in development is largely future oriented in relation to the economics of human capital formation and the politics of nation building. Such a perspective on children and young people is indeed not unique to the Lao PDR (World Bank 2006b; Cheney 2007); however, this view is in the Lao context directly challenged by children and young people's active involvement in various forms of migration. Their involvement in irregular migration not only unsettles the adult-child dichotomy underlying the developmental vision sketched above, but, from the perspective of the state, it also amounts to decay of one of the central pillars of the Lao state's nation building projects as the young population acts beyond the space of the state when involved in irregular migration.

1.3.1 The research village

> The village was in the process of becoming just a place to live rather than a rural settlement where interests enjoyed some general degree of broad acceptance. Villagers, in other words, were becoming citizens of a much wider community than their own settlements, and many of their connections with that world were of greater importance than those they had in common with their neighbours close by. (Elson, 1997: 226, IN: Evans 2008: 525)

> In Laos, land remains a strategic resource both for the nation and for most rural households. The country is, after all, still a land of farmers. That said, the argument developed in this book has dwelled on the progressive extraction of rural peoples from farming-focused and land-based livelihoods. Admittedly, this is occurring at the margins: some individuals, in some households, in some villages, and in some areas of the country are coming to rely on non-farm activities. (Rigg 2005a: 171)

In the first excerpt above, Elson describes a process of rural change that is well-documented across Southeast Asia and beyond (Bebbington 1999; Bryceson 2002). In the second excerpt, Rigg argues that this process is on the brink of unfolding in the Lao PDR whilst acknowledging that the village, the land and farm work remain of prime importance for the vast majority of Lao households and the Lao nation-state. Processes of rural change and changing rural livelihoods are not the main concern of this study, but provide an important backdrop for this study's main focus; migration and non-migration by young Lao. In addition, it is in villages like *Baan Naam*, the research village, in which these

processes of change have become most clear and interact most visibly with various traditional frames of meaning and social organisation.[5]

Picture 1.2: Regional map of mainland Southeast Asia (left), and close-up of the Vientiane region (right).[6]
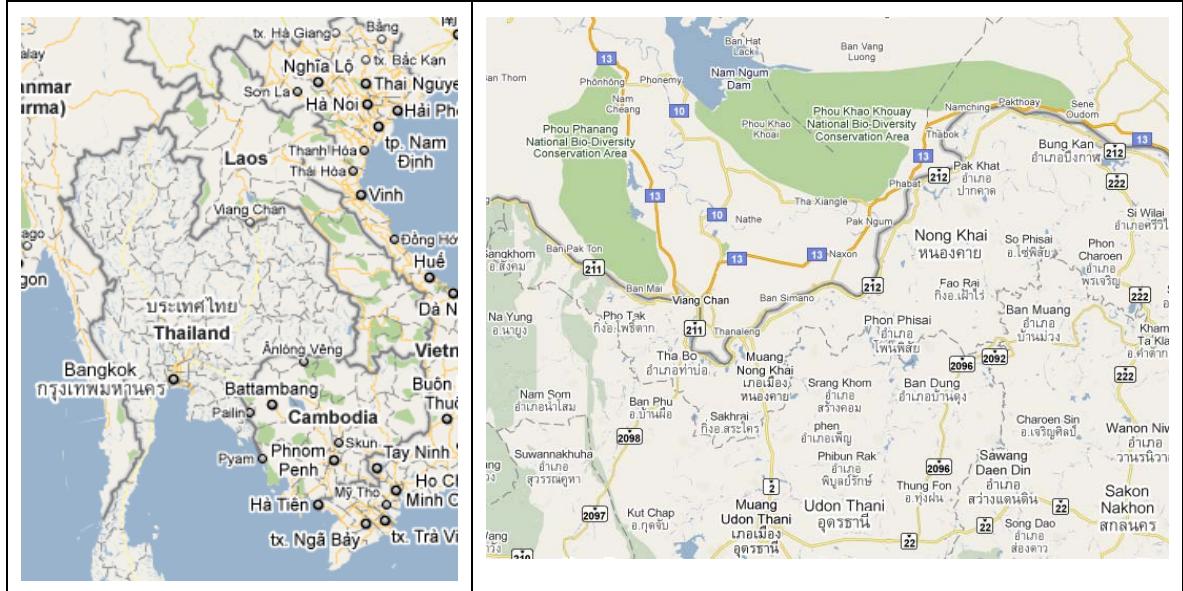
Baan Naam is located on the Mekong River bank and connected by dirt road to the Lao capital, Vientiane (*Viang Chan* in Picture 1.2). *Baan Naam's* near proximity to the Lao capital and its location on a main road network that is slowly upgraded have, amongst other things, ensured that *Baan Naam* as a village exists by no means independently of the state. In fact, as Hirsch (1989: 54) has observed in Thai villages, village-state relations have become thoroughly enmeshed with relations within the village.

Baan Naam's location on the Lao side of the Mekong River places it on the border with neighbouring Thailand. In fact, the Thai village of *Baan Fangthai* is *Baan Naam's* closest neighbour in a physical sense.[7] Since the village of *Baan Naam* can draw on a settlement history dating back some 200 to 300 years, the villagers of *Baan Naam* are in multiple ways connected to villagers on the Thai side of the Mekong River. Hence, *Baan Fangthai* is in many ways part and parcel of *Baan Naam's* wider social space. At the same time, the two villages are without doubt part of two very different political entities. This is most evident by the fact that cross-border movement between the two villages constitutes an illegal act. In addition, the fact that the two neighbouring villages are part of different

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[5] *Baan Naam* is not the real name of the research village, it literally means 'river village'. For sake of anonymity, in this dissertation aliases are used instead of actual names. This includes the name of the research village and the names of the respondents. Furthermore, see Appendix 1 for details on transliteration of Lao names, like *Baan Naam*, to Roman script.

[6] Maps from Google Maps <http://maps.google.co.uk/>, accessed on 21st April, 2010.

[7] *Baan Fangthai* is also an alias literally meaning the village on the Thai side of the river.

national entities that have trodden dramatically different paths of politico-economic development has further contributed to setting the two villages apart as illustrated by Picture 1.3 and Picture 1.4. A sub-theme in this dissertation is, therefore, how this dual relation of relatedness and difference informs everyday dynamics between *Baan Fangthai* and *Baan Naam* as manifested through migrant work by children and young people.

Picture 1.3: Main road running through *Baan Naam* (2008)

Picture 1.4: Main road running through *Baan Fangthai* (2007)

Baan Naam is by Lao standards a fairly large village and has a population of nearly 1,400 distributed over close to 300 households. It is also a fairly wealthy village, again relatively speaking, and has a full primary and full secondary school as well as a clinic on its territory. In many other ways *Baan Naam* is like most other Lao villages in the Mekong River valley. Its population is predominantly ethnic Lao and most villagers identify themselves as (Theravada) Buddhist. However, especially over the past decade several families of non-Lao ethnicity and practicing other religions than Theravada Buddhism have arrived in *Baan Naam*. This has affected the village as a community as described in chapter four.

Agriculture constitutes the main economic activity in the *Baan Naam*. Rice, both paddy and upland, is the main crop, and there is only one rice crop per year as all the village land is rain-fed. Although agricultural production is in most households for an important part for household consumption, increasingly commercial crops are also grown, such as maize and soya beans. In addition, foreign agri-businesses are planning to introduce rubber and cassava in *Baan Naam*. Salaried employment is rare in *Baan Naam* and the few households that have access to a salary (e.g. teachers) also engage in agricultural activities to supplement the meagre wages. Only a handful of trading and business households have livelihoods entirely disconnected from the land.

Socio-economic developments have been fast in *Baan Naam*, particularly over the last decade. For example, only some of the current cohort of parents have studied beyond primary level, whilst a good number have received no formal education at all. This is because the village had no full village primary school until the mid 1980s and the entire district had no lower secondary school until 1983 (the district secondary school became a full secondary school in 1992).[8] In contrast, for the current cohort of children, entering primary education has become the norm for both boys and girls and most complete primary education. In addition, now that full secondary education is available in *Baan Naam* more villagers than ever before reach into, and even complete secondary education despite continuing problems in this respect.

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[8] Note that Buddhist monasteries (*vat*) were already providing a basic level education, but to boys only, prior to the expansion of state-run mass-education. In fact, in *Baan Naam* it was on the temple grounds that around 1975 some basic secular education was delivered by a secular teacher to both boys and girls. In addition, some of the parents who have not gone through formal education have participated in the adult literacy campaigns (*paxaa süksaa*) which were carried out throughout the nation after the proclamation of the Lao PDR.

In addition, the current cohort of parents recall walking through forests and wading through streams just to reach other villages in the district, let alone going to Vientiane. The current cohort of young population may complain that travel to Vientiane is either a dusty or muddy affair depending on the season; the capital can nonetheless be reached within two hours virtually throughout the year. In addition, the dirt road that runs through *Baan Naam* is in the process of being upgraded into a main surfaced road which will link *Baan Naam* with several key centres in central and northern Lao PDR. This will undoubtedly trigger further changes.

Electricity reached *Baan Naam* in 1998, but prior to this some villagers were already watching Thai channels on car battery powered black-and-white antenna television sets. This is nevertheless incomparable with the degree of connectivity that can be observed in contemporary *Baan Naam* and which is increasingly taken for granted by the current cohort of children and young people. According to village authorities around 30 to 40 households possessed satellite dishes in 2007. Yet, the first cheap (around US$40) Chinese-made satellite dishes only appeared in Baan Naam around 2002-2003. The contemporary degree of connectivity, and relative wealth, is further illustrated by village data obtained from local authorities in 2007. This survey recorded some 150 VCD-players, 184 mobile phones, 140 motorbikes (mostly Chinese made) and, ten cars among a total population of some 1,400 or nearly 300 households. These figures suggest a significant intrusion of 'modern life', yet in many other respects life remains 'unchanging'. *Baan Naam* has, for example, no piped water (only wells and often shared wells), no sewage system, virtually everyone relies on firewood collection for cooking, and wild animals and vegetables remain an important part of villagers' diet.

1.4 Organisation of the dissertation

The dissertation is organised as follows. In the next chapter, chapter two, the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the dissertation are set out. This is followed by a methodology chapter (chapter three) which sets out the main methodological orientation, describes specific methods, and reflects on the specificities of doing research in the Lao context, and on doing research with children and young people in particular. Chapter four is a context chapter and concentrates in particular on changes and continuations in practices and discursive constructions of migration as observed in the Vientiane area over the past few decades. These changes are analysed in relation to some important politico-

economic and social developments that have taken place in the Lao PDR and the wider region.

Chapters five, six, seven, and eight form the core empirical chapters of the dissertation. Chapter five analyses the main relations that shape children and young people's social position in the Lao context. It also analyses discursive constructions of childhood and youth, particularly in relation to work, and how these constructs are constantly reworked through the interplay of various relations of interests operating at different levels of analysis. Chapters six, seven and eight turn to questions of migration and non-migration by children and youth specifically. Chapter six analyses various inter- and intra-household relations and characteristics affecting the distribution of migration and non-migration by children and young people. Chapters seven and eight, in turn, focus specifically on questions of children and young people's agency. Chapter seven does so with a focus on the sending site, concentrating specifically on how some young villagers become young migrants, while others do not. Young villagers' agency in becoming a young migrant in various forms of migration is studied through an analytical framework which distinguishes between 'fluid migration' and 'institutionalised migration'. This analytical framework illuminates the relational characteristics of various forms of migration and is further developed in chapter eight. However, in chapter eight this framework is also used to analyse young migrants' situation at migration destination, looking particularly at how young migrants deal with problems and dissatisfaction in the migrant work place.

1.5   Conclusion

This chapter has served as an introduction to the study presented in this dissertation. It has sketched the empirical manifestation of migration in the Lao context and has highlighted that it is predominantly young Lao who are involved in migration, some of whom are of child-age following national and international age-based definitions. Analytically, the phenomenon of children and young people involved in migration can be viewed in relation to the wider phenomenon of rural change, a process that has been well-documented across the rural South and is said to be on the brink of unfolding in the Lao PDR. Importantly, from this analytical perspective, children and young people are, through their involvement in migration, recognised as important agents in processes of development and change. This conceptualisation of children and young people as social agents connects with some of the main contributions of the new social studies of childhood which has informed recent work on child migration. However, it is at odds with the human trafficking narrative, which

depicts children and young people involved in migration as victims of processes of capitalist expansion, and with dominant policy agendas in the Lao PDR and elsewhere that grant virtually no space to young people below the age of 18 as active agents in migration processes. The research questions presented in this chapter aim to breakdown and overcome this binary perspective. This is done on the basis of a conceptual and theoretical approach that is developed from various bodies of literature. This allows transcending some important disciplinary and theoretical boundaries and, thereby, making an original contribution to the field of children, youth and development from an explicitly relational perspective.

2 Migration and Non-migration by Children and Young People: Theoretical and conceptual points of departure

2.1   *Introduction: Child migration, childhood, households and the state*

Since the turn of the Millennium the issue of children and migration has rapidly gained attention as an academic field of inquiry. Within this sub-field, four broad themes can be identified. First is the general theme of child migration which is at times also referred to as 'independent child migration' and this theme includes the trafficking-migration nexus. Second is the theme of children as 'left-behinds'. Third is children's role in family migration, and fourth is a sub-theme which focuses mainly on intra-EU youth migration.

The first theme, that of 'child migration', has received most attention in the literature, and the study set out in this dissertation should be placed in this category too. Studies on child migration concentrate on children and young people who migrate without their adults or caregivers, often, but not necessarily, for purposes of work (Camacho 1999; Iversen 2002; Young and Ansell 2003; Hashim 2007; Whitehead *et al.* 2007). These studies have so far largely focused on child migration in the developing world. In addition, this sub-theme draws heavily on work in the field of what has come to be known as the new social studies of childhood (James and Prout 1997; Holloway and Valentine 2000; Qvortrup 2005) thereby offering further contributions, from a migration perspective, to its two major propositions; childhood is a social construct and children are social actors (Ansell 2009: 190). The second body of research concentrating on children as 'left-behinds', focuses on children who remain behind following the migration of one or both parents (Asis *et al.* 2004; Esara 2004; Bryant 2005; Asis 2006; O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007: 51-54). This body of work is mainly rooted in family studies, but it is increasingly also influenced by the new social studies of childhood as it has started to appreciate 'left behinds' not just as objects of neglect or additional care burdens for grandparents, but also as active agents in reworking household and family relations when negotiating the social void created by migrating parent(s). This body of work has also by and large focused on the developing world; however, the third and fourth lines of research on children's role in migration introduced above are primarily developed in the western context. This includes a body of research which concentrates on children's role and position in family migration (Dobson and Stillwell 2000; Ackers and Stalford 2004; Bushin 2009), and a fourth sub-theme which concentrates on youth, rather than children, involved in what is mostly intra-EU migration,

often for purposes of study, but also encompassing 'gap years' and 'au pair' experiences (King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; Baláž and Williams 2004; Newcombe 2004).

Whilst the issue of children and migration is in the current academic spotlight, it needs to be emphasised that the empirical phenomenon of children involved in various forms of migration is by no means new (see e.g. Kirsch 1966; Jones 1993; Coldrey 1999; Bagnell 2001; De Lange 2007: 147). This is particularly true if it is appreciated that the young migrants referred to in the literature as 'child migrants' are seldom young children below 10 years of age, but mostly older children in their teenage years (Camacho 1999; Iversen 2002; Thorsen 2006: 89; Punch 2007; Yaqub 2009: 12-13). These 'older children' may, arguably, also be described as adolescents, young youth, youth, or possibly even young adults.

This observation is not just a semantic one, but relates to the global construction of childhood described in more detail below. This means, however, that there is a far wider literature available that could potentially inform studies on child migration than the relatively few studies that use this terminology specifically. The anthropological literature contains, for example, numerous references to migration involving young people, mostly young men, in relation to life course dynamics and rites of passage (Kirsch 1966; Jónsson 2008). Furthermore, the literature on rural industrialisation, rural change, and modernity is littered with references to young migrants, often daughters, particularly in the context of South-east Asia (Wolf 1992; Koning 1997; Mills 1999; Elmhirst 2002; Rigg *et al.* 2004; Hsu 2005).

The discussion so far has argued that the field of children and migration is relatively new as a distinct sub-field of academic inquiry. For this reason, it is argued, conceptual languages and theoretical approaches designed for the study of child migration specifically are relatively few and comparatively underdeveloped (Whitehead *et al.* 2007). At the same time, the previous paragraphs have suggested that various disciplines, ranging from migration studies to childhood studies, and diverse fields of inquiry, ranging from gender questions to processes of rural change, constitute sources of theoretical and conceptual inspiration that could usefully inform, enrich and further work on child migration. For this reason, this study has adopted a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing on work on rural change, childhood and youth studies (including child labour studies), development studies, migration studies, and studies on the household and the family particularly from a gender perspective. Departing from the research questions presented in chapter one and drawing

on these diverse bodies of literature this study has identified and developed three interrelated fields of analysis which form the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the study of migration and non-migration by children and young people that is presented in this dissertation. These are the fields of:

- Childhood and youth, which informs how we conceptualise young migrants as agents, and as constructs.

- The household, as a prime, albeit not the sole, area of decision-making regarding migration and non-migration of children and youth

- The nation-state, as a prime shaper of border realities, contexts of growing up, and family politics. This includes its relation with the global context, and its proxies and faces at a local level.

The next sections introduce and discuss these three main fields of analysis. For purposes of organisation this done in three separate sections, yet, the interconnections between these different fields of analysis are highlighted in each section. Furthermore, and in line with the ethnographic orientation of this study, concepts and theories are, where possible, discussed in relation to the research context, whilst however being attentive to various global-local interactions in this regard.

2.2   *Children, childhood and youth*

2.2.1   Childhood and youth as social constructs, and the construction of 'child migration'

A main tenet in the new social studies of childhood is that childhood, and also youth, should be understood as a social construct (Durham 2000; Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Ansell 2009: 190). This implies that what it means to be a child or youth, and also, when one is regarded, or not any longer regarded, being a child or youth necessarily differs across and also within space and time. It further implies that biological characteristics and processes provide not more than *a context* for childhood and youth (O'Neill 2000: 6) because children's and young people's lives, and thereby the experience of childhood and youth, are to an important degree moulded by social relations such as gender, generation, ethnicity, and class (White 2003; Ansell 2005: 21; Comaroff and Comaroff 2005). This conceptualisation of childhood and youth problematises the universality of processes of

child development suggested by classical development psychologists such as Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson (Woodhead 1999; Rogoff 2003). This conceptualisation also counters the globalisation of particular constructions of childhood and youth which have come to attain a hegemonic status (Boyden 1997; Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Males 2009).

The currently dominant view of childhood constructs childhood 'as being separate from adulthood' (Boyden 1997: 191). In this binary construct (O'Connell Davidson 2005), the adult is seen as 'equipped with certain cognitive capacities, rational, physically independent, autonomous, has a sense of identity and is conscious of its beliefs and desires, and thus able to make informed free choices for which it can be held personally accountable…it is because the child lacks these adults dispositions that it may not participate in this adult world' (Archard 1993: 30). This construct of childhood has strong spatial connotations since 'the sanctity of the nuclear family on the one hand and the school on the other' are regarded as 'the only legitimate spaces for growing up' (Nieuwenhuys 1996: 242). The fact that youth are social actors is in contrast with children seldom disputed. However, with regard to youth the debate is about the quality of their agency as their capacity for rational and responsible decision-making is generally regarded as less than that of adults. This assertion can be traced back to G. Stanley Halls' description of adolescence as a time of 'storm and stress' (Arnett 2006). However, adolescent behaviour has remained subject of much debate, often with universal tendencies, due to its focus on 'the adolescent brain' (Males 2009).

These constructs of childhood and youth can be traced back to western European enlightenment thinking and are thus an intrinsic part of western modernity (Ariès 1962; Comaroff and Comaroff 2005: 19-20). Since European notions of modernity have travelled across the globe and have become indigenised by ruling elites (see e.g. Thongchai Winichakul 2000), modern notions of childhood and youth have also become globalised (White 1996; Boyden 1997). This is however not to suggest, as Gigengack (2000) provocatively asks, that notions of childhood have been exported 'as if they were bicycles' from the industrialised world to the South. The process of globalisation of childhood has been more subtle and far less one-directional as is often claimed. It is rather, drawing on Appadurai's (1996: 32) take on globalisation, that 'forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies…tend to become indigenized in one or another way'.

The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) has been tremendously influential in globalising a particular construct of childhood as this

international human rights treaty has a near universal ratification rate. The UN-CRC has been important as it has defined 'a child'. While this definition may be at odds with most local understandings of the term 'child', it is nonetheless widely used:

> Every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier (1989a: Article 1)

It is appreciated that any age-based definition of the child is necessary arbitrary (Van Bueren 1995: 36), and that Article 1 of the UN-CRC accommodates for some degree of divergence from the proposed norm as well as the proposed measure (*ibid* 1995: 37). Nonetheless, a trend of gradually moving upwards the age-ceiling of the definition of 'a child' transpires from the history of international child welfare policies. The 1924 League of Nations' *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* and the 1959 United Nations' *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* did not yet define when childhood ends (Van Bueren 1995: 36). It was only for the *International Year of the Child* in 1979 that the measure of chronological age was introduced at a global level and the upper threshold for childhood was set at 15 years of age. A decade later, for the UN-CRC, this was raised to 18 years (*ibid* 1995: 36). Hence, the idea of childhood as a separate space from adulthood (Bhabha 2006: 1528; Montgomery 2008: 6) is not only set in the uni-dimensional measure of chronological age it is also gradually extended. Furthermore, as the UN-CRC 'emphasizes that the proper place for children is at school or at home with their families', and 'privileges education over work, family over street life, and consumerism over productivity' (Montgomery 2008: 6), the discursive effect is that the connotations and associations of childhood are wedded to an ever larger segment of the population, and by implication, increasingly out of tune with the day to day realities of many of these young people comprising the cohort of 'children'.[9] Furthermore, the UN-CRC is an important force by which migration by young people in their teenage years has become known as an issue of child migration, rather than adolescent or youth migration.

As argued above, the precise age in any definition of 'a child' based on the uni-dimensional measure of chronological age is necessarily arbitrary. The more important question, however, is why chronological age has become such a widespread and widely

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[9] It should further be noted that Latin American countries in particular have taken issue with the homogenisation suggested by the singular term 'child' in the UNCRC. The official Spanish translation of the UNCRC is 'Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño', however, the code that implements the UNCRC in Peru speaks of 'children and adolescents': 'Código de los niños y adolescentes' (2001). Further, the Argentinean Law not only takes issue with the age-group 'child' presented in the original UNCRC, but also with its gendered phrasing. The Argentinean law is thus called: 'Protección integral de los derechos de las niñas, niños y adolescentes' (2005).

accepted measure. Historical analyses show that the measure of chronological age is intrinsically linked to evolution of the modern state. Chronological age, related to the practice of recording dates of birth, has for the modern state become an important instrument for reading its population, to organise it, to target it, and thereby to impose its project of modernisation (Ariès 1962: 15; Scott 1998). This has, amongst other things, contributed to a categorical approach to childhood (Lassonde 2008; Mintz 2008) which in practice means that in modern societies social life is structured in such a way that children and young people are to a significant extent isolated from various spheres of the adult world, for example, from the adult world of work.

Subsequently, discussions on 'child migration' are often plagued by a wide gap between discourse and practice. When young people below 18 years of age are working away from home this is often constructed as an issue of concern that demands immediate intervention based on particular constructs of childhood (O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007). However, such a view ignores that through involvement in migration young people, whether regarded as children or youth, may 'legitimately act upon their environment' (Nieuwenhuys 1996: 238). Furthermore, in contexts in which involvement in work well-before reaching the age of 18 is the norm, and where youth is ideally spent away from the local community the problem may not be one of working away from home or the hardships of migration, but the precise opposite, the inability to migrate and being stuck in local wage work (Jónsson 2008).

One of the factors contributing to the global construction of children in migrant work as a problem that needs, above all, urgent intervention is the United Nations *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* (the Palermo Protocol), which supplements the United Nations *Convention against Transnational Organised Crime*. This protocol derives its definition of 'a child' from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as every human being below 18 years of age. Its definition of trafficking contains an important sub-clause with respect to children. It states that any agency on the part of children in recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt is irrelevant in case these children have ended up in situations of exploitation (2000: Art 3c), however, the Palermo protocol only vaguely defines the notion of exploitation.

Since some degree of exploitation often characterises children's migrant work conditions, and migration by children, just as is the case with adults, is usually facilitated, this

definition effectively collapses cases in which children are active agents involved in migrant work projects and make the best of available, but often constraining, circumstances, with cases of actual trade in children for straight-forward purposes of exploitation (Sharma 2003; Whitehead and Hashim 2005; Goździak 2008; Huijsmans 2008; Oude Breuil 2008). This way, the human trafficking discourse fails to address the problem of exploitation faced by many young migrants as in practice it tends to construct working elsewhere below a certain age as the problem. Consequently, human trafficking interventions generally evolve around removing young migrants from their places of migrant work and reintegrating them in their local communities (Huijsmans 2008). Similar approaches concerning child labour have met with fierce criticism as it is argued that the problem requiring intervention needs to be defined 'in terms of harm to children rather than work or employment as such' (White 2005: 332). Moreover, with regard to child labour it has become increasingly appreciated that working children are 'capable *as well as* vulnerable' and that their work is 'fulfilling and developmental *as well as* harmful and exploitative' (Ennew *et al.* 2005: 52, original italics). Hence, an important thrust in studies on child migration has been precisely to counter this image of passivity, incompetence and vulnerability by appreciating child migrants as active agents in the migration process (Iversen 2002; Young and Ansell 2003; O'Connell Davidson 2005; Whitehead and Hashim 2005; Hashim 2007).

2.2.2 A relational approach to the study of young migrants

The construction of childhood and youth as a separate stages of human life, excluded from several spheres of the adult world, has taken the analytical focus away from the various forms of 'interaction between children and adults lives' (Hart 2006: 8). Critics have, therefore, called for a relational, instead of categorical approach to studying, and theorising young people's lives (Hart 2006; Hopkins and Pain 2007; Hopkins and Pain 2008).

Work by Punch (2002b) and Whitehead *et al* (2007) theorises and conceptualises child migration from such a relational perspective. Whitehead *et al* (2007) propose in this respect the concept of the 'inter-generational contract'. Whitehead *et al* explain that this refers:

> … less [to] the idea of a fixed and binding set of exchanges…, than the many different kinds of interaction, and the values and processes which affect the everyday relations between parents and children over the short and medium term (Whitehead *et al.* 2007: 5).

The notion of the inter-generational contract allows Whitehead *et al* (2007: 40) to conceptualise both children and parents as social actors who exercise agency, have objectives and interests, and the various negotiations encompass both the here-and-now but also longer term relations. This theoretical and conceptual approach of child migration is firstly situated in the sphere of the household based on the assumption that children and young people 'develop as social persons within the context of family based households' (Whitehead *et al.* 2007: 16). However, Whitehead *et al* appreciate that the social space of the home is by no means isolated from wider interests and relations as is discussed in more detail below.

The notion of the inter-generational contract resonates with the concept of 'negotiated interdependence' developed by Punch (2002b) on the basis of research on migration by children and youth in Bolivia. Punch (2002b) situates migration in a series of transitions which characterise the social experience of youth. These transitions, which includes migration, are 'influenced by interdependent household relations which are not fixed but are worked out and renegotiated according to different constraints and opportunities which exist' (*ibid* 2002b: 124). Like Whitehead *et al* (2007), Punch's (2002b) approach also refrains from a categorical approach to children as migrants and instead theorise migration by children and young people as embedded in a series of interactions between children, young people and adults and shaped by children and young people's own interests, parental interests, household characteristics and state policies. This indeed relates to the way migration by young villagers has been approached in studies on rural change, which have also paid ample attention to young migrants' agency (Koning 1997; Elmhirst 2002).

2.2.3   Conceptualising agency

Apart from appreciating childhood as a social construct, conceptualising children and young people as social actors is the second major contribution of the new social studies of childhood (Ansell 2009: 190). It has been argued above that this analytical perspective has been embraced by studies on child migration. This is particularly true for studies that critique the dominant human trafficking narrative, but also for studies taking issue with the tendency of mainstream migration studies in which children tended to be treated as 'luggage', 'things transported by adults' (Dobson 2009: 356).

The work of Punch and Whitehead *et al* discussed above, draw in their respective theorisation of agency heavily on the gender literature. Agency is in these studies

conceptualised as a dimension of power, which Kabeer (2000b: 21, 25-26) has usefully defined as 'the ability to define one's goals and act upon them'. Agency conceptualised along such lines cannot be reduced to 'observable action' alone, as it may also take the form of 'inertness' (*ibid* 2000b: 21, 25-26). Furthermore, agency may also manifest in the form of 'bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis' (Kabeer 1999: 438).

Furthermore, Sen (1990: 127) has argued for a distinction between agency and well-being since 'a person may have various goals and objectives other than the pursuit of his or her well-being', because, agency is influenced, amongst other things, 'by a person's sense of obligation and perception of legitimate behavior'. These observations bear direct relevance to understanding children and young people's agency concerning migration and non-migration within the context of the household and are discussed in more detail below.

Sen's distinction between agency and well-being also highlights the importance of adopting a relational perspective, by studying children and young people's agency as embedded in sets of social relations. For this reason, this study has resisted employing a predefined age frame for identifying 'child migrants'. Instead, it has concentrated on young migrants who are according to local frames of meaning regarded as not yet adults (see chapter 5 for details). These young people are in relational terms positioned differently vis-à-vis their parents, siblings, and the wider community than young people who have already attained the social status of adulthood. Nonetheless, most of the young people studied, were considered 'children' in a legal sense; however, only few were considered 'children' according to local frames of reference. Still, some young migrants had crossed the legal, age-based, threshold into adulthood. These older young migrants were nonetheless retained in the sample as this allows shedding light on the relational question of how the legal category of childhood, as a discursive construct, affects the lived experience of young migrants.

2.3 *Residential living arrangements and the role of children: Lived realities, analytical fields, and normative constructs*

The domestic unit of the family or the households provides an important context for many dimensions of growing up (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Carsten 2004; Tomanović 2004). The domestic unit has also been identified as key field in which migration decision making

processes are situated (Lauby and Stark 1988; Massey *et al.* 1993: 436-440; Punch 2002b; Whitehead *et al.* 2007). However, the domestic unit, like the school and the local community, are by no means isolated social spaces. In fact, these spaces are highly porous (Massey 1994: 5; Holloway and Valentine 2000: 775, 779; McKay and Brady 2005: 90). Therefore, the conceptualisation of the analytical field of the household developed in this section is appreciative of how the intimate sphere of the household is shaped by extra-local forces.

A first step in the conceptualisation of the household is to take account of the plurality of domestic arrangements. The anthropological literature provides ample evidence of this, as children are observed to 'live in many sorts of family and recognize a variety of people as their kin', with biology not necessarily being the determining factor (Montgomery 2008: 132). Furthermore, Mead (2001 [1928]), in her research in Samoa in the early 1900s, already took issue with the widespread assumption that children are simply born into households and there to stay till they mature by observing that:

> Few children live continuously in one household, but are always testing out other possible residences (Mead 2001 [1928]: 31)

Despite considerable variation in the actual shape and form of domestic arrangements, the terms family and household have come to refer mostly to a particular manifestation; the nuclear family. A nuclear family is a two-generational household consisting of parents and their own children only. The emphasis on blood ties and its static structure are at odds with alternative conceptualisations of the domestic unit like, for example, the notion of *khobkhua* that is relevant in many Lao and Thai villages (Kaufman 1977: 21; Klausner 1993: 34; Sparkes 2007). *Khobkhua* literally translates as 'covered by kitchen'. Hence, this conception of the household is highly flexible as it is based on commensal relations, which are subject to change, and less so on fixed blood relations (Sparkes 2007: 230).

Research on the empirical development of nuclear household in North-western Europe concludes that 'economic developments undermined the material incentives for intergenerational coresidence' and thereby contributed to making the nuclear, two-generational, family structure a pre-dominant form in North-western Europe (Ruggles 2009: 264). Nonetheless, alternative domestic structures have remained prevalent in Western Europe (McIntosh, 1979 IN: Harris 1981: 51; Carsten 2004), and even more so in the non-western world. Yet, the social legitimacy of such alternatives structures have become under pressure as 'the prevailing familial ideology of capitalist society insists that

members of a nuclear family should live together, and that people not related in this way should not live together' (Harris 1981: 51).

Ariès (1962) has shown that changing norms over childhood leading towards the modern idea of childhood discussed in the previous sections, have been central to the above described changes in family life in North-western Europe. Despite the particularity of this social history, the idea of the enclosed family as the proper place for children is upheld as an ideal of global relevance (Nieuwenhuys 1996: 242; Boyden 1997: 195; Jacquemin 2006: 402; Montgomery 2008: 6, 118). It is on the basis of dominant normative constructs of the family and childhood that migration of children without their parents or guardians for non-educational purposes is frequently *a priori* associated with rupture of family ties and dysfunctional families. Furthermore, it is on similar grounds that migrating children and their families are often subject to strong moral evaluation (Whitehead *et al.* 2007: 4-5). However, such moral evaluations pay neither much attention to households as sites of 'cooperative conflicts' (Sen 1990) and to various relations of power that comprise households as social fields, nor to the changing context shaping rural life.

2.3.1 Rural Lao households, children's (migrant) work, and rural change

> The most important methodological issue of peasant essentialism is its argument (or assumption) that the core elements of peasant 'society' – household, kin, community, locale – produce (or express) a distinctive *internal* logic or dynamic, whether cultural, sociological, economic, or in some combination (Bernstein and Byres 2001: 6-7).

> Seventy seven percent of the [Lao] labour force is in agriculture (CPI, 2005) and 60 percent of farms still produce mainly for subsistence, not for the market (Bounthavy Sisouphanthong and Myers 2006: 2).

An important feature of the peasant household is that 'production is oriented largely toward family consumption needs' (Scott 1976: 156). However, equating this with subsistence production (see e.g. Bounthavy Sisouphanthong *et al.* 2001; Bounthavy Sisouphanthong and Myers 2006) reinforces the essentialist view on the peasantry referred to by Bernstein and Byres above, because it obscures the fact that peasants depend, and have always depended, to varying degrees, on markets and trade. In other words, whilst peasant households are characterised by a 'high level of self-provisioning' (Evans 2008: 514), the consumption needs in peasant households are in all likelihood, historically and contemporary speaking, seldom met solely within the household or local community. The degree to which peasants have been involved in trade remains hotly debated (Evans 2008: 508-513), yet, there is a general consensus that some degree of specialisation between

households and between communities has always been a feature of peasant societies (Rigg 2005a: 57-58), including the Lao peasantry.

Some degree of interaction between the peasant population and other socio-occupational groups, often of an extra-local nature, is thus not a new phenomenon. However, these interactions have taken a rapid spurt and have expanded considerably as rural communities and livelihoods are increasingly tied into the extra-local, national, and also international context (Hirsch 1989; Rigg 2005a). Infrastructural development, state expansion (including state partners such as international development agencies), mass-education, mass-organisations, the commercialisation of agriculture, and expansion of capitalist development in general are all factors that have loosened the connection between the rural population and the land and between villagers and their immediate community, or at the very least have added new dimensions to such traditional connections (Rigg 2005b; Rigg 2006). In addition, growing populations, a subsequent decline in accessible and high quality land, and modernisation of agricultural production have facilitated, or led to further scope for engagement in non-farm and possibly extra-local activities. Moreover, several studies have emphasised non-material dimensions, often set in generational frames, which are said to contribute to making rural life and agricultural work a less attractive option for particularly the younger generation (Mills 1997; Murdoch 2002: 25; High 2004; Rigg 2006).

This is not to claim that Lao villagers have stopped farming or have lost their interest in agricultural work, although some may have done so either forcibly or voluntarily. The point is rather that agricultural work cannot any longer, if it ever was, assumed to be the default or sole occupation of rural folks. Furthermore, land has certainly not lost its importance in the lives of rural Lao and even in cases in which aspirations are non-agricultural land remains an important form of security as expressed by some of Murdoch's (2002: 25) respondents with the words: '*na bor dai pai sai* (the fields aren't going anywhere)'. However, the point is that care should be taken with equating access to land and land ownership with relative wealth and landlessness with poverty (Rigg 2006).

A process of gradual reorientation away from the land and the local community as a consequence of increasingly spatially and occupationally diverse rural livelihoods is, so far, only a marginal phenomenon in the Lao context (Rigg 2005a). However, Rigg (*ibid* 2005a) argued that these minority experiences may well constitute a first indication of a more widespread change in rural livelihoods being around the corner. This is particularly

likely since such a process has been observed in several neighbouring countries, and in other contexts as well, referred to as a process of 'deagrarianisation' (Bryceson 2002).

Generational dimensions constitute an important component in most studies on processes of rural change. It is the daughters and sons in rural households that are, in effect, the main agents in various processes of rural change, whether this is framed in terms of questions about modernity and tradition (Mills 1999), labour and livelihoods (Elmhirst and Saptari 2004; Rigg *et al.* 2004; Rigg 2005a), or intra-household relations like gender and generation (Koning 1997; Elmhirst 2002; Koning 2005). Many of these sons and daughters, featuring in studies on rural change would in United Nations' terminology be regarded as 'children'. Nonetheless, the literature on rural change and the literature on childhood and youth (including child labour) rarely interact despite the fact that authors in the field of childhood and youth studies have long identified the importance of studying generational relations, questions of agency in relation to children and young people, and how these issues relate to various process of development and change (Boyden *et al.* 1998; Alanen and Mayall 2001; Bourdillon 2004; Ansell 2005).

Despite this scope for cross-disciplinary work as a field of inquiry the issue of children and young people involved in extra-local work appears to be framed in an unproductive intellectual divide. Young migrants are either celebrated as agents of change in many of the above mentioned studies on rural change, or depicted as victims of change through the trafficking narrative (Bastia 2005; Huijsmans 2007). A useful starting point for overcoming this artificial divide is to study the position of children and young people in peasant households, the variations in this by, for example, gender, and the changes in this as young people progress through the life course.

Peasant households have both productive and consumptive functions, and household members, already from a very early age, participate in both functions of the household economy (White 1975; Reynolds 1991). The subsequent relation between changes in the household demographic structure, due to life course dynamics, and household relative wealth was already observed by Chayanov in his work on dynamics of the Russian peasantry at the turn of the 19th century (see Table 2.1). Chapter five shows that children in Lao peasant households start contributing to the productive function of the household already at a much earlier age than acknowledged by Chayanov. This means that children and young people do not start working only when they leave the natal household as young migrant workers. Furthermore, it also implies that it cannot *a priori* be assumed that work

away from home necessarily involves working for longer hours, is physically or psychologically more demanding, is more hazardous or exploitative, than under the veil of the household economy.

Table 2.1: Chayanov's (1915) consumer-worker ratio

Household member	Consumer	Worker
Male worker – head of household	1.0	1.0
Female worker – head of household	0.8	0.8
Other members: age 17+ years	0.9	0.9
Age 13-17	0.7	0.7
Age 7-12	0.5	0.0
Age 2-6	0.3	0.0
Age 0-1	0.1	0.0

Source: Chayanov 1915: 4, IN: Shanin (1982: 234)

Furthermore, appreciating the productive and consumptive role of young household members it follows that the involvement of older children in migration may contribute to a process of reorientation of rural livelihoods, yet at the same time, and as illustrated by Table 2.1, this may very well stem from motivations rooted in distinct peasant logic. The peasant essentialism of Chayanov has been subject of fierce critique (Bernstein and Byres 2001), yet, it's argued that, at least in the context of rural Lao PDR demographic factors remain important factors for understanding various socio-economic dynamics (Evans 2008). From a household demographics point of view it could thus be argued that older children have a considerable consumption demand, but also a significant productive potential. In production processes which vary in intensity over the seasons the latter may not always be fully absorbed within the household or local community, whilst the former is a constant pressure on household budgets. In contexts in which migrant work has become increasingly within reach of peasant households, due to various transformations of rural areas discussed above, temporary involvement of some children in migrant work may well constitute an attractive option from the perspective of the household. However, even if such dynamics are rooted in distinct peasant logic, it could be argued that the effects of such dynamics do nonetheless contribute to furthering various processes of rural change and possibly lead to a disappearance of the peasantry.

The notion of 'cumulative causation' (Massey *et al.* 1993: 451) that is used in migration studies is here of relevance. The term cumulative causation refers to the observation that 'migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, typically in ways that make additional movement more likely' (Massey *et al.* 1993: 451). The idea of cumulative causation is sometimes hinted at in studies on child migration but seldom explicitly addressed with the possible exception of work on the notion of 'cultures of migration' (Punch 2007; Thorsen 2007; Jónsson 2008). One particular avenue of cumulative causation that resonates with work on agrarian change discussed above is the observation that migrant earnings often facilitate a greater capitalisation of agriculture. This in effect ties fewer hands, and, therefore, children, to the land and may in turn contribute to a subsequent increase in involvement in migration by children and young people.

2.3.2 Households as analytical fields: Bargaining, social relations, and Bourdieu

The previous section has emphasised the importance of households as structures, as shapers of children and young people's lives. In addition, the previous section also stressed that these households are in turn situated in overarching structural relations, be it social dynamics specific to the peasantry or processes of rural change. Questions of agency, of how children and young people are, as social actors, situated in the household and how their social position, and thereby agency, within the household is shaped by cross-cutting sets of social relations was left, by and large unaddressed. In this section, therefore, the discussion turns back to the question of agency. Building on the conceptual discussion of agency presented above, here a theoretical perspective is laid out of how to study children and young people's agency within the household from a relational perspective.

Households were in neo-classical economics long assumed to have a joint utility function acted upon by the household head as benevolent dictator. Or alternatively, in Marxist inspired theories, households were regarded as moral economies. Feminist work on the household has pointed out flaws in both assumptions, and has convincingly demonstrated that 'the boundary between self interest and altruism does not necessarily coincide with the threshold of the home' (Folbre 1986a: 33).

A major critique to neo-classical and Marxist approaches to the household is that assuming a joint utility function or a moral economy hides important relations of power operating

within the household (Folbre 1986b; Folbre 1986a; Hart 1992). Hence, in the feminist and gender literature it has now become undisputed that households comprise 'multiple actors, with varying (often conflicting) preferences and interests, and differential abilities to pursue and realize those interests' (Agarwal 1994: 54). However, this conceptualisation only occasionally informs studies on children's position in the household (see e.g. Hoddinott 1992; Du Bois-Reymond *et al.* 1993; Punch 2001; McIntosh and Punch 2009). The literature on the conjugal relation is far more developed in this respect and constitutes, therefore, a useful starting point for the theorisation and conceptualisation of parent-child and sibling relations concerning decision-making processes regarding migration and non-migration.

Central to feminist work on the conjugal relation is the notion of 'bargaining'. The idea of bargaining is used to analyse household decision making processes. Whitehead *et al* (2007), for example, situate bargaining within the idea of the inter-generational contract referred to above, and this way essentially analyse migration decision-making processes as negotiations between children and parents.

Control over children's labour has been identified as an important issue underlying such inter-generational bargaining processes concerning migration and non-migration of children. This may concern children's immediate productive and reproductive function in the household (see e.g. Hoddinott 1992; Hashim 2004: 111-112, 184-185), the migration arrangement (Iversen 2002), but also children's future care and support function when parents have aged (Hoddinott 1992). In other words, both migration and non-migration may be bargained about and that these bargaining processes incorporate immediate as well as long term concerns situated in sets of social relations.

Theorisations of bargaining approaches can take the form of highly complex mathematical models based on game theory. Here, however, we limit ourselves to sociological interpretations of bargaining relations based on an institutional approach to the household. An institutional approach to the household acknowledges that behaviour within the household is 'underwritten by a series of 'implicit contracts' which spells out the claims and obligations of different members to each other and which are backed by the norms and rules of the wider society' (Kabeer 2000b: 25).

At a basic level, bargaining involves both conflict and cooperation, and it incorporates the idea of a fall-back position. The latter refers to outside options, the alternative(s), should

any form of cooperation cease (Sen 1990; Agarwal 1994: 54-55). Apart from a fall-back position, Sen (1990: 135-136) argues that bargaining outcomes are also shaped by a 'perceived interest' and a 'perceived contribution'. Kabeer (2000b: 28), discussing Sen's work, explains that the 'perceived interest response' refers to a person idea of 'self-worth' relative to that of other household members. It shapes the degree to which a person is inclined to sacrifice his or her individual well-being for the sake of that of other household members and is thus less likely to press individual claims in bargaining processes. This relates to Sen's (1990: 127) distinction between agency and well-being discussed above.

'*Perceived* contributions have to be distinguished from *actual* contributions' (Sen 1990: 136), as the perceived contribution refers to the value that is *attributed* to a person's individual contribution to the household (Kabeer 2000b: 28). The value that is attributed to one's work has been found shaped by factors like, whether labour is performed for the market or undertaken in the domestic sphere, whether the labour process is sequential or segregated, and whether it is done by children and women, or by men (Elson 1982; Li 1998). The greater the value that is attributed to a person's contributions to the household vis-à-vis that of other members in the household, and the greater the persons sense of self-interest, the greater this person's bargaining power. Although, difference in bargaining power about migration and non-migration has primarily been considered between children and their parents, (Hoddinott 1992; Whitehead *et al.* 2007), differential treatment of children within the household based on, for example, sex, age, or birth-order (Punch 2001; Rende Taylor 2005a; Srinivasan 2006) suggests that perceived interest and perceived contribution also varies between parents and their different children based on gender, birth-order and other factors. These relations are furthermore not limited to interactions between parents and their siblings but also play out between siblings within households. Importantly, all this may be further complicated in case complex and flexible household structures are the norm, instead of static and simple nuclear households.

An institutional approach to the household allows integrating the perceived interest and perceived contribution dimension 'with the broader social processes by which social inequalities of various kinds are sustained in daily life and over time – without the open exercise of power or the emergence of overt conflict' (Kabeer 2000b: 43). Bourdieu's sociology has been identified as particularly useful in bridging this structure-agency divide (Agarwal 1997; Kabeer 2000b; Whitehead *et al.* 2007). Key concepts in Bourdieu's work which are of immediate relevance here are 'habitus' and 'doxa'. Doxa refers to all 'that

which goes without saying and *is not open to questioning or contestation*' (Agarwal 1997: 15, original emphasis). The related concept of habitus is more complex and refers to the 'socially-structured aspect of subjectivity in social practice' (Kabeer 2000a: 43).

Through the notion of habitus Bourdieu aims to bring together structuring principles and individual and collective agency. This resonates directly with the discussion about perceived interests and perceived contributions discussed above:

> The *habitus* is the principle of a selective perception of the indices tending to confirm and reinforce it rather than transform it…this disposition, always marked by its (social) conditions of acquisition and realization, tends to adjust to the objective chances of satisfying need or desire, inclining agents to 'cut their coats according to their cloth', and so to become the accomplices of the processes that tend to make the probable a reality. (Bourdieu 1990: 64-65)

The habitus thus refers to implicit social boundaries within which agents, through purposive agency, pursue particular strategies in order to accumulate material and symbolic capital (Kabeer 2000a). However, doxa may become heterodoxy when norms and customs are contested and have entered the arena of discourse (Agarwal 1997: 19). This puts the notion of habitus in flux. Although no society is stable in the sense that norms and customs remain unchanging, the shift from doxa to heterodoxy is particularly striking in societies which are undergoing relatively fast, and far-reaching transitions as is the case in the Lao PDR (Rigg 2005a).

2.3.2.1 Young migrants as agents beyond the sphere of the household

Migration decision-making processes are not limited to the field of the household. This is particularly evident when considering the role of social networks which may both extend into the social field of the household but may also constitute a social field separate from the household. For example, access to networks that facilitate migration may be guarded by young migrants' parents and accessing these networks may, therefore, be subject of bargaining in the field of the household. On the other hand, however, young villagers may migrate using their own networks, making them less dependent on the household when it comes to migration decision making processes. Lastly, since the importance of social networks and social capital is well-recognised in migration studies (Massey *et al.* 1993; Curran and Saguy 2001), this is one area in which migration studies can usefully inform the study of child migration.

The role of networks has received some attention in work on child migration. However, this analytical dimension is somewhat obscured by the term *independent* child migration (Whitehead *et al.* 2007), which, on the surface, suggests that children migrate alone

without any facilitation. Iversen (2002) deals with questions of networks and social capital in child migration most thoroughly, and incorporates this into the conceptual idea of household-based bargaining processes, in his work on child migration in Karnataka, India.

Iversen (2002) hypothesises that migrant children may benefit from their parents' superior social networks when looking for migrant jobs, and from their parents' superior bargaining skills for negotiating an employment deal. The child may further benefit, Iversen hypothesises, from cooperative migration decision-making because this way the young migrant is more likely to receive psychological and financial support when settling down in the migrant job, and maintains the right to return in case migration fails. The advantage of cooperation on the part of the parents, Iversen (*ibid* 2002) suggests, stems from access to the child's migrant earnings, and possibly gaining access to urban credits through their migrant child. Cooperation between children and parents thus appears to be, at a hypothetical level, to be mutually advantageous (Iversen 2002: 820, 828). However, Iversen (*ibid* 2002: 828, 831) finds the household network variable he computed in his statistical analysis of autonomous child migration to be insignificant. Reflecting on this he disqualifies this result as the definitions that were used may have been too rough to derive at any conclusive results. More conclusive is Iversen's (*ibid* 2002) work on the importance of child migrants' own social networks. These networks constitute of children's own relations with more senior young migrants. Amongst his autonomous child migrants, Iversen (*ibid* 2002: 822) finds that nearly 30 percent have used their own networks to find migrant jobs and only 12 percent were found relying on kin and relatives to access migrant work.

Studies that conceptualise migration as a social process have shed further light on the limitations and pitfalls of understanding migration, migrants' agency and the relations constraining migrants' agency solely from a household or sending site perspective. Work on migration as a social process has emphasised that social identities of migrants are not fixed but may be reworked through the very process of migration (De Haan and Rogaly 2002: 6; Hampshire 2002; Thorsen 2006; Jónsson 2008). This implies that the various social relations that shape young people's social position in the household and the local community may have only limited or possibly no analytical applicability in other stages of the migration process.

Social identities may be reworked by young migrants themselves (De Haan and Rogaly 2002: 6; Thorsen 2006). This may in part be related to life course dynamics, such as rites

of passage, since young migrants are mostly found in the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood (Jónsson 2008). However, changes in social position may also stem from structural relations such as the construction of migrant illegality (De Genova 2002) and structural characteristics of the labour market emphasised by the notion of the dual labour market (Piore 1979; Piore 1986). In other words, young migrants' agency and the relations constraining it shift through the social process of migration.

2.4 Children, families, and the (post-socialist) state: Claims on childhood and youth

> The state is not coterminous with society; it is one of many organizations or spheres of activity *within* society. It is therefore both an agent and a structure. It acts as an agent within a broader social structure (and international arena) and is always influenced to some extent by this structure. At the same time, the state also provides a structure of binding rules (more or less) that influence or control to some extent the actions of other agents within society (Thomas and Allen 2000: 191)
>
> …the legibility of a society provides the capacity for large-scale social engineering, high-modernist ideology provides the desire, the authoritarian state provides the determination to act on that desire, and an incapacitated civil society provides the levelled social terrain on which to build (Scott 1998: 5)

The communist parties that came in power in South-east Asia were foremost 'modernizing regimes…committed to the economic and social transformation of peasant societies' (Evans 1990: xii). Modernisation in these pre-industrial socialist states implied, amongst other things, breaking with practices of the past, which were either considered backward or counter-revolutionary. Hence, the state can clearly be recognised as an agent *and* a structure in these socialist and later post-socialist societies.

The power base of these newly established socialist regimes was initially often frail, and any effort to bring about change had to be carefully balanced against maintaining social stability (Molyneux 1985; Brown and Zasloff 1986). In addition, and contrary to the image of the unitary and all-seeing state conveyed by Scott in the quote above, in actual fact the implementation of policies was, and has remained, often haphazard, and subject to interpretation of lower ranking bureaucrats, and resisted and negotiated by the population (Li 2005b). This was and has remained particularly evident in the Lao PDR.

The areas of population politics, family policies, and childhood and youth were prime areas of intervention by socialist regimes as they well-suited the dual aim of furthering the revolution and maintaining social stability (Parish Jr. 1975; Molyneux 1985; Brown and Zasloff 1986). Key examples of how this affected young people in socialist states are the rapid growth in mass-education (Grant 1970; Brown and Zasloff 1986), active isolation of

children and young people from the production of value by introducing minimum age criteria for the allocation of work-points for collectivised work (Evans 1990: 136-137; Li 2005a), the introduction of minimum ages for marriage (Parish Jr. 1975), and the introduction of socialist inspired mass-organisations for children and youth (Grant 1970; Avis 1987; Evans 1998; Marr and Rosen 1998).

State efforts to institutionalise a modern childhood in which children and young people were for an increasing number of years isolated from various spheres of the adult world, often by use of the measure of chronological age as an organising tool, were a feature of socialist social policies. This dimension of state-socialism has generally received much praise from western commentators (see e.g. Penn 1999). However, these commentators have generally paid little attention to the political motivations underlying this modernisation of the institutionalisation of childhood and youth. How chronological age was, for example, essential for making the young population legible, and the institutionalisation of a modern childhood a way to bring the young population into state-spaces, allowing the state to impose itself on this important segment of the population (Ariès 1962; Scott 1998). The young population thus constituted an important target for the project of the making of the 'socialist man'. In addition, the political premium of the focus on the young population was also found in the belief that ridding the adult population from traditional, and other non-socialist ideas and practices could be achieved through the young population who were regarded as more malleable and receptive to revolutionary ideas than their parents and grandparents.[10]

State efforts to modernise childhood in these pre-industrial socialist states implied a dramatic shift in the value attributed to children and young people. As set out in the previous section, Chayanov already observed that in peasant households, children have an important productive function in the here-and-now. However, for socialist regimes the value of children lay in their role as becomings. As observed above, from the perspective of the socialist regime, children are the ultimate inheritors of the communist party, the revolutionary ideals, and its modernisation ambitions (Marr and Rosen 1998). The following excerpt from Evan's (1990) *Lao Peasant under Socialism* vividly illustrates the conflict of interest between the state and parents in peasant households over the value of children as 'beings' versus 'becomings'. The excerpt also sheds light on the important role

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[10] Parish Jr. (Parish Jr. 1975) observed that in China the young population was, for example, during the Cultural Revolution, mobilised to 'rid them [their parents] of their feudal ideas', as children were urged to teach their parents about the thought of chairman Mao.

of local bureaucrats in manipulating and reinterpreting state policies for various reasons. This is one of the reasons why there was often a considerable gap between socialist ideals and the extent to which this translated into transformed lived realities (see e.g. Parish Jr. 1975: 616; Molyneux 1985: 60):

> Another objection that springs from this peasant farm logic is the claim that in the cooperatives farmers cannot collect work points for children below sixteen years of age (this being the official qualifying age for cooperative membership), whereas peasants are able to reap the benefits of this pool of labor. The peasants' criticism of cooperatives, therefore, show how acutely aware they are of the importance of child labor to viability of their farms…as the head of Don Dou cooperative, Ngai, explained, the labor points of children up to the age of sixteen go under their parents' names "so as not to violate the cooperative's principles. (Evans 1990: 136-137)

The communist parties of Vietnam, China and the Lao PDR remained in power when their former allies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed. So in Vietnam, the Lao PDR and China the economic transition from a planned to a market led economy has taken place under the same communist party that decades earlier implemented socialist policies. Evans (1995: xi) argues that it is thus 'regimes as a political form which have survived, not socialism' which justifies using the term 'post-socialism' to refer to the contemporary Lao PDR.

When after the collapse of global communism advisors and aid from the former socialist block decreased rapidly, this gap was quickly filled by, mainly western, aid and development agencies (Evans 1995: xxiv-xxv). Particularly in the sphere of social policies these organisations and the idea of 'development' present a remarkable continuity with the policies earlier advocated for from a socialist ideology. Meanwhile at a Lao national level, despite the replacement of socialist rhetoric by that of nationalism, the young population remained of great political interest to the state, but now to impose its nationalist project of nation-building (Evans 1998). In other words, over the past two decades the political sphere of social policies may in the Lao PDR have become increasingly diffuse as INGOs, IGOs and also private companies have, in addition to the Lao state, become important actors in this field, this has by no means diluted the importance attributed to targeting the young population. Hence, conflicts of control over the young population between the nation-state and its proxies and allies, parents, and children and young people themselves remain, albeit possibly articulated in more subtle and complex ways.

Scott's (1998) quote taken from *Seeing like a State,* that opened this section has resonated and is engaged with throughout the discussion in this section. As chapter four sets out in more detail, on the surface the Lao case seems to tick all Scott's boxes, and appears a model case for Scott's framework. Scott's work has, however, been critiqued for its

conceptualisation of power as a '"thing" – one that is spatially concentrated in the bureaucratic apparatus and the top echelons of the ruling regime, from which it spreads outward across the nation' (Li 2005b: 385). This section has illustrated that such a spatially demarcated and unidirectional idea of the relation between power, the state and its population is not employed here. In fact, the following understanding of the state is certainly more accurate, and analytically appealing in the Lao context:

> "the state" is "at most a message of domination – an ideological artefact attributing unity, morality and independence to the disunited, amoral and dependent working of the practice of government" (Abrams, 1988: 81, IN: Li 2005b: 385)

However, in the contemporary Lao context there is some merit in maintaining a position that power is closely related to the state, albeit contested and resisted. Maintaining the rather bold notion of the state, rather than employing Foucault's more subtle, diffuse, and dynamic concept of governmentality proposed by critics of Scott (e.g. Li 2005b; Rose-Redwood 2006) serves to highlight an important power asymmetry between the state and its subject (see also Scott 2005: 401). At the same time though, it should be acknowledged that the state is not unitary neither coherent, as state related power(s) operates at many levels in often surprising ways.

2.5   Conclusion

The brief overview of the literature on children in migration presented at the start of this chapter illustrated that the recent attention to children's diverse roles in migration should not be interpreted as if the phenomenon is newly emerging. In fact, children and young people have always migrated and have always been actively involved in migration processes in various ways. Historical and anthropological work and also studies on rural change have long documented this, albeit without necessarily referring to these young migrants as children. This implies that work outside of the field of childhood and youth studies has the potential of usefully informing the conceptualisation and theorisation of migration and non-migration of children and young people. For this reason, the theoretical and conceptual foundation presented in this chapter has been developed from a multi-disciplinary perspective drawing on social theory, migration studies, childhood studies, feminist work on the household, work on rural change and deagrarianisation, development studies, and political science.

The two main contributions of the new social studies of childhood, the appreciation of children as social actors and childhood as a social construction, are central to the

theoretical and conceptual map laid out in this chapter. Moreover, the area of discourse and practice, to which these two tenets relate, are here, following Bourdieu, conceptualised as inter-related and pursued in three connected analytical fields. That is the field that of (1) children, youth, and childhood, the field of (2) households and families, and (3) the field of the state and the related international dimension. As stated above, these three fields have in this chapter been developed in a multi-disciplinary fashion. The advantage of this multi-disciplinary theoretical and conceptual approach is that it furthers the intellectual field of children, youth and development, to which child migration is a sub-field, whilst it also builds a platform to speak back to these various related literatures from the perspective of childhood, youth, and development, and informed by an empirical study of migration and non-migration of children and young people. The next chapter returns to the research questions set out in chapter one and lays out the overall methodological approach of the study and the specific methods adopted.

3 Researching Young Lives: Practice, theory, and context

3.1 Introduction: Methodological orientation

This chapter sets out the overall research methodology and the specific methods employed in this study. It also discusses the theoretical and practical dilemmas, concerns and arguments related to these methodological choices. The final section of the chapter sets out how data were analysed, processed and presented.

The overall methodological orientation employed in this dissertation follows from the research questions presented in chapter one and from the conceptual and theoretical orientation laid out in chapter two (Mason 1996). To recall, the research questions address three different, albeit related and overlapping areas. One set of questions addresses the discursive construction of migration and mobility by children and young people. The second set of research questions is specifically concerned with questions of children and young people's agency and the relations constraining their agency at different stages in the social process of migration. And the third set of research questions focuses on the interplay between practice and discourse in relation to the issue of migration by children and young people.

Since the three sets of questions are concerned with processes, social relations, social constructions, and lived experiences, the overall methodology employed is largely qualitative. However, within an overall qualitative approach certain quantitative methods, like a household survey, were incorporated. In addition, a qualitative methodology does not necessarily preclude the quantification of data. Where quantification of qualitative material made a meaningful contribution to the analysis this was performed.

The qualitative approach adopted in the research took two principal forms; discourse analysis, and ethnography. Discourse analysis took the form of deconstruction of discursive representations of children, childhood and youth in general, and in specific in relation to work, migration for work, and trafficking and was performed to address the first set of research questions. This methodology did not take the form of formal deconstructionist approaches that are used in literary criticism, but consisted of a critical reading and interpretation of secondary material including texts, photographic material, popular media, proverbs and expressions. Through this methodological approach discursive constructs of, for example, the involvement of children and young people in migration and in work in general were unravelled.

Such discursive constructions were contrasted with ethnographic observations that concentrated particularly on children and young people as social actors embedded in webs of social relations. Moreover, an ethnographic orientation illuminates 'the terms that the participants themselves used to describe what is going on' (Robson 2002: 186). This sheds lights on the important question of how certain discourses affect everyday practice.

It must be stressed however that ethnography is here considered a research orientation rather than a specific method based on participant observation. In fact, a range of research methods were employed including some rather un-ethnographic methods such as a household survey. Using the term ethnographic research orientation underscores that any research method was here not just treated as a data-generating tool but also as a form of social interaction with ethnographic potential as it illuminates how the research subjects understand or look at various issues (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 16).[11] This methodological note is discussed in more detail below.

3.2 *Methodological considerations contextualised*

Intellectual considerations may form the main basis for the methodological choices that are made. Yet, methodological considerations are not limited to intellectual factors alone but also shaped by various specificities of the research context. This is particularly true for research conducted by foreign researchers in post-colonial contexts ruled by one-party authoritarian regimes as highlighted by the following excerpt:

> Access to Laos for research has been extremely difficult since 1975, and this is the first major study of rural society there. Until very recently what was happening within cooperatives was considered, in the words of one Lao official, "a state secret." Fortunately for me this official disagreed with prevailing restrictions and greatly facilitated my research. (Evans 1990: xiii)

This excerpt is taken from Evans' seminal work *Lao Peasants under Socialism*. The research for this publication was conducted from 1982 to 1987 in a few villages near Vientiane during the years of high socialism in the Lao PDR. The socio-politico changes of the decades that followed have eased conducting research in the Lao PDR considerably. Nonetheless, obtaining official permission for conducting research in the Lao PDR and accessing a research site has remained a tricky affair for any researcher, but for foreign researchers in particular (see also Achren 2007: 94-96). This is especially true for research projects like this, which are not part of well-funded international collaborations, such as

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[11] This chapter uses the terms 'research subjects', 'participants', 'respondents' and 'informants' interchangeably. However, in practice some respondents were little more than informants whilst others took a more active role in the research. In the latter cases the term participant may arguably be employed. However, it goes beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss this in further detail.

development projects, and that address issues which are regarded 'sensitive' (Enfield 2008: 441,443; Evans 2008: 508).[12]

In order to maximise chances of gaining access to a research site in the Lao PDR both formal and informal paths were trodden. Appendix six sets out in narrative style and in a reflexive manner how this dual process unfolded in the early months of the research process and how this eventually led to the village of *Baan Naam* becoming the main research site.

3.3 *Ethnographic research with children and young people in the Lao context: Reflections on theory and practice*

3.3.1 Developing an ethnographic research orientation in *Baan Naam*

Participant observation is generally regarded as the method of choice for conducting classic ethnographic research. However, the specific way by which access to the research site was obtained (see Appendix 6) severely limited the scope for performing participant observation. When the village delegates, and later households and individuals, gave the green light for the research project to be carried out they did so on the basis of a particular understanding of what social research entails. Villagers' prime exposure to research is limited to survey based research that is employed by government officials for census and tax purposes and by INGOs and IGOs as part of 'quick scans' and 'situational analyses'. Villagers thus expected the research team to go from house to house with clipboard in hand in order to 'meet objectives' and 'finish the research'. The 'social interaction device for securing information' (Gold 1958: 218) is in this sort of research highly artificial and strongly hierarchical with the researchers firing questions and the respondents' role limited to responding to what is asked till the end of the questionnaire is reached.[13]

In order not to jeopardise the hard-won access to the research site, the research conformed particularly in the early stages of the research with villagers' understanding of research and started off with a household survey and semi-structured interviews. This implied that I was

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[12] 'Sensitivity' is by its very nature undefined and in cases in which research proposals are turned down it can only be assumed that this is done on grounds of sensitivity of the research topic. Further, it is quite likely that foreign and Lao researchers in their quest to obtain research permission self-impose much greater levels of censorship than would strictly be necessary and thereby maintain, or even create, areas of sensitivity.

[13] In addition, the village elite may have some experience with more participatory research approaches which are increasingly favoured by INGOs. However, even such attempts remain embedded in stark relations of power as the research team mostly comprises urban educated well-articulate ethnic Lao, and the 'participants' constitute relatively uneducated rural villagers, whom furthermore may be of ethnic minority. This creates severe obstacles for any genuine attempt of participatory knowledge generation.

unable to carry out the research role of 'complete participant' as described by Gold (1958) in his classic discussion of research roles, as this would have required participation in the research context for extended periods of time and in an embedded form.[14] In addition, performing Gold's (1958) role of 'participant-as-observer' hinged, especially in the early stages of the research project, also on conforming to villagers' understandings of what researchers do. The risk of 'going native' (Gold 1958) was therefore minimal. The pitfall of the other end of the continuum, that of 'ethnocentrism' (Gold 1958), was however more looming even though this is precisely what ethnography as a methodology aims to overcome (Robson 2002: 186). Paradoxically, however, it was through performing this particular research role of conducting fairly structured and rather formal research methods that I was able to create the legitimate 'social interaction' (Gold 1958) required for some degree of participant observation, thereby gradually being able to develop an ethnographic research orientation. In addition, these rather formal methods certainly had merit on their own terms as well.

There were also clear advantages for developing an ethnographic research orientation related to not having formal research permission. The lack of formal research permission meant, for example, that I did not have to work with an official counterpart, which, as described in Appendix 6 may pose a considerable challenge for developing an ethnographic research orientation (see also Scott *et al.* 2006). Furthermore, in the Lao PDR, foreign researchers usually need special authorisation to stay overnight in villages that lack facilities such as guesthouses (Trankell 1999: 8-9; Lachapelle 2008). Working without official research permission and official counterparts meant that this requirement was never enforced and I was thus able to spend the nights in the research village. Importantly, early mornings, evenings and even night-time provided ample opportunity for participant observation. During these hours most of the villagers were in the village, and thus fairly easily accessible, and importantly, they did not expect me to take on the role of survey researcher, as these were 'out-of-work-hours'. Hence, during these hours I could relatively freely mingle in or simply observe what was happening. These early morning, evenings and nightly hours are of course precisely the ones I would have missed had I had to stay outside of the village (see also: Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 48). In addition, as the village headman ran office from his house, staying overnight on his premises kept me

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[14] This excludes research roles taken up outside of the research village. For example, when taking research notes whilst attending a meeting or workshop in Vientiane on issues related to the research I did so in the role of 'complete participant', and other participants were mostly not aware of this.

up to date with all sorts of village developments and affairs. The advantages of staying overnight in the research village thus made up for many of the limitations on conducting ethnographic research discussed above.

3.3.2 Ethnography and research with children and young people

Research with children and young people is generally regarded as different from research with adults for a number of reasons, including children's legal status and their capacity to consent, children's lesser familiarity with conventional research methods, children's level of development, but also because of adults' perception of what a child is able to do (Qvortrup 1994: 3; Boyden and Ennew 1997; Davis 1998: 328-329; Punch 2002a; De Regt and Komter 2003: 4-5; Ruddick 2007: 513). For a combination of these factors researching children and young people long involved employing specific research methods. However, over recent years the literature on social science methods for research with children and young people emphasises increasingly the importance of good research practice rather than advocating for the use of specific research methodologies:

> …research with children does not *necessarily* entail adopting different or particular methods…as in all research, what is important is that the particular methods chosen for a piece of research should be appropriate for the people involved in the study, its social and cultural context and the kinds or research questions that have been posed (Christensen and James 2000: 2, original italics)

Ethnography as a general research orientation has over the past two decades become the methodology of preference for many researchers interested in children and childhood (Jenks 2000: 71-73). This is in part a reaction against the more formal methodologies employed in research on socialisation, development psychology, and enculturation that traditionally dominated studies on children and youth in sociology, anthropology and psychology (Zinnecker 1999; Bucholtz 2002). In these traditional approaches children and young people were predominantly objects rather than subjects of research, and formal and clinical methodologies, therefore, sufficed. Consequentially, children and young people have long remained a 'muted group' (Hardman 2001 [1973]: 502) which only changed once researchers started to acknowledge children and young people as social actors (Woodhead 1999; Zinnecker 1999: 2-3; Bucholtz 2002). It is based on this actor oriented understanding of children and young people that ethnography has become regarded as:

> …a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood. It allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research (James and Prout 1997: 8)

For others, like Toren (1999: 83), favouring ethnography when working with children has little to do with redressing an apparent injustice and giving voice to muted groups. Her

preference for ethnography is based on the epistemological argument that 'only children can give the researcher access to what they know as children about the peopled world'. Toren (1999: 13) stresses further that although adult researchers have once been children themselves this experience does not resolve the epistemological dilemma because 'the problem here for any one of us is that even while we embody our particular past, we do not have access to it except from the perspective of who we are now'.

Ethnography as a methodology for researching childhood has also met with concern. Qvortrup (2000: 78-79), for example, whilst not denying the importance of ethnographic contributions, maintains that sight should not be lost of structural forces since 'no child can evade the impact of economic or spatial forces, nor ideologies about children and the family – let alone political and economic ideologies and realities'. Qvortrup's concerns about the social and intellectual vacuum typifying some studies on children and young people are shared by several other scholars (Toren 1999: 18; Alanen 2000; De Regt and Komter 2003: 5-6; Hart 2006: 8; Hopkins and Pain 2007; Hopkins and Pain 2008; Ansell 2009).

Alanen (2000) calls in this respect for a 'relational approach' in studies on children and youth. This relational approach is in contrast to the 'categorical thinking' that underlies certain strands of research on children and young people wary of merely giving epistemological privilege to any social group and does not satisfy with the mere confirmation of people as social actors. Instead, it demands situating the study of children and young people firmly in social theory and on this basis theorise how children and youth exercise agency from their particular social position. This indeed implies, as outlined at a theoretical level in chapter two, paying ample attention to the various relations that constrain children and young people's agency, ranging from the household and the community to the national and international arena (Alanen 2000: 500; Whitehead *et al.* 2007).

3.3.3 Methodological dilemmas: Positionality and ethics

3.3.3.1 Positionality

An outstanding point of disagreement in the literature on social research with children and young people is the effects of differences in positionality between adult researchers and young respondents and the scope for resolving this through method or by taking up

particular research roles (Corsaro 1997; Davis 1998: 329; Christensen and James 2000: 6). Positionality refers here to the researcher's position in various relations of power, such as race, nationality, urban-rural relations, age, gender, social and economic status, and how this may affect the data that is collected and thereby the production of knowledge (Rose 1997: 308).

Since ethnography is concerned with participants' own understanding of their social world which is ideally obtained through some form of participant observation (Robson 2002: 186) unequal relations of power between adult researchers and young respondents on the basis of differences in relative age, to name one of the most pressing of several unequal relations of power, present a serious dilemma for ethnographic knowledge production. Some scholars, like Mayall (2002: 257), thus stress that it is 'very hard for children and adults to work together on anything like equal terms'. Thorne (1987: 102) concurs and adds that children may participate in research, yet it is adults that turn this into knowledge by speaking and writing about it. Others, however, like Mandell (Mandell, 1991 IN: Davis 1998: 329; Christensen and James 2000: 6) argue that despite relations of inequality between children and adults, adult researchers can nonetheless become active participants in children's worlds. Scholars like Mandell in effect argue that the adult researcher's positionality does not necessarily have to have a distorting impact on data collection and knowledge production when researching children and young people.

In the Lao context, difference in relative age is an important factor in shaping social interactions (see chapter five). This makes it virtually impossible for adult researchers to actively participate in children and young people's worlds on anything but socially highly unequal terms. Research interactions between adult researchers and young respondents are thus always and necessarily shaped by unequal relations of power. This would also include taking up the role of volunteer teacher or youth worker which many adult researchers working with an ethnographic approach with children and young people have done (see e.g. Punch 1998). Moreover, in the institution of school further unequal relations of power between adults and children are inscribed in the roles of students and teachers. Volunteer teaching may thus increase access to children and young people, yet it does so in a particular relational framework which may not necessarily be conducive for an ethnographic research which is primarily interested in what children and young people do outside of school. In addition, being associated with the institution of school may be counter-productive for building rapport with children and young people who are out-of-

school. For these reasons primarily it was decided not to take up a role of volunteer teacher. In addition, this discussion illustrates one of the example in which the positionality of the research team vis-à-vis the young respondents was recognised and reflected upon in the research process (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 17; Jackson 2006: 531, 534).

Another approach of dealing with positionality is trying to alter the impact of one's positionality. This is, for example, done by Notermans (2008: 364) who found that interviewing her young Cameroonian respondent in her assistant's home was far more productive than various other forms of research interaction in which she actively tried to participate in children and young people's worlds. Interviewing the young respondents in the confined space of her research assistant's home, isolated the research interaction, to some extent, from the larger social environment, and thereby lessened the impact of the normative frame of relative age on the research interaction which created a situation in which the young respondents spoke more openly. Notermans thus managed to alter her positionality somewhat by manipulating the research space, which, in her case, affected data collection and knowledge production positively.

The research on which this dissertation is based followed a different strategy which largely stemmed from the specificities by which access to the research village was obtained. First of all, employing two young Lao research assistants, a male (Aai) and a female (Paai), was one attempt to reduce the impact of positionality on data collection and knowledge generation. It was hoped that same ethnicity, a shared youth status and same sex would enhance the data collection process and the quality of data as it would somewhat reduce the impact of positionality.

However, in retrospect this proved more complex than I had anticipated. Employing two Lao research assistants greatly facilitated overcoming many linguistic and cultural barriers, and their youthfulness certainly helped relating to the young research subjects. However, this also implied that particularly older respondents did not necessarily take Paai and Aai very seriously and it meant that these young research assistants felt occasionally that they were not in a position to ask certain questions or phrase questions in ways that may have been more effective for research purposes. Furthermore, the urban roots of the two research assistants also shaped their positionality. As subsequent chapters illustrate, rural-urban relations are in the Lao context unequal relations of power with the urbanites in relative position of power vis-à-vis their rural peers. To illustrate how this affected the research interactions it suffices to state that Aai was, for example, confronted with

marriage proposals by village girls and Paai was frequently asked if she could facilitate study or work opportunities in Vientiane for young villagers. These examples suggest apart from my own positionality as a foreign researcher also my research assistants' positionality has probably affected the data collection process.[15]

In addition, the same sex interviews added another layer of complexity to the data and knowledge production, rather than doing away with one, as Aai did not develop the same level of trust with the boys and young men as Paai managed with most of the girls and young women. In fact, when Aai had to quit his job in May 2008 and Paai took over his workload I found that the boys and young men entrusted more in Paai than they had thus far done in Aai. Although this may partially be due to different personalities and research qualities, I maintain that the boys and young men found it easier to share detailed experiences and opinions with a female rather than with a male researcher. This also applied to my own involvement in data collection. As a result the research has collected more data, and also richer data, from women and girls than from boys and men. This throws up a series of issues in terms of analysis. For example, comparisons of experiences by gender need to be done carefully as the basis of comparison is unequal in a quantitative and qualitative sense. In addition, Paai was more able to reflect on this dilemma than Aai, which added another gender dimension to the data.

Data are not only coloured due to positionality of the research team, but also by the social setting in which it was obtained. Research settings ranged from everyday social settings such as the household, school, or other places in the village and in various settings at migration destination, to more or less isolated research environments like the classrooms in which the Focus Group Discussions took place. Since relations of relative age come with various social norms, and an important one being that children don't speak out freely in the presence of their social seniors, conducting interviews with children and young people whilst other, and particularly older, villagers were present made it nearly impossible to break through these normative relations. The strategy adopted to overcome this constraining factor was time. As the research progressed the novelty wore off, and it became increasingly possible to interview children and young people also at home or at migration destination in ways relatively unaffected by the influential presence of adults or other by-standers. One particular strategy to achieve this was by splitting up the research

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[15] The particular ways in which my status as foreign researcher, and the subsequent 'foreignness' of the research team, affected the data collection process is reflected upon in Appendix 6 under positionality.

team in which one would chat with parents and other people present whilst the other would sit down with the concerned child or youth. Furthermore, by taking note of how different research settings affected the research interaction, which includes recording how adults and other by-standers actively interfered or shaped the research, not only illuminated children and young people's social position, it also provided a grounded basis for interpreting data and for reflection on one's positionality and subjectivity (Jackson 2006: 534).

3.3.4 Ethics

The previous sections in this chapter and also Appendix 6 have already touched upon the issue of ethics in this research project. Here the issue of ethics is discussed in further detail.

The principles of governance of research ethics is in a review article by Alderson & Morrow (2006) described as follows:

> …research ethics involve the transfer of as much information and control as possible from researchers to participants, who may be far less confident and knowledgeable than the researchers. (Alderson and Morrow 2006: 412)

A problematic assumption in this description of research ethics and also in Pain's (2008) notion of 'participatory and iterative research ethics' is that the research subjects, or participants, are happy to receive considerable information and control over the research project. This may be the case in ideal participatory research settings in which communities or populations have identified their own research needs and invite outside researchers to carry out this research. Yet, it is a problematic assumption in research settings which are characterised by stark inequalities in power relations. The latter applies to this research project as it is carried out by an adult male foreign lead-researcher who is assisted by urban research assistants and in which the participants are rural villagers, and mostly children and youth, who are invited to open up on activities which may border on illegality and may be tainted by social stigma.

Davis (1998) proposes an approach to research ethics that fits the specifics of the research described here better as Davis makes ethics squarely the responsibility of the researcher, and thus does not enter slippery areas in which participants may be willing to participate but have no or little desire for, or actively avoid, much information and control. In Davis' (1998: 328) approach to ethics in research, he identifies three key areas, 'informed consent, confidentiality and protection'. These areas are set out in much detail in the Statement on Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (1986) which was taken as a guideline for this research project. However, since the Statement does not speak about research with

children specifically, below is set out how this research has addressed the areas of informed consent, confidentiality and protection.

At the very start of the research and with regular intervals throughout the research, the informants, adults and children, were verbally informed about the research, its aims, and how the information would be used. This was performed collectively at the level of the village and the household and repeated individually with each individual respondent. We furthermore explained to all informants that participation in the research was strictly voluntary, and that they could at any time pull out of the research if they wished to do so. In addition, we encouraged respondents throughout the research to raise questions about the research in case there was anything they wanted to know or were unsure about. Furthermore, we would occasionally ask the respondents what they thought the research was about and what they thought we would do with the data in order to verify that participants took part in the research on an informed basis.

Written consent as is sometimes advocated (Alderson and Morrow 2004) was not sought, as this was felt inappropriate in a context in which illiteracy is relatively high and in which also for the literate population written language does not play much of a role in everyday life. Moreover, signing of forms is strongly associated with government practices, something that we tried to distance the research from. Parental consent for participation of their children in the research was, therefore, confirmed orally at the advent of the research process. Informed parental consent was continuous as we interviewed children and young people in the context of the household with other household members present. As discussed above, this has affected the research interaction but ensured that parents and care-givers were fully aware of what kind of research their children were participating in. In addition, through the rapport and trust we built this way it also became increasingly easy to interview children and young people without the distorting presence of other household members without creating a special research environment. Furthermore, it also meant that children and young people felt at ease about being interviewed at home alone or elsewhere in the village as they knew that their participation in the research was fully approved of by their parents or care-givers.

Due to the great and many power differentials discussed above very few respondents openly voiced their dissent. However, respondents, children and youth included, expressed dissent in various other ways. At times by evading an interview by claiming to be busy, claiming to be about to go to the fields, claiming not feeling too well, or simply by not

being at home. More often though, expressions of dissent were more subtle, in such cases my assistants would after a brief chat simply thank the respondent and explain to me that we had to come back another time since this was 'not a good time' for an interview. In most such cases I did not recognise these subtle hints of the respondents, yet, Paai and Aai were highly responsive to the numerous subtle ways in which participants expressed concern or dissent about contributing to the research and would never push the research agenda but instead, would make sure that even in such brief encounters a good relationship was maintained. This mostly paid off eventually as these respondents were usually happy to talk with us at a later point in time.

As stated earlier, confidentiality is ensured by anonymising all data, including the precise research location. Confidentiality thus contributed to protecting respondents from possible adverse consequences of participation in the research. In addition issues of protection relating to respondents' psycho-socio well-being also arose over the course of the research project, for example, where the research touched upon areas that were traumatic for the respondents. Unlike the culture of counselling that has become dominant in the West, my research assistants insisted that respondents were not helped by encouragements to talk about this with us as relative strangers. Hence, when the research touched upon traumatic areas, these issues were only explored if the respondents took the lead in talking about it. In such cases we tried to find out how the issue had been resolved, if at all, and if we could be of any further assistance. In cases where respondents did not want to share what had happened in detail we did not press the issue any further and did not come back to it in any direct ways. This is, however, not to say that we left such issues unexplored in terms of research. Usually we were able to construct a fairly complete picture by simply keeping our eyes and ears open in the village and piecing the several bits of partial information together without pressing the issue with any respondents directly.

Since ethical dilemmas are not limited to questions arising from what research subjects decide to confide to the research team, but may also stem from learning about something in indirect ways various ethical dilemmas remained. One such a case concerned a 15 or 16 year old girl whom we had interviewed regularly. Halfway through the research she had gone together with her friend to Thailand for work. The trip was organised by a lady in the research village who was unrelated to the girls. This lady had promised the girls domestic work in a nearby Thai town. Once in Thailand, however, the girls were transported to central Thailand where they were to work in a Karaoke bar. Unhappy with this situation,

the girls managed to escape and travel back to *Baan Naam*. The story of the girls is a public secret in *Baan Naam*, as is the dubious role of the lady who 'facilitated' the migratory journey. For her involvement the lady has been fined with 3,000 *Baht* by the village authorities but no further actions were taken, partly because neither the girl, nor her parents felt that any further action was necessary.

The dilemma we were confronted with in this case is whether we should have raised concern about the lady's role with local or district authorities so that this situation would not be repeated in the future, or were we to leave things as they were as all directly involved did not want to press any further charges. Dilemmas like this were treated as 'situated dilemmas' (Ferdinand *et al.* 2007: 540) to which no ready-made answers are available, but which ultimately depend on a contextually informed, but, therefore, often ambivalent subjective judgements. In this case we decided to leave things as they were. It was clear from talking with the family and the girl that they wanted to forget about the event and move on, and were satisfied with the fact that the lady had been fined. Turning it into an issue would, therefore, not be in the interests of the girl and her family. In addition, it is important to realise that raising any issue may bring about undesired consequences for the people directly involved, and that outsider researchers are mostly very poorly positioned to oversee or influence any such subsequent events, particularly in authoritarian contexts like the Lao PDR.

Another ethical dilemma was how to compensate the research participants for their time, efforts and information (see also Scott *et al.* 2006: 34). This is particularly problematic since it cannot be assumed that the research translates into any tangible benefits for the research participants. This dilemma was in part resolved since most villagers found talking with a foreign researcher who took an interest in their daily life a rewarding experience in itself. In addition, parents were often also keen to see their children communicating with a foreign researcher. The latter undoubtedly stemmed at least in some part from a glimpse of hope that this may translate into a job offer, fellowship, or possibly marriage. Nonetheless, the research team tried to live up to positive expectations most villagers had concerning being interviewed by a foreign research team by trying to make each interview or informal chat an as pleasant experience as possible. Apart from this enjoyment factor, the research also compensated the research subject in other ways. At the level of the village we made donations to village projects when this was requested. Furthermore, the participants in the bi-monthly interviews received a token of appreciation for Lao New Year and at the end of

the research process and we offered to take photos of all households participating in the household survey, also as a token of appreciation.

3.4 Methods and data

The previous sections have illustrated some of the methodological dilemmas the research was confronted with, here the focus shifts to the actual means by which data was generated and analysed. To recall, the research questions and the conceptual and theoretical framework demand rich qualitative data, and the inclusion of children and young people amongst the primary informants. In addition, appreciating migration as a social process implies that the research would ideally be multi-sited to capture the very different ways in which young people may be socially positioned in different stages of the migration process.

To reiterate further, these methodological demands had to be met under a series of constraining circumstances. Conducting research without formal permission was, for example, one of the reasons why the multi-sited angle remained relatively underdeveloped as access to each research site depended on careful development of personal relations. In addition, and as discussed above, the ethnographic orientation was also shaped by the research unofficial status and villagers' understanding of research. As a result, within the overall ethnographic orientation the research employed a multi-method approach and the various specific research methods are summarised in Table 3.1 and described in more detail below.

Table -3.1: Details on key methods for collecting primary data

Method	N	Location	Date	Data description
Household survey	54 hhs; 362 hh-members	At individual households	*Oct 2007 *follow-up in Sept 2008	Recorded on questionnaire in English, processed in MS Access
Auto-photography	6 groups with one camera (36 shots) each	In and around research village	*Oct-Nov 2007	Photos and commentary of photographers (notes taken in English)
Essay writing	99 (56 male; 43 female)	Prim and Sec school in	*Nov-Dec 2007	Essays in Lao, translated into English

(primary 5; sec 3; sec 6)		research village		
Semi-structured interviews; general	-village head (1) -abbot (1) -primary school head (1) -secondary school head (1) -Lao Youth Union central level	Research village; Vientiane	*Sept-Oct 2007	Notes taken in English
11 rounds of bi-monthly interviews (6 topical; 6 time-use)	26 respondents; 268 interviews (128 male; 140 female)	Various places in the village	*Dec 2007-May 2008 *one round in September 2008	Notes taken in Lao and/or English and translated into English
Focus group discussions	8 (4 adults; 4 children & youth)	At primary school	*March 2008	Discussions recorded; transcribed directly into English; visualisation material of the life course
Semi-structured interviews with current young migrants	*1 male *6 female (14 interviews) + phone interviews with other girls	At migration destination in research village (2), Thailand (1), Vientiane (4)	*Jan-June 2008	Notes taken in Lao, translated into English, some tape-recorded
Semi-Structured interview with young returned migrants	*12 male (of which 5 also participate in bi-monthly interviews) *20 female (of which 4 also participate in bi-monthly interviews)	In research village	*Oct 2007-Sept 2008 *March 2009	Notes taken in English and/or Lao, translated into English, some tape-recorded.
Semi-	-8 life-histories adults (4	In research	*May-	Interviews recorded if

structured interviews - specifics	men, 4 women) -village head -village secretary -local expert on religious rituals -village youth union leader -*aanuxon* & *nyauwaxon* representative at prim school -*nyauwaxon* & *xao nhum* representative at sec school -4 in-migrated families	village	Sept 2008 *March 2009	consent was given; transcribed directly into English
Ethnographic observations	Recorded as entries in a research diary	n/a	June 2007- June 2009	Regular entries, organised by date.

Each specific method listed in Table 3.1 had its own merits, but importantly by carrying out these clearly defined research activities I conformed with the terms on which villagers had agreed to the research and this created legitimate research interactions. In addition, simply moving around in the village from one interview to the other, having lunch or a drink somewhere, attending village festivals, and spending evenings at the house of the village chief were all rich contexts for ethnographic observations, and so were visits to Thailand, chats with Lao nationals whilst waiting for the train or bus to Bangkok, discussions with my wife's Lao teaching colleagues about pedagogical approaches and general child-rearing practices, chats with our *mèè baan* (domestic worker) about research findings, and attending workshops and research presentation in the Lao PDR.

A research diary (RD) was used to record all such observations that somehow appeared relevant. This diary was also used to reflect on the research process, particularly on issues of positionality, and to develop initial analyses. The importance of the interplay between these two functions of a research diary for conducting ethnographic research is by Toren described as follows.

> The discipline of writing fieldnotes makes one a better observer, and the better one becomes at observing, the richer and more nuanced one's fieldnotes…and so on; moreover, it's in the course of endlessly describing all the mundane details of daily life that one discovers what the interesting questions might be (Toren 1999: 84)

The research questions set out in chapter one could however not solely be addressed by the primary data collected through the means set out above. This applies particularly to the discursive dimension of the research. Therefore, an important part of the dissertation is based on the analysis of a range of secondary sources. The key secondary sources that have informed the research are set out in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Key secondary sources

Source	Description
Vientiane Times	Daily English language newspaper (consulted from June 2007 till August 2009)
Lao Language newspapers	Consulted for specific topics only (e.g. children's day)
Regulations of Lao Youth Union	1994 and 2006 version, and Lao Youth Union website
Lao Laws	Both English and Lao language versions
Lyrics	Of popular songs on themes related to the research
Lao Proverbs and Government/Party slogans	With regard to child rearing practices, adult-child relations, and young people's role in Lao society
Website of Ministry of Information and Culture	Village and Family of Culture programme
INGO reports; Lao government data	Official and unofficial research reports bearing relevance to the research
Academic literature	Journal, books and other relevant peer-reviewed material

The *Vientiane Times*, like all newspapers in the Lao PDR is a state-controlled medium. It thus reflects government views on matters rather than possibly alternative views emerging from the wider public. When bearing this in mind, the *Vientiane Times*, as the only English daily of the Lao PDR, provides ample material to analyse government views, and changes in this, on issues relating to the research. This includes not only newspaper articles but also photographic material published in the *Vientiane Times*, which together with the captions shed, for example, an interesting light on dominant perceptions of Lao children's working activities as analysed in chapter five.

Reports and publications from IGOs and INGOs need, like the *Vientiane Times*, also be interpreted through institutional discourses (O'Laughlin 1998). When working with such 'grey material' it has to be remembered that 'agencies that request reports [commission research] can simply refuse to accept conclusions they do not like, assigning drafts to the dustbin or negotiating bland or uncontroversial conclusions' (O'Laughlin 1998: 108). This is particularly true in the Lao PDR where research reports from IGOs and INGOs not only reflect the commissioning organisations' institutional discourses, but also, need to meet government approval if the research report is to be formally published. In addition, researchers and consultants producing these reports 'often exercise self-censorship, since they wish to both have their research reported, and to be commissioned to do further research' (*ibid* 1998: 108). This results often in highly compromised reports that may say more about institutional discourses and government positions than about issues that were actually studied.

Further, grey material stemming from the Lao context is also plagued by a serious concern about the quality of official data that is used in these reports:

> …the collection of statistics in Laos leaves much to be desired, in spite of the existence of a National Statistical Office within the Committee for Planning and Cooperation. Statistics between the different government departments are often contradictory and no one is sure how accurate they are. The system is not integrated and the government offices in Vientiane rely more on guesswork than real data…It should be mentioned that reports by the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF, and the ADB are usually based on figures provided by the [Lao] government and then interpreted by experts in these organisations. Even if these statistics are used appropriately, they are based on faulty premises which make any coherent analysis difficult. (Vatthana Pholsena and Banomyong 2006: 74-75)

Despite these shortcomings and concerns this study has made use of grey material and some statistics presented in these reports. However, statistics from such sources have only been used in case the methodology and questionnaires used to generate this data were available so that the reliability of data could, to some extent, be verified. Second, since the institutional discourses of IGOs, INGOs and the Lao government are such important shapers of grey material published in the Lao PDR, such sources become of analytical value for precisely these reasons and have, therefore, been used to unravel discursive representations of, for example, trafficking and migration (see e.g. Huijsmans 2008).

3.4.1 Household survey

For reasons outlined above, the research commenced with a household survey. This survey was carried out over a period of two weeks in October 2007 and covered 54 households out of the then 277 households in *Baan Naam*, the research village. The household survey was

designed in English and translated into Lao (see Appendices 3 & 4). The survey was first piloted in Vientiane and an improved version was piloted in the research village before carrying out the survey. Survey interviews were conducted in the Lao language and the survey took about 30 to 60 minutes. The survey questions were in most case asked to one of the main couple in the household and in case both husband and wife were presented usually both responded to the questions asked. In some cases in which heads of household were absent at the time of interview, but knowledgeable grown-up children or elderly were present the household survey was carried out with them, possibly following up at a later stage on some remaining questions.

The survey addressed three areas: (1) the household's basic socio-economic and demographic household profile, (2) migration and mobility of household members and migratory aspects of household history, and (3) a section on children and young people in the household. Apart from generating data on these areas, the household survey also served the following purposes:

♦ To introduce the research team and the research objectives to each individual household

♦ To quickly acquaint ourselves with various realities of village households

♦ To generate a sampling frame for subsequent research activities

The sampling procedure used for selecting households for the household survey was based on the administrative structure of the research village and is described in further detail in Appendix 6, which also discusses in more detail some methodological approaches employed during the household survey.

3.4.2 Bi-monthly interviews

A main short-coming of survey data is that a survey is essentially a snapshot which lacks temporal dimensions, unless repeated survey rounds are conducted. This short-coming was in part addressed by conducting bi-monthly interviews with a carefully selected group of young people from early December 2007 through to late May 2008 with an additional round in September 2008. [16] This way seasonal, and other temporal variations were

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[16] In June, July and August 2008 no bi-monthly interviews were conducted. In June because priority was given to conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with various purposefully selected villagers, and in July and August the Lao organisation that had facilitated access to the research village advised against visiting *Baan Naam* due to apparent security concerns in the district.

captured and it allowed building up better rapport than what is possible through survey research alone. In addition, conducting bi-monthly interviews justified regular and sustained access to the research village, and created the forms of social interaction necessary for developing and maintaining the overall ethnographic research orientation.

The bi-monthly interviews were conducted with 26 children and young people, 13 girls and 13 boys, from 26 different households. These 26 respondents were selected purposefully, using the household survey as a sampling frame. The sample for the bi-monthly interviews consists of unmarried individuals who were in terms of social age regarded as children or youth, see Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Sample for bi-monthly interviews

	Male (n=13)		Female (n=13)	
Approx. Chrono. Age on 1/1/2008[17]	In-school (P=primary, S=secondary; followed by age-grade)	Out-of-school	In-school	Out-of-school
10	P4			
12	P4; P4; S2		S1	
13			S3	1
14	S3		P5; S4; S3	1
15		1	S2	1
16	S5			2
17		2		1
18	S6	1		
19	S5			1
24		1		

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[17] As chapter five explains in more detail, chronological age is often not known precisely and figures stating chronological age need, therefore, be treated as approximations.

TOTAL	8	5	6	7

The sample further ensured a fair distribution in terms of chronological and social age, school participation, and birth order. In addition, about three quarters of the sample consisted of either siblings of young household members, who were recorded as 'young migrants' in the household survey, or, of young respondents who had themselves worked elsewhere recently.[18]

The latter aspect of the sampling procedure served three purposes. Firstly, building rapport with siblings and parents of migrating children and youth was hoped to affect gaining access to these young migrants themselves. Secondly, even if the young migrant in question could not be interviewed in person, regular chats with parents and siblings provided a good amount of information to reconstruct these migrations through these secondary sources. Thirdly, it also provided a context for studying how migration of siblings relates to, and affects the situation of non-migrating children and young people in the household.

Initially, the bi-monthly interviews were designed as time-use interviews; semi-structured discussions about the children and young people's activities of the previous day and their reflections on it. The aim of these talks was to obtain information from children and young people's own perspectives on the division of labour within the household and other activities the children and youth were involved in. It was hoped that these regular interviews would provide ample scope to address (1) migrations involved in by the respondents themselves, (2) migration involved in by their siblings and (3) how the latter affected the everyday lives of the respondents, and (4) discussing migration at a more general level. Interviews were not recorded as this was believed to affect the research interaction negatively.

The interviews were conducted by my assistants, who also took notes of it in Lao language and translated these into English. In order to remain involved in this part of the research I accompanied each research assistant once per month. In practice however, the loose interview format proved difficult for Aai and Paai to work with, as they tended to focus too narrowly on the respondents' activities and did not follow through, to a sufficient extent,

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[18] This was the case with 10 out of the 13 boys and young men, and also with 10 out of the 13 girls and young women.

on how this related to wider household dynamics. As a result the interviews became quickly repetitive and yielded little new information.

Picture 3.1: A bi-monthly interview. Particularly in the early stages of the research it proved hard to separate young respondents from adults. And even if this was achieved lots of other by-standers remained

It was, therefore, decided to replace one round of time-use interview per month with a round of topical interviews. This way we could maintain regular contact with the respondents and the households, and also generate useful additional information. Topical interviews included, life-history interviews, experience/knowledge interviews (one relating to usage of school knowledge in everyday life, and one relating to knowledge of a series of issues based on everyday village life), interviews on perceptions of common jobs done by young migrants (based on photos), and on perceptions of Vientiane and Thailand vis-à-vis their own village (based on photos). In addition, the bi-monthly interviews incorporated young people's reflections on local events such as Lao New Year, the village festival, but also Valentine's Day, and birthdays, and provided the opportunity to follow-up on a range of other issues as they emerged throughout the research.

3.4.3 Targeted semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the main method used to collect information on village history, customs, traditions, general socio-economic development, the role of mass-organisations in the village, and general information about current and past mobilities and migrations. These semi-structured interviews were conducted with a wide range of villagers, including knowledgeable elderly (male and female), local authorities, teachers, the local abbot, and with other knowledgeable villagers (young and old).

With the exception of some follow-up interviews with young migrants at migration destination, all semi-structured interviews were conducted by myself and a research assistant. All semi-structured interviews were conducted in the Lao language based on a loose format merely indicating the topics I planned to discuss. As a rule of thumb, first time interviews were generally not tape-recorded for the sake of building rapport. Permission for recording interviews was only sought once some basic level of rapport was established with the interviewees. Hence, most tape-recorded interviews stem from the later stages of the research process. This means that the majority of interviews were not tape-recorded, but it also means that the interviews that were conducted during the later stages of the research process and were generally most focused and of highest quality were tape-recorded.

3.4.4 Photo material and essay writing

Essay writing and auto-photography was conducted in the early stages of the research as a means to quickly gain an insight into children and young people's perspectives on some dimensions of the research. In addition, essay writing and auto-photography children and young people are able to do relatively independently without the direct intimidating presence of a foreign research and his urban research assistants. Auto-photography has also the advantage of depicting simultaneously actual persons, places, things and activities from the perspective and experience of the photographers themselves (Rudkin and Davis 2007: 109).

For the auto-photography exercise six groups of about three students each were formed; a male and female group was formed in primary 5, secondary 3 and secondary 6. Each group was given one 36 shot-disposable camera and were after a brief introductory exercise at school asked to take pictures of their everyday tasks and working activities over a period of one week (see picture 3.2 and 3.3).

Picture 3.2: A 17 or 18 year old female secondary 6 students is harvesting beans in the family fields (October 2007).

Picture 3.3: A 13 year old male secondary 3 student is fishing on a nearby river (October 2007).

After the photographs were developed, interviews were conducted with each individual photographer about what he or she had depicted. This gave a broad and quick quantitative and qualitative overview of children and young people's everyday activities from their own perspective. However, since none of the young photographers had ever taken a picture with

a camera before, taking pictures cannot be assumed to be a relatively easy and unproblematic method as, for example, claimed by Rudkin and Davis (2007: 109).[19] This is particularly the case with manually operated disposable cameras that don't have automatic flash settings. Also, culturally specific ideas about the taking of images of living persons need to be considered. The latter, did however not pose any obstacle here.[20]

The essay writing activity was conducted with all students from one class in age-grade primary 5, secondary 3 and secondary 6. For this activity the students were asked to elaborate, in writing, on what they thought they would be doing after finishing their education, and whether this would be in their village or somewhere else. The aim of this activity was to get an idea about young people's future aspirations with regard to jobs and staying in the village versus the city. However, since the activity was conducted in a school environment and in the early stages of the research the results are heavily affected by this particular timing and social setting and are, therefore, very difficult to interpret and, subsequently, hardly used in the analysis presented in the following chapters. The essay material was also plagued by some further methodological concerns reflected upon in Appendix 6.

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[19] Interestingly, some young photographers had however taken pictures with mobile phones!

[20] On another occasion during the research process an adult woman felt greatly uncomfortable about the idea of posing in a group picture after an FGD. In fact, she explained that she wore an amulet to protect herself from any pictures being taken of her.

Picture 3.4: Giving instructions for an essay writing activity in Secondary 3. Even classrooms provide hardly any space for separating the research activities from everyday life, as the numerous by-standers illustrate (October 2007).

3.4.5 Focus group discussions

A total of eight focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in March 2008, four FGDs with parents (two with mothers, two with fathers, who are all drawn from the families of the 26 children participating in the time-use study) and four FGDs with children and youth (again, drawn from the 26 children and young people participating in the time-use study). The FGDs used pictures taken from the *Vientiane Times* depicting Lao people in various stages of the life course to prompt discussions about locally relevant concepts of stages in the life course, age-appropriate activities, and reciprocal relations between children and their parents through the life course and with particular emphasis on work.

Picture 3.5: FGD with the youngest group (March 2008)

Picture 3.6: FGD with fathers (March 2008)

The adult FGDs were single-sex, but the FGDs with children and young people were somewhat experimentally conducted as a mixed-sex exercise. In retrospect, single-sex FGDs may also have worked better in relation to children and youth. The FGDs were facilitated by Aai and Paai and the discussions were tape-recorded. Each FGD lasted about one hour and had between 4 to 8 participants.

3.5   Data processing and analysis

Table 3.1 showed that raw data consists in this study primarily of interview and observation notes, complemented with some questionnaire forms and tape-recordings of interviews.

Translation of interview notes from Lao language into English was done together with the research assistants, often whilst still in the field and with the actual interviews fresh in mind. In cases in which translation was done by the research assistants independently, their translation was compared with my notes and subject to discussion with the research assistants. When translating Lao language materials into English key phrases, key words and key sentences, but also ambiguous expressions, were retained in the Lao language alongside our English translation, this, to keep the analysis as close as possible to the original material.

Whilst processing and translating interview notes we frequently identified issues requiring follow-up research. Translation of interview notes thus served as a preliminary data analysis, and it shaped subsequent interviews, and thereby, the subsequent research process. This form of data processing and translation also aided in rapidly developing a useful, and research specific, Lao language research vocabulary which I could draw upon in subsequent research activities. In addition, actively engaging in the data translation process helps foreign researchers to gain a better understanding of the wider cultural context of the research through the conceptual scheme of language which is a great asset for the interpretation of data (see also Maclean 2007; McEwan 2009: 283-284).

The survey questionnaires were entered into Microsoft Access using two connected forms. One form was designed for household data and another form which was linked to the household form was used for data on individual household members. This allowed the exploration of the data from a household as well as from an individual angle, and importantly, also to explore the relation between individual records and the household records.

Other questionnaire materials as well as some qualitative interview materials were processed in Microsoft Excel to facilitate basic quantitative analysis.

3.5.1 Analysis and presentation

Some degree of analysis already took place when the data were processed as illustrated in Box 3.1 and as explained above. However, this did not take a highly systematic form as is, for example, prescribed in formal grounded theory (Burawoy 1998: 25-27; Goulding 1999). Reflection and interpretation at this stage of the data analysis process consisted of reflecting on the data and data collection experiences with research assistants, supervisors, and interested third parties. In addition, interpretation and reflection also takes place by relating the data and data collection experiences to the literature and other sources of information and inspiration such as newspaper articles.

Thorough analysis was thus not conducted till most data were collected, roughly at stage two in Box 3.1. To reiterate, this was primarily because the research was conducted without proper authorisation and speeding up the research was favoured over solid mid-way analysis in order to reduce the risk of having to terminate the research prematurely (see Appendix 6). Unsurprisingly, therefore, once the data was processed and a more thorough analysis commenced several gaps in the data quickly emerged. These gaps identified in stage two of the process depicted in Box 3.1 were addressed by follow-up research as indicated by the arrows.

Given the relative shortage of relevant and reliable secondary material and also to allow maximum space for the ethnographic material to speak on its own terms, the themes and areas of analysis developed in step two of the data analysis process were derived through the interaction of data with the research questions. Hence, an inductive orientation was adopted. It is, however, appreciated that no approach is truly inductive and that at best only an effort can be made to start theoretical reasoning from the data, as any analyst brings in his or her personal baggage which shapes the inductive approach (Mason 1996). Inductive approaches are also compromised by the fact that the research and analysis is to a great extent driven by pre-determined research questions.

Text-box 3.1: Data analysis process
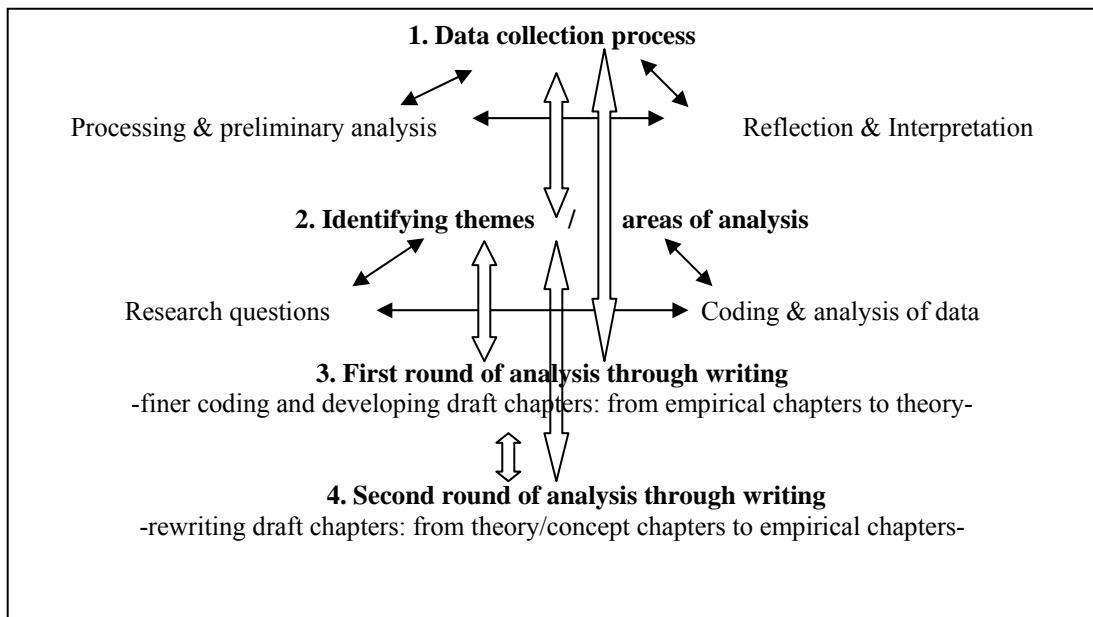
Coding and analysis of data was performed manually, but quantitative observations were analysed in Microsoft Excel. Coding of qualitative data refers here, and in the subsequent sections, to a process of organising the data into themes which emerge from the data. These themes are in turn further subdivided and explored for theoretical and conceptual potential. Depending on the themes at stake this was done cross-sectionally, non-cross-sectionally, and through drawing analytical diagrams and tables (Mason 1996: Chapter 6). An example of this approach is the development of the analytical categories of 'fluid migration' and 'institutional migration' presented in chapter seven.

The initial writing process (step three in Box 3.1) requires moving from codes to a coherent theoretical argument. This requires collapsing, further developing, or dropping particular themes. It also illuminates further gaps in the data, demanding some follow-up research in either the research village or in secondary sources (indicated by the arrow). In line with the inductive approach, the initial writing process started with the empirical chapters first and closed with the methodological and theoretical chapters.

The fourth step in the data analysis process consisted of working towards a final draft. This part of the analysis adopted a more deductive approach as a main aim at this stage was to develop the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the thesis more strongly in relation to the literature. For this reason, rewriting and reworking the draft chapters started from the theoretical and methodological chapters. These chapters were once again revisited after having reworked the empirical chapters too. Data analysis and refining the theoretical arguments of the thesis was enhanced by feedback from supervisors at various stages of the

research process, but in particular on the draft chapters and final draft. In addition, data analysis was also enhanced by presenting parts of the thesis and analysis in international conferences.

A key premise of the thesis was to work flexibly and dynamically with different units of analyses (e.g. the individual, the household, the village, the nation). The data analysis process made, therefore, extensive use of combining various sources of data and employed various forms of triangulation. Triangulation was here not so much performed as a quest for truth (Mason 1996: 148-149), although it did serve this function in some respects, but rather as a means to lift the analysis to a relational level in which different methods and different unit of analyses become complementary and produce more rounded and dynamic observations of the processes that are studied.

Data is presented in the dissertation in quantitative and qualitative formats. In case qualitative accounts could be meaningfully aggregated, and if this way an argument could be more convincingly developed or illustrated, the qualitative data is presented in an aggregated form in a table, figure or diagram. However, most data is used in its original qualitative form as either 'excerpts', which are direct quotes from translated interviews, 'notes' which are summarised notes from one interview, or 'composite notes' which are constructed on the basis of more than one interview. Note further that the indication 'excerpt' is only used for data that was recorded and translated verbatim. 'Notes' may refer to either shortened translated transcripts or to notes taken during an interview. Lastly, use of interview material in the main text is indicated by the name of the interviewee followed by the full date on which the interview took place like: (Jonnie, 16/3/2008). Details on all children and young people who participated in the research are presented in Appendix 2.

3.6 Scope, limitations and other issues

In describing the methodology and the process of data analysis, several issues affecting the scope and limitations of the research have already been flagged. This reflexive relation with the data is maintained in the subsequent chapters. Nonetheless, some issues need specific attention and are discussed below.

First, any study that is to a great extent based on observations stemming from interactions with people from one single village raises questions about how such small scale studies speak to other cases. In responding to such concerns, it is useful to distinguish between two issues; representativeness, and generalisability. Representativeness is a statistical quality

and although efforts were made to maintain a degree of representativeness at the level of the village, this statistical property does not hold beyond the village and achieving this was not the aim of the research. To stress, any figures on incidence of migration in the research village can, therefore, not be more than indicative of what may be happening elsewhere in the Lao PDR.

The strength of 'small *n*-studies' is, therefore, not found in the applicability of its empirical findings, but in the applicability and generalisability of its conceptual and theoretical contributions (Small 2009: 9-10). Purposive sampling, rather than statistical representative sampling, was, therefore, the prime sampling method employed in this study. This sampling approach does not aim to achieve statistical representativeness, but is about purposefully selecting cases of theoretical and conceptual significance. Relations with the wider population, which is here primarily the rural ethnic Lao population of the Lao PDR, and importantly *not* the various ethnic minority groups, are thus expressed in theoretical and conceptual terms and not in terms of statistical properties. The contribution of this study lies, therefore, in the conceptualisation and theorisation of the processes and dynamics underlying trends and figures that are presented in various other studies (e.g. MoLSW *et al.* 2003). It is in this respect that theorisations based on one single case speak to other cases and meaningfully contribute to the production of knowledge.

Another limitation stems from my relatively limited Lao language skills and from the fact that a relevant working vocabulary was developed whilst conducting research. Ideally, ethnographic research is conducted with full understanding of the local language so that observations can be interpreted in a rounded and holistic way. However, in this research some key vocabulary, and associated socio-cultural frames, I only acquired and came to understand through the process of conducting field work, and, therefore, always a step too late. To name just one example, in the household survey I used the Lao terms *phuu bao* and *phuu sao*, and *wai nhum* or *xao nhum* interchangeably, as all meaning youth. Only overtime, I became aware of the fact that the former terms refer more to bodily changes and becoming of marital age whereas the latter are more general terms for the stage of 'youth' in the life course. These very different meanings and the very different connotations of these terms thus remained unnoticed and unexplored in an important part

of the research. Similarly, it was only towards the end of the research that I became aware of the more subtle distinction between, for example, *phuu sao* and *pen sao*.[21]

Relatively limited Lao language skills also required working with research assistants, which not only solves problems but also creates its very own. In the section on positionality it was already noted that the urban background of the research assistants affects the data. Another limitation stems from the fact that both research assistants had had no formal training in social science and arrived at the job with only very rudimentary experiences of working as research assistants. Whilst working with untrained and inexperienced research assistants has the advantage that no 'unlearning' is required, this does not outweigh the advantage of an ideal scenario in which assistants would have been trained in social research methods and would have had a background in social science. Yet, in the Lao context it is unrealistic to expect finding assistants with such qualifications and satisfactory English language skills who are still willing to work for a salary that can be accommodated by a PhD research budget. The alternative followed here, to train research assistants on the job, is thus only a necessary second-best solution.

A final problem that kept emerging throughout the research was the interpretation of vagueness and inconsistency in answers to fairly straight-forward questions such as things like age, how many years ago something had happened, and ownership.[22] Klausner (1993: 34) recalls similar examples in his introduction to his writings on the Lao of *Isaan* in North-eastern Thailand. Klausner argues that seemingly imprecise responses like '14 or 15 years', 'older than 20 years', 'not reaching 100', and inconsistencies in these responses over time are in fact 'actually often quite good indicators of reality', and that thus 'it was the questions that had been imprecise not the answers' (Klausner 1993: 34). Whilst not disputing Klausner's argument, I would argue that at least in the Lao PDR also another dynamic is at stake. It is not just that village life was far more flexible than could be done justice to by precise figures; there was also a healthy resistance to precision, whether politically or economically inspired. This tendency in responses was further aided by numerous possibilities in the Lao language to give appropriate answers without disclosing

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[21] A girl is called *phuu sao* when she is regarded of marital age (although these days it may reflect physical maturity and an interest in the other sex rather than association with marriage per se). *Pen sao* comes before this, and refers to becoming feminine in various respects, and leaving the a-sexual stage of child (*dek noi*) behind for good.
[22] Interestingly, this only becomes a real issue in case the research interviews the same respondents more than once, because only then it becomes apparent that data are inconsistent. Most studies conducted in the Lao PDR are of the 'quick-type' and are therefore not faced with this dilemma.

any precise or unambiguous information. Furthermore, the cultural setting of an interview in the Lao contest is such that questions can only be asked once and possibly once more in another way. If it then becomes clear that the interviewee is reluctant to become any clearer the issue is seldom pursued any further at that moment with that person. Triangulation between methods was in some cases used to arrive at what appeared to be the most realistic accounts. In other cases, however, the ambiguity is maintained in the dissertation and data are presented with all its imprecision and vagueness as this appeared, in some cases, to be closest to the original observations.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has developed the theoretical and conceptual discussion presented in chapter two into a methodological research orientation and into actual research methods. In presenting the various methodological choices, this chapter has drawn on the academic literature, but importantly, it has also highlighted how methodological considerations are shaped by the particularities of the research context.

Having introduced the study in the introduction chapter and having laid out the theoretical, conceptual and methodological foundations of this study in this chapter and in chapter two, the following chapter is the first of four empirical chapters. This first empirical chapter aims to contextualise the study and focuses, therefore, on historical changes and developments that have taken place in the Vientiane region and which have affected villagers' migration and mobility.

4 Contextualising Changes and Continuities in Migration

4.1 Introduction

The theme of migration and mobility involving Lao nationals, under which I include here trafficking, has received considerable attention in recent studies (Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2003; MoLSW *et al.* 2003; Maniemai Thongyou and Dusadee Ayuwat 2005; Bounthavy Sisouphanthong and Myers 2006; Huijsmans 2007; Rigg 2007; Molland 2008; Supang Chantavanich 2008). A common observation across this otherwise diverse literature is the claim that involvement in migration and mobility by Lao nationals is increasing. It is further commonly observed that an increase in migration is for an important part due to processes of socio-economic and political change unfolding within the Lao PDR and the wider region, and the Lao PDR's related renewed position in the region with its emphasis on regional integration. Relating the empirical phenomenon of migration and mobility to these larger processes of change, which continue to unfold, suggests that the involvement by Lao nationals in forms of mobility and migration, and the very role of it in rural livelihoods, will, in all likelihood, only continue to increase in the years to come (Rigg 2005a).

Most studies and reports adopt a near-exclusive focus on the present which leads to the suggestion that migration and mobility is something new in the Lao context. In fact, only few studies stress that migration and mobility is by no means a new phenomenon in Lao village life (e.g. SCUK *et al.* 2004). The dearth of historical inquiry suggests that the current manifestation of migration and mobility has no history and is a mere by-product of contemporary changes in the Lao socio-economic and political landscape. This view emerges particularly strongly from reports on migration and mobility from local and regional media and from reports of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and is especially pronounced in studies and reports on 'migrations gone wrong', referred to as 'human trafficking' (UNICEF and MoLSW 2004; Charoensutthipan 2005; Viengsavanh Phengphachan 2007).

In order to address this historical gap, this chapter starts with a brief historical analysis of migration in relation to processes of development and change observed over the past five decades. This is firstly to illustrate that migration and mobility are by no means new phenomena in the Lao social landscape, although I do not wish to deny a growing

significance of migration and mobility over the past decade. Second, this historical analysis is for an important part developed on the basis of life-histories of the current cohort of parents in the research village of *Baan Naam*, hence the historical timeframe. This approach allows moving beyond the analytical tandem of processes of transition and the empirical manifestation of migration and mobility to a tri-polar relation of processes of transition, the empirical manifestation of migration and mobility, *and* household histories of migration. The dimension of household and parental migration history is further developed in chapter six and seven as it helps explaining why young villagers within the same village are positioned differently in processes leading to becoming a young migrant or remaining in the village. Lastly, analysing villagers' accounts concerning past migration and mobility patterns and practices illuminates the ways in which these phenomena have changed over time, but also, how the discursive construction of migration and mobility has changed overtime. The final part of this chapter turns to the question of migration policy and analyses the emergence of a migration regime in the Lao PDR. This regime, it is argued, consists of two, yet interrelated dimensions; a focus on bringing undocumented migration into formal channels and a related focus on combating human trafficking. The final section of this chapter illustrates how this two-fold regime is shaped by global and regional forces, whilst at the same time it has become 'indigenized' (Appadurai 1996: 32) at the Lao national level, and village level.

4.2 *Economic and political factors shaping migration and mobility in Baan Naam: A brief historical account*

Passing through villages like *Baan Naam* on the Lao side of the Mekong valley that are off the main road network, it is easy to give in to the superficial idea that time has stood still. This idea finds further support if one also travels through the neighbouring villages across the Mekong River located on the more elaborate, and paved, Thai road network. Comparing the pictures of *Baan Naam*, the research village, and the Thai village of *Baan Fangthai* that were presented in chapter one convincingly illustrates the above. The first impression of *Baan Fangthai* is certainly not one of an isolated rural idyll due to, amongst other things, the paved roads, electricity wiring, and modern housing, despite its physical location far from the centre of the Thai nation-state, whilst an impression of an unchanging rural settlement appears, on first sight, to hold for *Baan Naam* despite its physical proximity to the Lao capital Vientiane.

In contrast, *Baan Naam* may be located near the Lao capital of Vientiane; yet, its various extra-local connections and linkages are on the surface not immediately transparent. In fact, it is villages like *Baan Naam* in which small-scale agriculture for own consumption is still of considerable importance and where village life remains to a significant extent shaped by the seasons that sustain the ideological construct of peasant village communities as social islands, largely disconnected from various wider forces (Kemp 1989; Kemp 1991). This may indeed lead to the conclusion that migration and mobility are new phenomena in *Baan Naam*.

A first note of caution to such an assertion emerges from accounts of the history of *Baan Naam* as a settlement. By Lao standards *Baan Naam* is considered a well-established village, yet according to local sources the village was only established some 200 to 300 years ago by migrants from an area some 100 km north of *Baan Naam*. It is worth adding that in those days the ethnic Lao population of what is now north-eastern Thailand and the Lao PDR was not yet divided by the current geo-political border. In fact, the current border dates back only just over a century ago following from negotiations between the French colonising force that ruled what is now the Lao PDR, and the Kingdom of Siam (now Thailand). Prior to this colonial act the ethnic Lao population was at times subject to Siamese rulers, and at times subjects of Lao kingdoms. Importantly, the attempted revolt against Siam by the Vientiane ruler Chau Anou in the early 19th century 'prompted the Siamese state to engage in a systematic policy of relocating tens of thousands of people from the east bank of the Mekong into a region [present-day north-eastern Thailand] it indisputably controlled' (Evans 2002: 30-31).

A second and more contemporary note of caution emerges from data obtained through the household survey described in the previous chapter. Data on place of birth of the current cohort of parents of the 54 households surveyed shows that in the majority of households (29) at least one of the main couple is born in *Baan Naam*, and in seven instances the head of household *and* spouse were both born in *Baan Naam*. Importantly, however, Table 4.1 shows that amongst the households surveyed, in a greater number of households the head of household *and* spouse were both *not born* in *Baan Naam*. In addition, the adults that were born in *Baan Naam* and are still living in the village at the time of survey had not uncommonly married partners who were born well beyond the district. This again illustrates how a seemingly unchanging community which appears to be relatively isolated

and independent has nonetheless developed on the basis of, and through, a considerable degree of extra-local interactions.

Table 4.1: Place of birth of current cohort of parents (n=108; 54 households)

Place of birth	Male head of household only	Spouse only	Both head of household and spouse (individual)
Baan Naam	14	15	7 (14)
Within district	4	4	-
Within Province (Vientiane Municipality, Vientiane Province)	4	4	-
Other province in the Lao PDR	8	5	10 (20)
Isaan (Thailand)	3	4	1 (2)
Unknown	3	2	1 (2)
TOTAL	36	34	19 (38)

In 16 out of the 54 households surveyed in *Baan Naam* neither the head of household nor the spouse was born in *Baan Naam*. Details on the 16 households are presented in Table 4.2 and listed in chronological order based on the year in which the couple moved into Baan Naam. The household records are interspersed with notes on major socio-economic and political developments. This is not to suggest that individual and household migration is directly related to these wider developments. However, these wider developments nonetheless constitute an important interpretive frame for understanding the micro-level quantitative and qualitative dimensions of migratory dynamics that are discussed in more detail below.

The discussion below is organised in three eras, the pre-socialist era, the socialist era, and the post-socialist era, and it concentrates primarily on migration and economic and political developments affecting the Vientiane region, including the *Isaan* region in North-eastern Thailand. This discussion may, therefore, not necessarily bear much relevance for

migration dynamics and developments observed elsewhere in the Lao PDR, which are set in very different histories, ecologies, and ethnic contexts (see e.g. Evrard forthcoming).

Table 4.2: Households in which the head of household *and* spouse are *not* born in *Baan Naam*

hh-ID	(approx) arrival in *Baan Naam*	From (Male/Female)	Reason for migration.
32	2004	Huaphan Province	Left Huaphan due to a shortage of land
53	2004	Xiang Khwaang Province/Luang Prabang Province	Following a failed resettlement scheme
33	2003	Huaphan Province	Followed other villagers from Huaphan in search for better life
55	2002	Unknown/Xaysomboun special zone	Following a failed resettlement scheme
54	2002	Luang Prabang province	Following a failed resettlement scheme
52	2002	Xiang Khwaang/Vientiane Province	Following a failed resettlement scheme
47	2001	Huaphan Province	Children had first migrated to the Vientiane area, parents followed later. Parents settled *Baan Naam* since relatives from Huaphan had settled there already.
37	2001	Luang Prabang province	Following a failed resettlement scheme
51	2000	Both born in *Isaan* (Thailand) and raised in Vientiane city	Came to *Baan Naam* to set up a furniture workshop
49	2000	Xiang Khwaang Province/Xayabuly Province	Regarded *Baan Naam* as a good place to start a business (shop/trading centre)
*2000s Continued facilitation of national and regional integration through, for example, authorisation of border crossings, and national and international road construction projects. *1997: The Lao PDR joins the ASEAN			
45	Before 1997	Huaphan Province	Teacher couple allocated to *Baan Naam* by educational authorities
4	1996	Xayabuly Province	Widowed mother followed her 2nd born child (son) who had married into *Baan Naam*
36	1996	Xiang Khwaang Province	This household lived in various places before settling in *Baan Naam*.
9	1990	Luang Prabang	Mother arrived as child with her family in the

	(1975)	Province/Vientiane Province	district around 1975. Around the same time father arrived, also as child with his family, in neighbouring district. As a married couple they moved around 1990 into *Baan Naam*.

<div style="background-color:grey">

*1990s: Further market reforms; improved relations with Thailand; increased regional integration

*1987-1988: Violent Lao-Thai border conflicts

*Mid 1980s: Introduction of market reforms

*Mid 1970s-mid 1980s: Policies implemented to organise society based on communist principles, severely controlling people's mobility and other freedoms; around ten percent of the Lao population fled the country across the Mekong into Thailand and beyond.

*December 1975: Establishment of the Lao PDR by proclamation, following coalition governments that included the *Pathed Lao*.

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39	1971	Vientiane/*Isaan* (but raised in *Baan Naam*)	Mother was born in *Isaan* but moved with her family to *Baan Naam* when she was about 5 years old (around 1971)
24	No details	Vientiane/*Isaan*	No details

<div style="background-color:grey">

*Mid-1960s: Escalation of the war in Laos; significant war induced population movements; by 1964 the communist *Pathed Lao* controls half the country (mainly mountainous hinterland). It sets up 'mass-organisations' and committees in *Pathed Lao* controlled villages, village education and recruits youth for its activities and for further education and training in Vietnam.

*From mid-1950s: Significant increase in United State's support of the Royal Lao Government as part of US's regional anti-communist struggles

*1893: Franco-Siamese Treaty is signed and established that the land on the east bank of the Mekong became French territory, thus separating the Lao of *Isaan* from the Lao of French Colonial Laos.

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Historical data from Evans (2002) and Brown & Zasloff (1986).

4.2.1 The pre-socialist era (1953-1975)

Following the Second World War, French colonial rule in Indo-China was never fully re-established and in 1953 the Royal Lao Government attained full sovereignty (Evans 2002: 92). The two decades that followed till the proclamation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975 is here referred to as the 'pre-socialist era'.

In this era three major factors affecting migration and mobility in the Vientiane region can be identified. First, in the decades prior to the proclamation of the Lao PDR, the Vientiane plain 'functioned as a frontier area for landless migrants from the Thai northeast [*Isaan*]' (Evans 1990: 39). In addition, seasonal migration by ethnic Lao from *Isaan* into the Vientiane region was also widespread. The household survey data from *Baan Naam* illustrates the prevalence of migration from *Isaan* into the Vientiane region. In eight out of

the 54 households it was established that the head of household and/or spouse were born in *Isaan* (see also Table 4.1). This concerns a total of nine individuals and in seven cases relatively complete information on migration history was obtained. These seven individuals were unrelated and had all moved as children and together with their families into the Vientiane area in the 1960s or early 1970s. Three of these families settled in Vientiane city and the remaining four in *Baan Naam*.

Second, in the pre-socialist era the Vientiane urban economy was heavily stimulated by American aid. From the mid-1950s through to the 1960s American dollars kept the Vientiane economy booming, albeit artificially, as a direct consequence of the United States' stake in the Lao civil war, which was part and parcel of the wider Vietnam conflict (Brown and Zasloff 1986; Stuart-Fox 1997; Evans 2002; Viliam Phraxayavong 2009; Walsh and Nittana Southiseng 2009: 99). Barber (1979: i) who was working in the Vientiane region in the 1960s writes in this respect about a 'phenomenally rapid cultural and economic transformation'. Apart from the land frontier argument, the war time economy also drew ethnic Lao migrants from the Thai region of *Isaan* across the border into the Vientiane region.

The war time economy also intensified rural-urban relations on the Lao side of the border. In fact, these relations were more intense in the pre-socialist era than in the years after the proclamation of the Lao PDR. Elderly villagers recalled, for example, that it was in the 1950s and 1960s that trade boomed, money increased in importance and that transport connections between *Baan Naam* and Vientiane gradually improved.

> From about the 1950s there were motorised boats between *Baan Naam* and Vientiane and people from the district would go to Vientiane, either on foot or by boat, to sell things in the Vientiane markets. For example, when I was around ten years old I started earning money by walking cattle to or from the markets near Vientiane. Later I would also go to Vientiane to sell agricultural produce in the markets on the outskirts of Vientiane. It was in this way that I earned the money for getting married in 1967. Furthermore, it was in the 1960s that Vientiane traders started coming to *Baan Naam* (on foot) to buy cattle on a regular basis. This led to a considerable inflow of money which villagers used for improving their living conditions. This is when development (*padthanaa*) first came to *Baan Naam*. (Notes from interview with Anu's father who is now in his 60s, 21/5/2008).

The intensity of rural-urban relations in the pre-socialist years is also illustrated by Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black (2004: 38), drawing on Branfman's (1978) work in the villages of Baan Pha Khao and Baan Xa Phang Meuk. These villages were then located in the proximity of Vientiane, and Branfman reported widespread involvement in non-agricultural activities by the rural population. In the 1950s, 84 percent of the adult population in Baan Pha Khau was, for example, found to be employed in non-agricultural

activities and 76 percent in Baan Xa Phang Meuk. However, the vast majority of these villagers participated in non-agricultural employment in addition to working their own fields, and continued to identify themselves as farmers. The prevalence of rural-urban migration, including migration from *Isaan* into the Vientiane region is also observed in numerous other studies referring to the pre-socialist era (see e.g. Ayabe 1961; Kaufman 1964: 11; Branfman 1978: 15; Barber 1979: 105-106; Evans 1990).

A third and final factor affecting migration in the pre-socialist era in the Vientiane region concerns in-migration by villagers displaced by increased violence in particularly the mountainous hinterlands. During the 1960s the internal conflict between the communist *Pathed Lao* and its international communist allies, and the American supported Royal Lao Government intensified and grew increasingly violent. Forced migration in the form of refugee movements and other displaced populations increased particularly rapidly when the American air-raids over Lao soil started in the mid-1960s. Furthermore, these migrations continued well-after bombing campaigns ceased in the early 1970s and continued in the socialist era described below (Brown and Zasloff 1986). Although *Baan Naam* as a village escaped the worst of the violent conflict, individual household histories are nonetheless shaped by this violent past. Household no. 9 and 36 in Table 4.2 are such examples. The migration history of these households further shows that initial war-time displacement may linger on for years to follow.

4.2.2 The socialist era (1975-1986)

After the proclamation of the Lao PDR in 1975 migration and mobility patterns changed dramatically due to the changed economic and political realities. Building a socialist state contributed to an increased control by the state over villagers' mobility. This is by no means unique to the Lao socialist experience, as this has been observed in various socialist states. The motivations of different socialist regimes for controlling mobility and migration were largely the same, either, politically motivated and relating to concerns over national security, and/or, economically motivated and related to programmes of rural collectivisation and discouraging trade (Parish Jr. 1975: 625; Brown and Zasloff 1986: 144; Scott 1998: 213).

The Lao socialist regime also embarked on programmes of rural collectivisation (Evans 1990) which required a stable and sedentary rural population. In addition, as part of efforts to reorganise society along socialist principles things like taking up casual labour in

Vientiane city or travelling there for purposes of (petty) trade were seen as counter-revolutionary and, therefore, actively repressed by the state. Furthermore, security concerns were another important factor for limiting people's mobility. The increase in bureaucracy and constraints on everyday life to which all this contributed has been aptly summarised as follows:

> 'a [Lao] peasant needed up to seven signatures to cross a provincial line, three to move his pig to the next village, and even one to kill a chicken' (Far Eastern Economic Review 1977, IN: Brown and Zasloff 1986: 173).

Similar observations emerged from interviews with older villagers, and this control over people's mobility probably explains the absence of any records of in-migration during the socialist era in the household survey data (see also Table 4.2) for purposes other than marriage:

> …actually, in those days [the socialist era] the [Lao] police did not want any movement, people had to stay in their own village. (Notes from interview with Laddavan's mother who is now in her 40s, 21/5/2008)

Political motivations related to concerns over national security also gave rise to state-directed migration. Village resettlement programmes, which are discussed in more detail below, carried out in the 1980s were mostly inspired by such security concerns and often affected ethnic minority populations whose loyalty to the communist party was questioned.

For a combination of the factors described above, in-migration of Thai families from the Thai region of *Isaan* that was described in the previous section ceased in the early 1970s. In addition, due to Cold War relations a sharp division emerged between capitalist Thailand and its socialist Lao neighbour. Consequentially, all sorts of exchanges and movements across the Mekong River, which were commonplace prior to the socialist era, came under heavy state scrutiny:

> Before [after 1975], if you went to *Baan Fangthai* or elsewhere in Thailand it meant that you were a refugee and you would be sent to a camp in Thailand. Also, if you crossed the border into Thailand in those days it meant that you could not come back home because the police in Lao PDR would catch you if you were to return. My older brother crossed the border in those days and he never came back. He now lives in the United States. (Notes from interview with Buanoi's mother who is now in her 40s, 21/5/2008)

Heavy policing of the Lao-Thai border in the area of *Baan Naam* which started in the socialist era, and is still evident today, was also fuelled by the claim that *Baan Naam* was, and remains, situated on a route used by insurgents. These insurgents launched attacks from bases in Thailand on Lao soil in the decades following the establishment of the Lao PDR, and in some areas into the 2000s.

As Buanoi's mother observes, migration and mobility was not only controlled by the newly established socialist state, the victory of the communist forces also triggered huge uncontrolled populations movements. Importantly, the nearly ten percent of the total population of the new Lao PDR that fled the new Lao regime included about 80 percent of the country's educated and civil servant base (Brown and Zasloff 1986: 193). This left the new Lao government with a near impossible task of running a country virtually without the human resources to do so. Moreover, this massive refugee movement further expanded the ethnic Lao population on the Thai side of the border, adding another dimension to cross-border relations between the populations on both sides of the political divide.[23]

4.2.3 From socialism to post-socialism

> Socialism has come and gone in Laos…The roots it sunk were shallow and they were easily uprooted. (Evans 1995: xi)

Less than a decade after programmes of rural collectivisation were first introduced, they were again abandoned (Evans 2008: 512). Further market-oriented reforms followed from the adoption of the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) at the fourth Party congress in 1986 (Vatthana Pholsena and Banomyong 2006: 27). This led, amongst other things, to the introduction of market-determined pricing of various essentials, a new investment law and privatisation law, and breaking up of sectoral state-monopolies (Than and Tan 1997: 6-7; Rigg 2005a: Table 2.1). These developments implied a further move away from socialism, and should be understood in relation to the global collapse of state-communism.[24]

Evans (1995: xxiii) argues that the most important change for Lao peasants brought about by 'a re-emergence of the market' was 'that it allows the flexibility of the family farm…to fully reassert itself'. In other words, the subsequent increase in mobility and migration should according to Evans in the first place be understood as an inherent dimension of peasant livelihoods, something that was merely temporarily suppressed during the socialist era. Furthermore, Evans (2008) argues that despite some degree of mobility, migration and other extra-local activities, most rural households in the Lao PDR remain primarily oriented to the local community and dependent on the land. Chayanov's work on cyclical

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[23] However, even before this influx of Lao refugees, the total population of ethnic Lao on Thai territory was already much larger than that east of the Mekong River.

[24] The official Party line of explanation for this shift remains however that this is based on a rereading of Marxist-Leninist theory. It is argued that it was a mistake to move towards socialism without passing through capitalism, since 'capitalism comes before socialism' (Somsack Pongkhao 2009). Evans (1995: xv), however rightly observes that this is 'perhaps [an] ingenious (or ingenuous?), rationalisation of its position by a ruling communist party'.

differentiation within the peasantry remains according to Evans (*ibid* 2008), therefore, of greater importance for explaining differences in relative wealth within most Lao villages than the impact of external dynamics.

As discussed in chapter one, Rigg (2005a) views the contemporary manifestation of migration and mobility in rural Lao households through a different interpretive frame than that of Evans. For Rigg, we don't witness a mere reassertion of peasant households. Instead, the involvement of (mostly young) villagers in an extra-local activities through migration and mobility is illustrative of a more profound rural change which has been described as a process of 'deagrarianisation' and has sparked debates about the disappearance of the peasantry (Bernstein and Byres 2001; Bryceson 2002; JoDS 2002; Rigg 2005a).

Rigg's (2005a) argument is not based on the kind of long term anthropological engagement with the Lao peasantry that Evans (1990; 1995; 2008) bases his argument on. In contrast, the conviction of Rigg's (2005a) argument lies in the fact that he complements his primary data collected in a number of Lao villages with a wide range of secondary studies conducted in the Lao PDR and, importantly, with theoretical work on rural change emerging from, amongst other places, neighbouring Thailand. Based on these diverse sources Rigg (2005a: 171) acknowledges that land remains of utmost importance to most Lao households today, and that a process of change is only just starting to emerge, but that 'none the less there is a discernable trend that is in the process of quite fundamentally transforming the structure, functioning, and reach of…the 'livelihood footprint' of households'. For Rigg (2005a) this implies, amongst other things, rethinking the 'rural', which has consequences for understanding rural livelihoods, rural poverty and strategies to address rural poverty and to enhance rural livelihoods. Furthermore, Rigg's reading of the involvement of young Lao in migration also implies that migration is there to stay and that the involvement of some members of rural households in migration is only going to increase. This perspective does not necessarily deny the 'excesses of capitalist development' that Evans (1995: xxix) warns about in the form of human trafficking, yet, the point is that in the overall process of change young people are going to be less tied to the land and become less oriented towards the local community, and increasingly involved in migration and mobility.

The discussion above has so far only focussed on the phenomenon of some household members becoming involved in extra-local activities whilst the household's physical base

in the village remains unaltered. Table 4.2 shows, however, that in the post-socialist era also entire households moved to new localities. This pattern is illustrated by household number 47, 49 and 51 in Table 4.2, which in turn reflects a larger trend of migration from remote rural areas to urban areas or larger villages on the road network (Messerli *et al.* 2008). As the brief notes in 'reasons for migration' in Table 4.2 explain, motivations for household migrations are often economic and have to be understood in relation to processes of uneven development brought about by a transition to the market (Epprecht *et al.* 2008).

Apart from the manifestation of migration and mobility as immanent to either peasant livelihood strategies or to processes of rural change, in the post-socialist era state-orchestrated migration in the form of so-called resettlement programmes have remained important. From the second half of the 1980s internal resettlement in the Lao PDR was increasingly carried out in the name of state-led development and modernisation often with implicit or explicit support from the international development community (Baird and Shoemaker 2007). The development themes attributed by Lao authorities to state orchestrated internal resettlement are diverse and include, amongst other things, state service delivery, combating opium production, addressing security concerns, and to stop the practice of swidden cultivation. Consequentially, a resettlement component can be found in a wide range of Lao policies. To complicate things further, villagers may volunteer to become involved in resettlement programmes but there may also be elements of coercion (Evrard and Goudineau 2004; Rigg 2005a: 96-117; Baird and Shoemaker 2007). In addition, apart from developmental objectives internal resettlement programmes also serve an important function in terms of bringing poorly visible rural populations, often ethnic minority groups, into the space of the state, and thereby allowing the state to assert itself more powerfully (see also: Scott 1998; Evrard and Goudineau 2004; Rigg 2005a; Baird and Shoemaker 2007).

Baan Naam itself was not earmarked as a village that should take up resettled households, yet, as Appendix 8 describes in more detail, it has come to take up a number of households who were involved in failed resettlement programmes. This is illustrated in Table 4.2 by household number 37, 52, 53, 54, and 55.

4.3 Qualitative changes in migration and mobility in Baan Naam

The previous section has mainly focussed on the major political and economic developments underlying changes in migration and mobility patterns observed in the Vientiane region over the past five decades. This section turns the analytical lens to qualitative changes in migration and mobility patterns. It focuses in this respect particularly on qualitative changes in migration as observed across two generations, comparing migration and mobility in the pre-socialist and socialist era when the current cohort of adults were considered children and youth with the current era.

When introducing the two neighbouring villages of *Baan Naam* (the research village) and *Baan Fangthai* its nearest neighbour on the Thai side of the Mekong River in chapter one it was already stressed that *Baan Fangthai* is in many ways part and parcel of *Baan Naam's* wider social environment. Villagers attend each other's festivals, relations of kin run across the geo-political border, *Baan Naam's* population visit markets and trade fairs in *Baan Fangthai*, etc (see for a similar case:Lyttleton and Amorntip Amarapibal 2002). In other words, when cross-border mobility and migration between *Baan Naam* and *Baan Fangthai* started, according to villagers, to re-emerge in the 1990s this was by no means a new phenomenon. In fact, cross-border mobility had merely been temporarily suppressed during the decade of high socialism.

4.3.1 Changes in the direction of migration flows

Cross-border movements between communities on both sides of the Mekong River are certainly not newly emerging, yet the characteristics of cross-border movements in the post-socialist era differ from earlier forms in some important ways. First, diverging paths of development in Thailand and the Lao PDR altered economic relations and reversed the direction of migration. Migrants from the Thai region of *Isaan* headed not any longer for the Vientiane plains but for urban centres in the Thai North-east and beyond, a pattern soon followed by migrants from the Lao side of the border. Post World War II modernisation programmes on the Thai side of the border were of a capitalist nature and were in the underdeveloped *Isaan* region in part carried out as a strategy against lingering communist insurgents. These developments took for an important part the form of heavy investment in road infrastructure and the introduction of commercial agriculture in deforested areas (Long 1966; Wilson 1966; Fuglie 1991; Cropper *et al.* 1999; Sparkes 2005: 15). Although the region of *Isaan* continued to remain 'lagging' at a Thai national level, the economic

progress made this way compared favourably with the situation on the Lao side of the Mekong River where a decade of high-socialism achieved anything but a vibrant economy. Hence, from the 1970s onwards several towns and cities in *Isaan* had become far more important as regional centres of economic gravity than Vientiane or other urban areas on the Lao side of the border. This dramatic and rapid transformation on the Thai side of the border against the relative stagnation of economic development in *Baan Naam* is well-captured by Suchai's father:

> Before [around 1975] *Baan Fangthai* was just like *Baan Naam*; on both sides people moved around by cart and buffalo… I think *Baan Fangthai* started to change from around more than 20 years ago. At that time civilisation/prosperity (*khwaamchaleun*) and development (*padthanaa*) started arriving in *Baan Fangthai*. When I saw what had changed I was very surprised. *Baan Fangthai* was not longer *Baan Fangthai* anymore [as he knew it] (and laughs). (Excerpt from interview with Suchai's father, 22/5/2008)

Due to impact of decades of radically different approaches to modernisation, even cross-border mobility for purposes of trade, attending village festivals and trade-fairs had become increasingly a one-directional affair. This is well illustrated by accounts from local officials at the nearest authorised border-crossing point to *Baan Naam* some 15km upstream (crossing the border from *Baan Naam* is illegal, albeit widespread). This border-crossing point is open on two days a week. On these days, local officials claim that on average some 100 Lao citizens cross the Mekong River into Thailand, but only about 10 Thai nationals make the journey in the opposite direction (interview notes, 26/9/2007).

4.3.2 From crossing a river to crossing a border

Closely related to the economic developments described above are a series of political changes. State-led modernisation in the Lao PDR and in Thailand was not only based on economic goals it also embodied nationalist objectives (Brown and Zasloff 1986: 231-232; Keyes 1991). In addition, these programmes altered village-state relations in significant ways. Rural road construction may, for example, facilitate market integration. By the same token, however, it also enables the state 'to infiltrate and dominate geographical space and impose itself on the people inhabiting that space' (Rigg, 2002: 619, IN: Rigg 2005a: 120).

Through the various manifestations of state-led modernisation programmes villages like *Baan Naam* and *Baan Fangthai* became increasingly tied into the nationalist frame of the state. Furthermore, the power of the state became more firmly located inside of the village (Brown and Zasloff 1986: 219; Hirsch 1989: 54), exemplified by, for example, the presence of military and police personnel, mass-organisations, mass-education and various

other state elements such as bureaucratic procedures and regulations. This has contributed to a stronger sense of national identity amongst the ethnic Lao population on both sides of the border, a sense of being part of this bigger, abstract entity of the nation-state. Ethnic identity becomes then cast within the frame of the nation-state. Gabrowsky (1995: 107, IN: Evans 1999a: 29) argues, for example, that the ethnic Lao from *Isaan* 'increasingly identify themselves as *khon Isan* within Thailand, and not as Lao'. In addition, and as described in detail in chapter eight, the increased presence of the state in rural Lao PDR triggered a similar process on the Lao side of the border. Hence, whilst on both sides of the border the village and ethnicity have remained important markers of identity, this has become embedded in an overarching but in many ways rather abstract frame of national identity.

4.3.3 The emergence of work as a motivation for cross-border mobility

Cross-border interaction between villages on both sides of the Mekong River did in the pre-socialist era generally not include work. In fact, older villagers claimed that in the decades prior to 1975 village life on both sides of the border had been largely the same and, therefore, there had been little reason to cross the border into *Isaan* for anything else than casual visits or petty trade. However, in the 1990s work on a migrant and commuting basis became an important reason why villagers on the Lao side of the border went to Thailand:

> Before (prior to 1975) people did not travel a lot like today. People would only occasionally go beyond their village. For example, when I was *pen sao* (a maturing girl) I never went to *Baan Fangthai* as young girls do today. However, some other villagers would go to *Baan Fangthai* in those days. They would go there to exchange or sell their agricultural produce. (Notes from interview with Laddavan's mother who is now in her 40s, 21/5/2008)

> Then [before 1975] people did not go to *Baan Fangthai* to work like they do today. No, they would only go there to visit or buy some food or clothing. (Notes from interview with Anu's father who is now in his 60s, 21/5/2008)

Work on the Thai side of the border was, and is often done on a commuting basis. However, the generally good quality and extensive road network on the Thai side of the border connects *Isaan* villages with regional centres in north-eastern Thailand and also with the commercial centres of central Thailand and the international arena. This road network has facilitated migration by *Isaan* migrants to the towns and cities of Thailand and also abroad (Jones and Tieng Pardthaisong 1999; Mills 1999), and is increasingly doing the same for Lao migrants. Furthermore, due to the Lao PDR's geography and the generally

poorer state of roads it's for Lao migrants often easier and cheaper to cross the border into Thailand than to migrate to Vientiane in search for work.

4.3.4 Changes and continuities in the mobility of sons and daughters

The notes of the interview with Laddavan's mother presented above also illustrate important changes in mobility and migration from a gender perspective. Laddavan's mother's account is representative of stories of other older women in *Baan Naam* and it resonates with quantitative observations showing that young women outnumber young men amongst Lao migrants below the age of 18 (MoLSW *et al.* 2003).

A generation ago young women would seldom leave the village before getting married. Instead, they worked the family fields and in the slack season and evenings they would weave and do embroidery. The quilts, pillows, sheets, and items of clothing young women produced were the things a girl would take with her into marriage. Of at least equal importance was the degree of diligence displayed by the quantity and quality of these materials. Adolescent girls thereby demonstrated their capabilities as a prospective wife (Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black 2004: 118-125). Nowadays, older women argued, none of the young girls makes any of these items herself but they buy them instead. This buying is often done with money adolescent girls earn by doing wage- or day-labour in Thailand. Weaving and embroidery skills are thus largely displaced by ownership of disposable funds and the capacity to earn as illustrations of the prospective qualities of a hard-working and diligent wife, and also that of a dutiful daughter (Mills 1997).

In contrast with young women, contemporary involvement of young men in migration and mobility is more of a continuity of early patterns as some degree of migration and mobility has been a traditional feature of adolescent life amongst young Lao men prior to entering marriage. This took the form of entering the Buddhist Sangha or *pai thiaw*, going around/travelling, (Kirsch 1966; Keyes 1986). From a historical perspective, feminine identity was thus developed by staying in the village, whereas migration and mobility contributed positively to the formation of a masculine identity. The sanctioning of the involvement in migration and mobility by adolescent men also relates to uxorilocal residence patterns amongst the ethnic Lao and the practice of paying a bride price. Older men in *Baan Naam* were, for example, keen to emphasise how they had earned the money for the bride price themselves through wage labour in Vientiane or through involvement in trade. Contemporary involvement of boys and young men in migrant or other extra-local

work can thus be seen as a continuation of traditional patterns, whereas the opposite is true for girls and young women (Mills 1997: 38-39; Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black 2004: 37).

4.3.5 Lao and Thai childhoods: An intimate relation of interdependence

Different paths of state-led modernisation between the Lao PDR and Thailand did not only produce very different material circumstances on both sides of the border as discussed above, it also altered constructs and lived experiences of childhood between Thailand and the Lao PDR.

For example, on the Thai side of the border, growing up with few siblings has increasingly become the norm as the total fertility rate declined sharply from more than six children per woman in the early 1960s to less than replacement levels (less than two) in 2000, without dramatic regional variation at a regional aggregate level (Vipan Prachuabmoh and Preeya Mithranon 2003: 37). In contrast, in the Lao PDR most recent provincial total fertility rates vary between 3.8 and 5.8 (Government of Lao PDR and Steering Committee for Census of Population and Housing 2006: 102). For Baker (2007: 169-172), this demographic revolution in Thailand is one of the factors underlying the observed 'dramatic reduction in the number of Thai children in the labour force… [which] coincides with an increasing number of children continuing with their education'. This is, however, not to say that Thai children and youth have lost their productive function entirely or to overlook continuing disparities in educational participation within Thailand (Amara Soonthorndhada *et al.* 2005).

Furthermore, despite the qualitative gap between childhood experiences on both sides of the border Lao childhoods have also changed dramatically. For example, Lao census data show that net school enrolment rates have increased considerably over the past decade, and particularly for girls. Yet, these enrolment rates peak at age 11-12 at about 90% after which they quickly drop to less than 50% for girls at age 15 and for boys at age 17 (Government of Lao PDR and Steering Committee for Census of Population and Housing 2006: 52, 66). On the Thai side of the border though, being in full-time education well-beyond primary education has become the norm and is illustrated by relatively high national gross secondary school enrolment rates of 69 percent for males, and 72 percent for females (UNICEF n.d.).

Subsequently, fulltime involvement in various forms of work after, or before, finishing primary school has become relatively rare on the Thai side of the border whilst fairly common on the Lao side of the border. This qualitative difference in childhoods on both sides of the Mekong River was well-observed by villagers:

> They [people on the Thai side of the border] need Lao labour since over there the young people are not available for this work [talking about transplanting rice]. For example, over there *dek noi* [lit. children, but here referring to teenagers] cannot do farm work, but here *dek noi* can do this work. In fact, over there they prefer *dek noi* rather than adult (*phuu nyai*) workers from the Lao side of the border, because adults tend to complain when the sun is too hot and like to take a break when they get tired, whereas *dek noi* work quickly because they just want to finish, get the money, and go home. (Notes from discussion with Laddavanh's mother; RD, 9-11/7/2008)
>
> I don't know exactly why this family hired a Lao girl, but I heard them [employers] say that it is very difficult to find a Thai girl for this work. (Notes from interview with Khik in Udon Thani, Thailand, where she works as a domestic for a Thai family; Khik was about 17 years old at the time of interview on 31/3/2008)

The notes further illustrate that the differences in constructs of childhood are in some ways complementary. On the Thai side of the border households generally have fewer children available for various productive and reproductive tasks in the household due to lower fertility rates and since children may be staying away from the natal household for reasons of study or work. In addition, Rigg (2006: 189-191) observes that both Thai parents and their children have come to view agriculture as a low status occupation, something best to be avoided in terms of future aspiration but also as an activity at present. Furthermore, economic differences between Thailand and the Lao PDR create a situation in which many Thai families are able to afford hiring Lao labour, which is often considerably cheaper than hiring Thai nationals, as Khik also alludes to above. Moreover, in relation to domestic work young Lao domestics not only 'substitute for their Thai counterparts…in terms of labour, but also in terms of the reclamation of traditional subordination', which Thai domestic workers increasingly resist (Raya Muttarak 2004: 520). In short, different demographic regimes, different economic realities, different views on agricultural work, and different constructs of childhood, create a form of intimate interdependence in which young Lao migrants fill many of the labour gaps of their Thai peers. Importantly, this relation of interdependence is smoothened by cultural-linguistic similarities between Thai and Lao nationals, which facilitate not only communication, but also allow for the sort of ideological continuity Raya Muttarak (*ibid* 2004) refers to above in relation to the employment of migrant domestic workers. This gels with Baker's (2007: 175) concluding observations in a study of child labour in contemporary Thailand. He observes that the phenomenon of working children and youth may not have disappeared from Thai soil, yet it increasingly concerns foreign youngsters and not Thai nationals.

4.3.6 Of modernity and tradition: Lao-Thai relations

> Around 1995 you could go to *Baan Fangthai* again and people started visiting their relatives again. You could cross the border because at that time there was freedom/liberation (*podpôôi*) and Lao and Thailand were again like 'older brother and younger brother' (*baan phii, müüang nôông*).[25] (Notes from interview with Hang's father who is in his 40s, 23/5/2008)

The expression *baan phii, müüang nôông* used by Hang's father above literally means 'the home of the elder brother, the land of the younger brother' and is an expression widely used in Thailand to describe Lao-Thai relations (Vatthana Pholsena and Banomyong 2006: 60).[26] This expression conveys a sense of relatedness based on a range of cultural and linguistic similarities between the population of the two countries, and specifically between the ethnic Lao of *Isaan* (north-eastern Thailand) and the ethnic Lao living in the Lao PDR (Evans 1999a; Enfield 2002). However, reference to kin relations conveys more than mere relatedness. As discussed in more detail in chapter five, in the Thai and Lao context sibling relations are apart from relations of relatedness also relations of hierarchy. In the expression *baan phii, müüang nôông* the Lao (from the Lao PDR) and the Lao PDR as a nation state is generally considered to represent the inferior party; the younger brother (Mayoury Ngaosyvathn and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn 1994; Thongchai Winichakul 2000: 536; Khien Theeravit and Adisorn Semyaem 2002; Vatthana Pholsena and Banomyong 2006: 60-61).

Present-day Lao-Thai relations can be qualified as relatively good, particularly taking account of the problematic relations during the Cold War and violent border conflicts in the late 1980s. However, underlying feelings of inferiority and seniority have not evaporated and resurface time and again (see e.g. Khien Theeravit and Adisorn Semyaem 2002). This adds an important dimension to understanding migration in the Lao-Thai context, ranging from Lao-Thai bilateral negotiations concerning migration policies to everyday interactions between Thai employers and their Lao migrant personnel (see e.g. Khien Theeravit and Adisorn Semyaem 2002; Raya Muttarak 2004; Kessarawan Nilvarangkul *et al.* 2006: 55). The latter is discussed further in chapter eight.

In addition, migration by Lao nationals to Thailand is also shaped by the dichotomous construction of tradition and modernity associated with the Lao PDR and Thailand

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[25] The term '*podpôôi*' is usually used to refer to the victory of the Lao communist forces culminating in the proclamation of the Lao PDR in 1975. Interestingly, Hang's father departs from this common usage and instead uses the term '*podpôôi*' to refer to the actual cease of fighting and the subsequent return of relative peace. This only happened many years after 1975.

[26] The preferred Lao language expression is *baan kai, müüang khiang*. This draws on the historical baan-müüang relation, characterised by adjacency (*kaikhiang*) which refers to cultural-linguistic and even kin relations, as well as physical proximity (personal communication with Rob Murdoch, 21/2/2010).

respectively. Evans (1999a: 30) argues, for example, that Lao from the Lao PDR often regard Thai culture as representing 'global culture', and admire it for its sophistication and level of development. In contrast, the Lao PDR is often regarded as embodying tradition. This may be positively interpreted such as in the construction of the Lao from the Lao PDR as 'the protectors of real, traditional Buddhist values which the Thai have lost' (*ibid* 1999a: 30). But it also comes with deep-seated historical connotations of the Lao relative to the Thai as backward and lacking civilisation (Thongchai Winichakul 2000: 536). Contemporary studies on migration take up this theme and often argue that it is precisely the unattractiveness and limited opportunities of traditional life versus the bright lights of the city and Thailand that are amongst the factors pushing and pulling young Lao villagers to Lao towns and across the border to Thailand:

> Lured by city life with abundant consumer goods, bored by subsistence farm work, which does not generate enough cash, the young Lao from the countryside leave their home… (Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2003: 54)

Aspirations related to modern ways of life, no doubt shape individual migration decision-making processes concerning young migrants. This theme has indeed received considerable attention in the literature (Koning 1997; Mills 1997; Mills 1999). Furthermore, Hirsch (1989: 50-51) observes that what is regarded as development 'is very much a consumerist, urban-oriented side of development'.[27] The subsequent implication is 'that prosperity lies in an urban lifestyle' (*ibid* 1989) and that villages are, therefore, far from developed since villages lack urban characteristics (for a similar line of argument in relation to spirituality see: Thongchai Winichakul 2000). In addition, villages are also far from development geographically speaking, as villages are at a physical distance from the urban centres of development. In other words, in order to participate in modernity it appears that young villagers must leave their rural localities for urban areas.

Hirsch's analysis of the Thai material fits the Lao context, as common Lao expressions like 'development has come' (*padthanaa maa lèw*) and 'development has arrived' (*padthanaa*

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[27] Here it is important to stress that the Lao language terms like *khwaamkaonhaa* (progress), *khwaamchaleun* (civilisation, prosperity, development), *siivilai* (civilised, developed), and *kaanpadthanaa* (development) are in the contemporary Lao PDR in everyday and official speech often used interchangeably and in combination with one and other. This is similarly the case in Thailand and in Thai language (Thongchai Winichakul 2000: 531). Moreover, in both contexts these terms generally carry positive connotations and refer to developments or modernities that have made life more comfortable, such as improved roads, electricity, electric apparatus, mobile phones, waged employment, air-conditioning, motorised transport, concrete buildings, etc. This interpretation of development, progress and modernity is indeed closely associated with profits, consumerism, technology, and physical science, and seldom are these terms employed in relation to the brand of development that has become increasingly popular in the NGO sector under the name of 'local development', 'community development' or 'participatory development'.

hôôd lèw) illustrate. These expressions further underscore Hirsch's argument that development, in this sense, is not an indigenous process originating from rural communities, but comes/arrives from elsewhere, presumably from urban areas, and is delivered by urbanites (or foreign experts). However, expressions like 'development has come' also suggest that it is not a necessity to leave rural localities in order to participate in modern life. Indeed, it expresses a sense that, with some patience, things will change and that rural life has become more comfortable and modern. Moreover, and as chapter eight sets out in more detail once young villagers arrive in urban areas their relative lack of sophistication, whether real or perceived, only becomes more pronounced. For at least some rural youngsters waiting for development to arrive in rural areas is, therefore, not necessarily the most unattractive of options.

4.4   Migration policies in the contemporary Lao PDR

So far, the discussion has not addressed the issue of migration policies. This is for an important part due to the fact that in the Lao PDR for long policies either aimed at keeping people in place, or moving people to a particular place (resettlement). Migration and mobility of a cross-border nature in particular to Thailand was not in any sense addressed by the Lao government. In fact, the political sensitivity surrounding the act of crossing the border into Thailand ensured that till the 21st century even raising the issue formally in policy debates was a rare and delicate event.

However, with the turn of the millennium things have gradually changed, much due to global shifts in the migration discourse. Over the past decade, cross-border migration and mobility between the Lao PDR and Thailand has started to receive much attention, as international migration has across the globe become an important policy issue based on an odd combination of motivations. Security concerns on the one hand and a growing conviction on the other hand that migration, if properly managed, may actually benefit both receiving and sending nations (De Haan 2006; World Bank 2006a; Datta 2009; World Bank 2009).

Today, the issue of cross-border migration and mobility to Thailand has remained a delicate issue. However, it has nonetheless become an important policy area for governmental and non-governmental actors in the Lao PDR. This policy area tends to have two faces. Cross-border migration is either presented as an issue of human trafficking which needs to be combated, or as an issue of irregular migration which needs to be

brought under state control. In contrast, internal migration, whilst widespread and also sensitive, is in the Lao PDR only just beginning to attract some attention from a policy perspective (Somsack Pongkhao 2008b; Ekaphone Phouthonesy 2009a; Ekaphone Phouthonesy 2009b). This resonates with international observations, in which the issue of internal migration has also been identified as an under-addressed field (De Haan 2006).

The following sections analyse how the policy agendas of regularisation of migration and that of combating of human trafficking have developed at a national level in the Lao context, but also how these policies are interpreted locally and made compatible with other interests.

4.4.1 Regularisation of migration: Macro and micro perspectives

As the Lao PDR embarked on a politics of regional integration, best illustrated by the country's accession to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997, it became for the Lao government increasingly difficult to ignore evidence of irregular Lao migrants working in Thailand, or to condemn it as unpatriotic behaviour concerning only few isolated individuals. Hard evidence on the magnitude of the phenomenon was documented through Thai rounds of registration of migrant workers that were first conducted in 1996. Lao authorities had thus little other choice than to accept cross-border migration of Lao nationals as a reality and to enter bi-lateral discussions on migration as one of the consequences of a wider politico-economic agenda of regional integration. Moreover, the remaining conservative perspective on the pros and cons of migration on part of the Lao authorities, which stem primarily from nationalist considerations, fell increasingly out of tune with dominant global perspectives on migration. In the post Cold War world, migration became increasingly regarded as a silver bullet for development:

> …movement of labour – as part of a well-functioning integrated labour market – would lead to the elimination of disparities and equalization (De Haan 2006: 1)

> Allowing the freer flow of skilled and unskilled labor across national border would probably do more to reduce poverty in developing countries than any other single policy or aid initiative (World Bank 2009: 161)

In light of these developments a general framework for migration regulation was agreed in 2002 in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on employment cooperation between the Royal Thai Government and the government of the Lao PDR. The aim of this MoU was twofold: first, to regularise undocumented Lao migrant workers already working in Thailand through processes of registration, identification and the issuing of temporary passports and working permits. The second aim was to introduce 'a system in which

private recruitment companies recognized by each government will help match labor demand and supply with respect to the immigration and labor laws of both countries, and international labor conventions' (World Bank 2006a: 64). These are the recruitment agencies referred to in the following chapters.

The ambivalence with which cross-border migration is formally embraced in the Lao PDR is evident from the legal documents that set out the scope and restrictions applying to Lao recruitment agencies (discussed in: Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2007; Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008). Sending Lao migrant workers through formal channels of recruitment to Thailand is, for example, in Prime Minister Decree 68/2002 (2002c: Article 1) celebrated as a means of expanding the quantity and variety of work places available to Lao workers and as a means by which the Lao labour force is upgraded through acquiring new skills, knowledge and expertise. Participation in migration is, therefore, as long as it goes through authorised channels like recruitment agencies, made compatible with existing agendas of modernisation and national development. On the other hand, various limitations that apply to the recruitment of Lao migrant workers illustrate that these apparent gains have not by-passed the lingering sensitivity intrinsic to Lao-Thai relations. A case in point is the prohibition to recruit Lao workers for unskilled jobs with little dignity such as cleaners, domestic workers and porters (2002b: Part 2), despite the fact that greatest demand for migrant labour in Thailand concerns precisely this sort of work:

> Access to cheap labor is important for labor-intensive industries in Thailand to remain competitive, and with the diminishing appeal of the 'dirty, difficult, and dangerous' jobs to Thai workers, Thai industries continue to need and attract workers from Lao PDR, Cambodia and Myanmar (World Bank 2006a: 14).

At the level of the village, the ambivalent official position on migration is illustrated by the way local authorities in *Baan Naam* relate it to another policy, that of cultural villages. The cultural village scheme is an awkward frame of modernisation and nationalism. In order to become a cultural village, a village needs to 'reduce poverty and preserve traditional practices and festivals' (Xayxana Leukai 2008b). However, in order to become a cultural village, first a minimum number of households must be declared 'households of culture'; for this, they must meet five criteria: 'permanent housing, family democracy, the teaching of children to respect their parents and elders, earning an income without breaking regulations, and participation in village development' (Xayxana Leukai 2008a). Although this cultural programme has been pursued by the Lao Ministry of Information and Culture (MIC) for some years, it has since 2008 been given prime political attention. As a result,

Lao MIC data from 2008 show that nation-wide a total of 124,538 households were declared as households of culture, accounting for 12.9 percent of the total population, and a total of 409 villages were declared 'villages of culture', accounting for 3.8 percent of the total population (2008b).

In 2009 village authorities also started awarding households in *Baan Naam* the status of 'household of culture'. When talking about the interpretation of selection criteria of cultural families with the vice-village head of *Baan Naam* he explained that having children involved in migrant work in Thailand was in principle not an obstacle for becoming a cultural family as long as these children had done so lawfully by migrating through recruitment companies. He further added that migration by children to Thailand through a recruitment company, in fact, contributed positively to the household's chances of becoming a 'household of culture' since remittances added to the household income, thereby, improving the household's position to meet the minimum income requirement for becoming a household of culture. He stressed, however, that in case migrant children started causing problems, or started dressing inappropriately upon their return to *Baan Naam* they would thereby jeopardise their family status as a household of culture (from interview with vice-village head, 15/3/2009).[28]

Ambivalence on the position of local authorities on cross-border employment was also observed in relation to the widespread practice of commuting for day labour to the Thai village of *Baan Fangthai* and surroundings. As *Baan Naam* is not an official border crossing point, crossing the Mekong River from *Baan Naam* into *Baan Fangthai* is an illegal activity, as is taking up day labour on Thai soil without proper documentation. Although the village headman of *Baan Naam* claimed that cross-border movement between *Baan Naam* and *Baan Fangthai* has become more strictly monitored since 2005 as part of an overall Lao government strategy to address the issue of uncontrolled border-crossing (RD, 27/2/2008), the phenomenon has remained widespread and actual arrests and fining are relatively rare. The latter is for an important part due to constant bribing of Lao and Thai border controllers by local boat men.

Cross-border day labour is an important source of additional income for many households in *Baan Naam*, and shipping work teams across the Mekong the main livelihood for a number of boat-owning households on the Mekong River banks. Hence, strictly enforcing

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[28] Examples named were causing fights, excessive drinking, gambling, boys and men wearing earrings and wearing their hair long, and girls and women wearing short skirts.

official policy would make the village head extremely unpopular. His approach is, therefore, one of constantly balancing local realities against orders received from higher levels as is illustrated by the following note:

> On one of my first days in *Baan Naam,* the *naaybaan* announced over the village speaker system a high level official visit to a neighbouring village. Since the officials would pass through *Baan Naam* villagers were told to tidy the village, but also, to refrain from the illegal practice of crossing the Mekong River into Thailand for the coming few days (RD, 8/10/2007).

A more powerful voice against the widespread and illegal practice of cross-border day labour than that of the Lao state comes from within the village. Some wealthy land-holding families in *Baan Naam* depend on hiring labour during peak times in the agricultural calendar. Since these farmers grow virtually the same crops as the farmers on the Thai side of the border, who also depend on Lao day labour, they find that they are competing with Thai farmers over the hiring of day labour from *Baan Naam*. As a result, wealthy farmers in *Baan Naam* have to pay a day wage that at least comes close to the wage that is paid on the Thai side of the border. Failing to do so results in a shortage of day labourers, which is especially true during times of peak demand for labour. Although clearly an economic issue, discontent about this reality is not expressed by the larger land-holders in *Baan Naam* in economic terms, but in moral terms. The difficulty of mobilising sufficient day labour is by these farmers put down to a decline in village morality and lack of reliability of fellow villagers. They argue that villagers prefer to work in *Baan Fangthai* for money above 'helping out' fellow villagers. These larger landholders therefore press for tighter border controls. Moreover, they subtly embed this in narratives of national development, not dissimilar from the justification of introducing labour recruitment agencies, by arguing that working on the Thai side of the border, instead of doing local wage labour, negatively affects agricultural production on the Lao side of the border which undermines Lao national development (RD, 27/2/2008).

Underneath these practices and rationalisations there is another aspect that needs attention. Migration into *Baan Naam*, particularly by settlers from other ethnic groups and without any pre-existing ties to the village has altered *Baan Naam* as a community. These new-comers by and large fall outside of any existing moral community in *Baan Naam*. Hence, for these newly arrived households commuting to *Baan Fangthai* and day labouring in Thailand does not involve any moral compromise as some of the larger landholders are keen to emphasise. In addition, since many of the new-comers own very little land day

labour and cross-border employment is for them a particularly important livelihood strategy.

4.4.2 Human trafficking as a migration discourse

> The beauty of trafficking, constructed as a problem of organized transnational crime…is that it apparently presents a form of forced migration that simultaneously involves the violation of the human rights of the 'trafficked' person *and* a threat to national sovereignty and security. (O'Connell Davidson 2005: 69)

The MoU on employment cooperation between the Lao and Thai government was in 2005 followed by another MoU between the two governments, this time on combating human trafficking. Like the MoU on employment cooperation the MoU on combating human trafficking also reflects global trends since the issue of human trafficking became an issue of global concern at the turn of the 21st century (Laczko 2005; O'Connell Davidson 2005: 66). Moreover, in international reports on human trafficking the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) is frequently singled out as a trafficking hotspot (Economic and Social Commission for the Asian Pacific (ESCAP) 2000; International Labour Office 2003: 29), particularly in relation to the trafficking of children, which as explained in chapter two refers to young people below 18 years of age.

The United States has been a main actor in globalising the human trafficking agenda. Under the Bush administration it not only became a major funder of anti-trafficking initiatives across the globe (Goździak 2008), but also put itself into the role of global anti-trafficking monitor. As part of the United States' national anti-trafficking activities, the US State Department was appointed to 'develop and issue annual reports on the situation of human trafficking in every other country deemed [by the United States] to have a significant problem in this area' (Gallagher 2007: 1). These *Trafficking in Persons* reports (TIP reports) have been tremendously important in numerous countries across the globe, not in the least since:

> Under the Act [United States 2000, Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act], the US will not, as a matter of policy, provide non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance to any government that does not comply with the minimum standards [set out in the Act] and that is not making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance (Sec. 10a). In addition, such countries will also face US opposition to their seeking and obtaining funds from multilateral financial institutions including the World Bank and the IMF (Sec. 110(d)(1)(B)) (Gallagher 2007: 4)

Largely due to this sort of global and regional pressure the trafficking narrative also entered the Lao policy arena, and anti-trafficking programmes started to be implemented. Molland (2005: 27), a long time observer of the trafficking discourse in the Lao PDR counted 'over [a] dozen trafficking projects' in the Lao PDR in 2005 and noted that very

few were more than five years old. Since 2005 the human trafficking narrative has only become more pervasive. For example, a 'national human trafficking plan' has been drawn, which is expected to be 'incorporated as part of the government's 11 priority plans for its 111 major national development projects' (Panyasith Thammavongsa 2007). The pervasiveness of the human trafficking narrative is also illustrated by Table 4.3. It shows that a total of 35 different organisations are involved in anti-trafficking initiatives in the Lao PDR, including 8 Lao governmental bodies, 11 IGOs and ten INGOs.

Table 4.3: Parties involved in anti-trafficking initiatives in the Lao PDR (Data obtained from UNIAP, 2009)

Category	Organisation
Lao Government Bodies (8)	1. Lao Bar Association; 2. Lao Federation of Trade Unions; 3. Lao Women's Union; 4. Lao Revolutionary Youth Union; 5. Ministry of Foreign Affairs; 6. Ministry of Justice; 7. Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare; 8. Ministry of Public Security
IGOs (11)	1. Asian Development Bank (ADB); 2. International Organisation for Migration (IOM); 4. International Labour Organisation (ILO) 4. Lao Red Cross; 5. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); 6. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); 7. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); 8. United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP); 9. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); 10. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); 11. United Nations Regional Taskforce on Mobility and HIV (UNRTF)
NGOs (10)	1. AFESIP; 2. CARE International; 3. Child Wise; 4. Concern Worldwide; 5. Friends International; 6. Norwegian Church Aid; 7. Oxfam Quebec; 8. Save the Children Australia; 9. Village Focus International; 10. World Vision
Lao Non-profit organisations (1)	1. Poverty Reduction and Development Association
Other (5)	1. Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project (ARTIP; Australian Government/AUSAID); 2. French Embassy; 3. Australian Federal Police; 4. Theun-Hinboune Power Company; 5. Nam Theun 2 Power Company
TOTAL:	**35 organisations involved in anti-trafficking initiatives in the Lao PDR**

The human trafficking discourse may at an international level primarily be concerned with issues of human rights and combating transnational organised crime, international discourses nonetheless becomes 'indigenized' (Appadurai 1996: 32) at national and local levels. At the national level the human trafficking discourse provides, for example, additional tools for combating irregular migration, possibly quite unrelated to any genuine concern about trafficking per se (Sharma 2003: 58; O'Connell Davidson 2005: 69).

This line of thought finds support in the observation that the pervasiveness of the anti-trafficking agenda in terms of programming and in the policy sphere exist despite reliable figures on the magnitude of the phenomenon (Gallagher 2007). Moreover, such concerns about the actual knowledge base of human trafficking are not mere accusations, but in fact shared by key actors in the anti-trafficking industry in the Greater Mekong Sub-region such as the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP):[29]

> Even after nearly ten years of attention to human trafficking, estimates of the number of human trafficking victims are very limited and generally lack empirical merit … the counter-trafficking community has yet to come up with reliable methodologies for getting those numbers (UNIAP 2008).

Similar to the Lao national level, also at the level of the household, and the level of the individual young migrant, the human trafficking discourse may be manipulated to serve particular ends. For parents, the human trafficking narrative may prove a powerful tool to convince children, and particularly daughters, to remain in the natal household and thereby keeping control over them. For young migrants on the other hand the human trafficking narrative provides the language to present oneself as a victim of trafficking who is pitied rather than as an irregular migrant subject to prosecution (for a similar argument in relation to child prostitution see Montgomery 2007). In addition, by seasoning the migrant experience with the familiar language of exploitation particularly young male migrants are able to disguise the fact that they may have spent their migratory earnings whilst away and have, therefore, returned with only little or no money for their relatives in the village.

Lastly, an anti-trafficking discourse which stresses young villagers' naivety and depicts stories about extra-local employment opportunities, including stories from trusted relatives, as probable lies (see e.g. UNICEF and MoLSW 2004) offers villagers very few alternatives. In such a context, encouraging early marriage may well constitute one of the few feasible household-level anti-trafficking strategies as was observed in one household in *Baan Naam*, albeit probably not one that was intended by the anti-trafficking agencies. Tunkeo, who studies in Vientiane at the National University, explained, for example, that her younger sister was by her parents encouraged into marriage at the age of 16 or 17 because her parents regarded their last born daughter as somewhat naïve, which they feared would make her an easy prey for human traffickers. An early marriage, the parents reasoned, would be a protective act in the sense that it ensured that their youngest daughter

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[29] UNIAP was establishment in 2000 in order to facilitate a stronger and more coordinated anti-trafficking response in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. As a key agent in the anti-trafficking industry it created a competition to identify research proposals able to provide badly needed information. It is from the UNIAP 'competition' web pages that this quote is lifted (UNIAP 2008).

wouldn't be lured by any attractive employment prospects as marriage effectively tied her to the village (Tunkeo, 10/2/2008).

4.4.3 Regularisation of migration and combating trafficking: Two sides of the same coin?

> At the moment the government doesn't want people to go to Thailand, but before [around ten years ago] it was easy. Today it is more difficult to go since there are more police… Also, now there is the bridge in Vientiane to go to Thailand which means you should not cross the border by yourself anymore as we did before. (Excerpt from interview with Buanoi's mother, 21/5/2008)

> These days it is more difficult to go and work in Thailand than before. Before [around fifteen years ago] there were no police to check documents so you could just go. And, in case you were caught by the Thai police you would first try to convince them that you were from *Isaan*. If they didn't believe this you would pay the police only 200 or 300 Baht and they would let you go. These days, however, you cannot do this anymore. If the police catch you without documents they will put you in jail. (Notes from interview with Nom and Khik's father, 15/3/2008. Khik's father has worked repeatedly in Thailand in the 1990s. He first went around 1990)

The two interview notes above illustrate two paradoxes. First, over recent years the Lao and Thai governments have vastly increased the number of official border crossings, yet Buanoi's mother argues that crossing the border into Thailand has nonetheless become more difficult as illegal border-crossing points have become more heavily patrolled by the state. Second, over recent years the Lao and Thai government have developed policies to facilitate regular migrant work for Lao nationals in Thailand. This suggests that working in Thailand for Lao migrants has become easier, yet this only holds for regular migrants, whereas the opposite is the case for irregular Lao migrants.

These paradoxes can in part be explained by the complementary effects of efforts to regularise migration and to combat human trafficking since both policy frames amount to a regulated and selective migration regime. Anti-trafficking policies as well as policies aiming to bring irregular migration into formal channels lead to greater border control since continued undocumented migration undermines efforts at regulation. Furthermore, the assumption in anti-trafficking circles is that trafficking occurs predominantly in relation to undocumented migration. Based on this assumption, addressing irregular migration can be viewed as an anti-trafficking approach. In addition, in the name of awareness raising campaigns powerful narratives are disseminated by government and non-governmental actors in which migration to Thailand through irregular channels is associated with exploitation, abuse and human trafficking. This is another example of how the two policy agendas are in practice mutually reinforcing.

The two MoUs and related policies are also complementary in the terms for inclusion and exclusion they set concerning regular migration and human trafficking. Chronological age is key here. Lao recruitment agencies are prohibited from recruiting migrants younger than 18 years (2002a). On the other hand, and as discussed in chapter two the definition of human trafficking, and thereby qualifying a case as a case of trafficking, can be stretched far wider in relation to young people below 18 years as opposed to young people of majority age. Defining trafficking somewhat differently between cases concerning young people of minor age and young people of majority age is based on protective considerations. Nonetheless, in contexts in which becoming a young migrant before turning 18 is fairly widespread both the regularisation measure as well as anti-trafficking efforts do little in terms of addressing the issue of the risk of exploitation that many young migrants face. Policies do either not apply to minors, or amount to keeping them in their villages and out of migrant work. In fact, efforts focussing on making migration safer, and thus addressing the sources of harm related to working elsewhere, are only just starting to be developed in relation to (young) adult migrants, and hardly at all in relation to migrants below 18 years of age (Dottridge 2006).

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has added some historical depth to the overall focus of the dissertation on migration and mobility involving children and young people. Taking up this historical perspective is not to deny the importance of the process of 'transition' (Rigg 2005a) and its impact on the Lao social landscape in general and on the current manifestation of migration and mobility in particular.

The importance of the analysis developed in this chapter is threefold. First, migration and mobility may be on the rise in the current Lao PDR, yet, this is not without historical precedence. Second, drawing on interview material with older villagers, this chapter has analysed some of the important qualitative changes in migration dynamics and practices. Third, tracing past migration dynamics through household histories and life histories has not only illustrated the importance of extra-local relations in what on the surface may appear to be a rather stable and unchanging rural community, it has also added an important dimension to the analysis of current patterns and dynamics of migration and mobility involving children and young people.

The latter dimension is important in terms of understanding variations in the distribution of young migrants across households and for understanding variation in the actual process by which young household members become young migrants. The degree to which a migration versus settler history shapes the distribution of young migrants across households is analysed in further detail in chapter six. Chapter seven in turn, takes up the issue of networks. It analyses how access and not having access to wider spatial networks shapes the process by which young villagers either become young migrants or remain in the village.

The important qualitative changes in migration dynamics are, firstly, the fact that till about four decades ago migration flows were reversed compared to contemporary flows; from North-east Thailand to the Vientiane region. Second, daughters have only recently started to become more mobile and become involved in migration. Third, work was in the pre-socialist era hardly a motivation for cross-border mobility from Lao territory into Thailand whereas it has become a major reason for cross-border mobility today, much due to some decades of different paths of socio-economic development between the Lao PDR and Thailand. Fourth, Lao-Thai relations have remained delicate whilst at the same time the geo-political border has gained in importance in terms of articulating the difference of nationality which has come to overshadow many relations of similarity and relatedness such as ethnicity, language and customs.

The final part of this chapter has shown that despite the lingering sensitivity of the phenomenon of cross-border migration to Thailand there is nonetheless an official migration regime emerging in the Lao PDR. This regime is greatly shaped by global and regional factors, whilst it also reflects national interests, and is 'indigenized' (Appadurai 1996: 32) at local levels. This regime consists of a two-fold but interrelated approach of combating human trafficking on the one hand and regularising migration on the other. The United Nations definition of the child as any person below 18 years of age plays a pivotal role in this, as 'policies addressing migration and human trafficking hinge on the international, age-based definition of the child' (Huijsmans 2008: 346). As chapter two has set out, this international definition of the child is based on a particular construct of childhood. The following chapter analyses how childhood and youth are constructed in *Baan Naam* and at a Lao national level, and how these constructs are undergoing change, and what, amongst other things, the role of chronological age in this is, which has become so important in the international realm.

5 A Sociological Perspective on Lao Childhood and Youth: Structures and actors

5.1 Introduction

Anthropology has long recognised the important role of age in social organisation (La Fontaine 1978). Anthropological studies highlighting the importance of age focus mostly on so-called traditional societies. However, the role of age is equally important in modern societies. Chronological age has, for example, been identified as a prime measure by which modern states make their populations legible (Ariès 1962: 15; Scott 1998).

In the transitional context of the contemporary Lao PDR (Rigg 2005a) modern and more traditional forms of social organisation co-exist and interact. Looking at Lao legal documents alone may, for example, give the impression that the Lao life course is structured on the basis of what have increasingly become global, modern norms. Table 5.1 shows that the uni-dimensional measure of chronological age acts as the prime factor in this attempt of structuring the life course, and it is this measure that excludes certain segments of the population from particular spheres of life and includes other segments in it.

Table 5.1: Age-related regulations in Lao law

age	Issue; Source
6 years	Starting age of compulsory education; Amended Education Law (2007c: Art 17).
10 years of age	Age from which a child's consent for adoption is required; Family Law (1990: Art 38).
14 years	Minimum age of employment
*14-18 years	*Child labour regulations apply; Amended Labour Law (2006a: Art 41).
15 years	Minimum age of criminal responsibility; Penal Law (1989b: Art 17).
From 15 years of age	Entitled to decide independently on questions related to medical care; Law on the Protections of Rights and Interests of Children, (2006b: Art 48: 16).

18 years	Minimum age of marriage; Amended Family Law (2008) reported in Vientiane Times (Ounkham Pimmata 2008).
	Right to vote; Amended Constitution (2003a: Art 36).
	Young persons cease to be children; Law on the Protections of Rights and Interests of Children (2006b: Art 2.1).
	Minimum age for migrant recruitment (recruitment agencies); Prime-Minister Decree (2002c).
20 years and above	Right to stand for election; Amended Constitution (2003a: Art 36).
25 years	Minimum age for a judge in People's Courts; Amended Law on the People's Courts (2003b: 55).
60 years (women may retire at 55)	Age of retirement; Amended Labour Law (2006a: Art 59).

This legal framework of societal organisation based on the measure of chronological age co-exists, however, with a remarkable lack of importance that is attached to precise chronological age in many areas of rural Lao PDR in particular as was already observed by Barber (1979: 26). The fact that birth registration has now been a legal requirement for nearly two decades (1991: Art 9) has altered this situation only marginally. For example, when 25 (13 girls, 12 boys) out of the 26 children and youth participating in the bi-monthly interviews were asked about their date of birth only 15 (6 boys, 9 girls) knew their full date of birth, often after some thinking. The others could only provide partial information such as an age in years, a date (e.g. 'day 25', with or without knowing the month), a month, a year, a day of the week (e.g. Tuesday), a season, and several combinations of such pieces of data.

In contrast, young and old villagers in contemporary *Baan Naam* displayed a near perfect knowledge of relative age and related social norms. This dimension of age is, however, virtually absent from the legal codes adopted by the modern Lao state.

This chapter analyses how these different systems of social organisation shape the social experience of growing up, looking particularly at the role of work and children and young people's position in the household and their relation vis-à-vis the state. Rather than juxtaposing the modern with the traditional, this chapter seeks to unravel how the two interact and how international and national forces enter local struggles of control over

childhood and youth which informs the understanding of the different views on the issue of migration at a young age.

5.2 *Relative age and the system of 'phiinôông'*

> …age is respected, and everyone gauges himself as either older or younger than the next person, behaving accordingly. An exception is the layman-monk relationship. The latter, regardless of age, is one of the most respected members of the community. (Kaufman 1964: 20)

> The incident occurred on May 14, when Mr Leng [23 year old labourer] was drinking with three friends in his village. The men were talking and joking about their respective ages and the situation became heated when each tried to outdo the other and claim seniority and demand the others' respect. The fight became physical and Mr Airnoy and Mr Lae overpowered Mr Leng in a brief tussle. (unnamed 2009)

In the Lao context, age is a key principle of social organisation (Evans 1990: 140; Enfield 2007; Rehbein 2007). The two quotes above illustrate, however, that it is particularly the relative manifestation of age that is important rather than precise chronological age. Norms of appropriate behaviour in social interaction are thus, amongst other things, determined by differences in relative age and may due to this relational dimension change dramatically from one social interaction to the next as one's relative position is never static (for a detailed discussion see Enfield 2007: 100-101).

Chronological age is of course not unimportant as it is one of the factors informing relations of hierarchy based on relative age. Other factors may be personality factors, disabilities, and social attributes. Occasionally, however, age-based seniority may run counter to the logic of chronological age. In case of multiple births, such as twins, age-based seniority is attributed to the child that is born last chronologically speaking (RD, 14-15/3/2009 (see also Hanks 1962: 1249; Sparkes 2005: 234fn21)). Similarly, age-based seniority between sons-in-law is determined by their wives chronological age, also if this runs counter to the ages of the men themselves (Sparkes 2005: 77).

The system of *phiinôông* (Rende Taylor 2005a: 413; Sparkes 2005: 23) is the overarching framework of social norms related to differences in relative age. Rende Taylor (2005a: 413) describes the system of *phiinôông* as 'a derivative of the patron-client relationship whereby elders are expected to take care of juniors throughout life, while juniors are expected to be obedient to elders'. The system of *phiinôông* refers originally to kin relations, and relative age is, therefore, enshrined in Lao kin terminology. This makes it 'impossible to refer in Lao to a sibling without explicitly stating whether he or she is older or younger than oneself', or to refer to a sibling of one's parent without explicitly stating whether he or she is older or younger than one's parent (Enfield 2005b: 55-56).

In this hierarchical social framework Barber (1979: 79, 312) and Kaufman (1964: 19-20) highlighted the relation of *siaw* as the only relationship of absolute equality. Writing about the pre-1975 era Barber and Kaufman describe *siaw* as a special bond between two close friends of the same age and sex which is sealed by a special ceremony conveying reciprocal obligations and privileges to the two young people and their parents. This ceremonial dimension is, however, no longer observed in contemporary *Baan Naam* and the term *siaw* is these days used to refer to close friends of similar age, but not necessarily of the same sex. Furthermore, young people in *Baan Naam* tend to distinguish between *siaw* from school (*siaw hôônghian*) who are class-mates with whom they have a very close relation whilst in school, and *siaw* from the village (*siaw baan*). The latter they may not meet on a day-to-day basis, but, unlike their *siaw* from school, the young villagers argue that this relation lasts a life-time.

The system of *phiinôông* distributes different rights and responsibilities within and beyond the household according to relative age (Enfield 2007: 101). The central concept here is that of *lun*. People of the same *lun* are, technically speaking, of the same age. Hence, one's older sibling is a *lun* above, and one's younger sibling a *lun* below oneself (Enfield 2005b: 55). The concept of *lun* is one of the factors underlying the different relations of power, rights and responsibilities shaping the intra-household bargaining processes that were discussed at a theoretical level in chapter two. For example, differences in *lun* attribute to older siblings a responsibility to care for their younger brothers and sisters, whilst younger siblings are expected to obey their elder siblings. This also means that older siblings may, for example, use their position of relative seniority to transfer work which was originally given to themselves by parents or other social seniors to younger siblings. This is illustrated by Hang, whereas the case of Panee illustrates the caring role of the older sibling:

> In the late afternoon I steamed rice, cleaned dishes and cooked. I did this work together with my younger brother (7 years old). However, I told him to clean the dishes by himself since I was too tired after having done the family laundry in the morning. (Notes from bi-monthly interview with Hang (weekend), 25/2/2008)

> I didn't have lunch at school today, but returned home because I had to prepare lunch for my younger sister (6 years old) since my parents were out working the fields. (Notes from bi-monthly interview with Panee (week day), 27/11/2007)

As stated above, the use of kin terminology is not limited to kin relations, neither is this the case with the social norms associated with it (Enfield 2005b: 55). This is illustrated by the interview excerpt below. The excerpt also illustrates that children and young people actively adopt and modify this social framework. The excerpt thus illustrates that the

reproduction of social norms is in this case far from a one-directional case of socialisation. This is particularly evident in relation to school. The excerpt illustrates that young people have skilfully adapted the traditional system of relative age to the reality of the modern institution of school in which grades are more important markers of seniority than other manifestations of age differences:

> Paai: How do children know whom to call *aay*, *üüay*, *nôông* [kinship terms for older brother, older sister, and younger sibling respectively]?
>
> Dalay: When I was young and I saw someone who is bigger I would call them *aay*, *üüay*, if smaller, than I would call them *nôông*. You can see, you know. But in some cases my mother would also tell me how to call someone.
>
> …
>
> Paai: How do you understand *lun*?
>
> Dalay: For example, I'm born in the third month, and if someone else is born in the same month but a different day, we are of the same *lun* (*lun diawkan*).
>
> Paai: Is it just about being born in the same month, or are there also other things. I mean, what if you don't know when someone is born, how do you then know about *lun*?
>
> Dalay: [You] Look at how tall they are and how their face looks and if this is the same or different than you.
>
> Paai: And if someone is born in the same year, but a different month, is it also the same *lun*?
>
> Dalay: Yes that is possible.
>
> Paai: And if you study in the same class, but have a different age, are you then the same *lun*?
>
> Dalay: No, but, you can say *lun diawkan kaanhian* [the same *lun* in terms of studying, thus being in the same age-grade].
>
> …
>
> Paai: So in your case, some students in your age-grade are younger and others older than you. Do you then call each other *aay*, *üüay*, *nôông*?
>
> Dalay: No, we don't call each other like that; we just use each other's name. In my class, for example, some are 16 and others are 15 or 17. This is not a big difference. It is not like some people are 20 years already. Also, some class-mates are older than I am, but their body looks the same as mine so we can just use names only. (Excerpt from interview with Dalay, 14/3/2009)

5.3 Ages and stages

In addition to a frame of social relations based on relative age a general framework of 'ages and stages' can also readily be observed in the Lao context. Whereas relations of relative age are important in shaping hierarchy and appropriate behaviour in social interactions at a micro level, age and stages reflect more general norms of age-appropriate behaviour.

Villagers in *Baan Naam* identify several distinct stages in the life course which were explored in eight Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with adults (4 FGDs) and with children and youth (4 FGDs). Since the FGDs aimed to identify the stages in the life course as recognised by villagers from *Baan Naam*, each FGD followed broadly its own course and

the ages and stages that emerged differed considerably from one FGD to the next. However, virtually all FGDs brought up and reflected upon the following stages:

- *Èènoi* (baby) or *keudmai* (newborn): Very young children who cannot move around independently or talk. They may not yet have a name. They are not dressed yet but wrapped up in cloths, and tend to cry a lot.

- *Dek noi* (child): Now children eat rice, and can stand, walk and run. At this stage children are still small but they start doing things by themselves, like playing, or roaming around in the village. They are naughty and are not embarrassed to move around naked in and around the house.

- *Phuu nyai* (adult): At this stage, people are married and have a family. They act responsibly and work hard for their family and set a good example for their children.

- *Phuu thau* (elderly): At this stage people start to deteriorate physically and possibly mentally. Their hair turns white, they loose their teeth and they tend to suffer from illnesses and pains. They have adult children and they don't do much work themselves anymore apart from looking after grandchildren and spiritual work.

(Compiled from eight FGDs)

5.3.1 Neither a child, nor an adult

In all FGDs stages were identified in which young people were neither children in the sense of *dek noi*, nor adults in the sense of *phuu nyai*. These stages were referred to with a range of different terms, all with their own connotations. This section discusses the concepts of stages between childhood and adulthood in some detail as it is firstly in this in-between category that most young migrants are found. Second, these in-between categories shed further light on the meanings attributed to adulthood and childhood in the Lao context against which these constructs are positioned.

Two FGDs (one consisting of youth, one of mothers) made it a point to distinguish between *dek noi* as children in general, and children attending primary school who were referred to as *nak hian* (lit. pupil) or *wai hian* (lit. age of learning).[30] By making this distinction, these FGDs act on the awareness that the connotations of *dek noi* are incompatible with what is expected of a good pupil. The term *dek noi* stresses playfulness,

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[30] Note that the term *nak siiksaa* (student) is generally used for students at post-secondary level.

naughtiness, lack of discipline, lack of social awareness, and a general lack of understanding about things that are regarded as important. Since school and learning are associated with seriousness and discipline, and certainly not with childishness or play, the notion of *dek noi* is incompatible with the ideal of a disciplined, diligent, and scholarly primary school student.

Childhood innocence and other stereotypical qualities of *dek noi* are generally only celebrated when it concerns young children of pre-primary school age. Once children are approaching or have reached primary school age child-rearing concentrates increasingly on ridding children from stereotypical *dek noi* qualities. This is also what the Lao proverb *hak ngua hhai phuuk hak luuk hhai tii*, meaning 'love [your] cow, tie it; love [your] child, hit it', refers to.

Nonetheless, there are important gender differences in the appreciation of display of typical *dek noi* characteristics. *Dek noi*-ness is generally condoned, and even celebrated, for a greater number of years when it comes to boys than to girls. For example, young boys of two or three years old may be roaming around without underwear which attracts little attention. Girls at this age are, however, constantly told to be 'shy' and disciplined into keeping their private parts covered from a very young age.

The notion of *wai katheun* was brought up in an FGD consisting of fathers. This term refers literally to an age (*wai*) that is neither this nor that (*katheun*), or according to the fathers themselves 'half *dek noi* and half *wai nhum'*. *Wai katheun*, like *wai hian*, thus serves to distinguish between slightly older children, who don't any longer behave as typical *dek noi* (children) and infants who are seen as embodying the connotations of *dek noi*.

Virtually all FGDs also identified a stage of youth. For this the Lao term *wai nhum* (lit. age of young) was frequently used, often interchangeably with the *Isaan* equivalent *wai lun*. Describing *wai nhum*, both adult and child/youth FGDs referred to wearing of fashionable clothes, interest in going out, and bodily changes. The FGDs clearly distinguished the stage of *wai nhum* from children (*dek noi*) and adults (*phuu nyai*). Child/youth FGDs stressed in this respect that *wai nhum* wasn't just about having fun, which typified for them children (*dek noi*). Instead, they argued that *wai nhum*, unlike *dek noi* (children), had plans for their future and acted upon these. An FGD consisting of fathers concurred insofar that they acknowledged that *wai nhum* had, unlike *dek noi*, a clear sense of what is right and wrong.

Yet, these fathers were keen to distinguish *wai nhum* from adults (*phuu nyai*) by stressing that *wai nhum* didn't necessarily act upon this awareness, as adults were said to do, and may not necessarily listen to advice from their parents.

The terms *phuu bao,* for young men, and *phuu sao,* for young women, refers to largely the same age and stage as *wai nhum* discussed above. However, unlike *wai nhum* these terms are more strongly related to bodily changes and associated social behaviour such as becoming of marital age and having an interest in the opposite sex. The FGDs that brought up this stage thus talked specifically about courting, and stressed that young men and women, but especially women, would start to become shy in the presence of the other sex.

Xao nhum is another term broadly overlapping with the age and stage of *wai nhum.* Traditionally *xao nhum* refers to the young able-bodied population (both sexes) who are called upon to do communal work in the village. However, the traditional connotations of *xao nhum* have to a great extent been replaced by the Lao Revolutionary Youth Union (LRYU) which uses the term *xao nhum* to refer to its members. One FGD consisting of mothers was clearly affected by LRYU rhetoric as they stressed that *xao nhum* were the representatives of the parents and the future of the nation, and that young people in this stage knew what was good and bad, and were naturally hard working.

5.3.2 The ages of the stages

Figure 5.1 plots the relation between the key stages discussed above, gender, and recorded chronological age, using household survey data. Although it must be re-emphasised that data on chronological age needs to be treated with extreme care, Figure 5.1 illustrates some important observations.

Figure 5.1: Relation between stages in the life course and chronological age[31]

Relation between age groups and chronological age by sex (n=352)
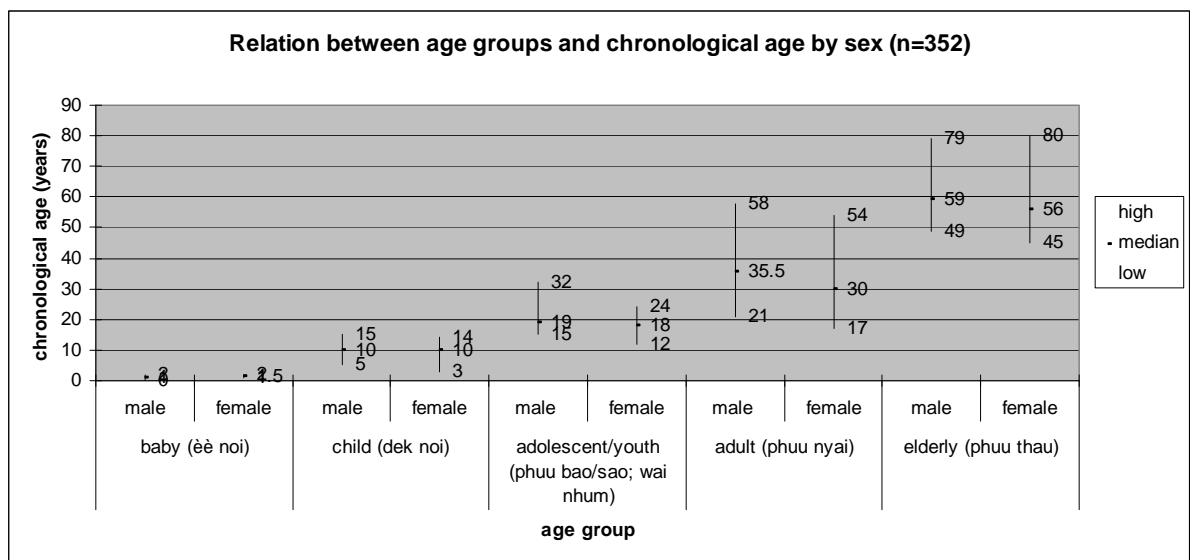
First, Figure 5.1 shows that young people are stopped being regarded as *dek noi* well before they have reached the age of 18 at which according to the Lao law one ceases being a child (*dek*). Second, there are important gender differences. Girls stop being seen as children at a slightly younger age than boys, and are sooner said to become youth and adults. These observations are directly related to gender differences in important markers of these stages such as performing productive and reproductive tasks in the household, quitting school, marriage and attaining parenthood.

5.3.3 To call someone a child

The discussion above has illustrated how in the Lao context, just as the case in many other contexts, childhood in the sense of *dek noi* and adulthood in the sense of *phuu nyai* are constructed as opposites. In this dichotomy the construct of adulthood is attributed with virtues such as independence, competence, knowledge, and maturity, whereas childhood is constructed as a period of innocence, immaturity, dependence, a-sexuality, and vulnerability.

Use of the terminology of *dek noi* and *phuu nyai* is not limited to the life course. In fact, this terminology is frequently used in disconnection from the life course as a means of conveying to someone, often in a playful or ironic manner, the attributes of childhood, youth or adulthood. Durham describes this as follows:

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[31] Note that records in which the stage in the life course was given as 'unknown', and ambiguous records are excluded here.

> To call someone a youth is to position him or her in terms of a variety of social attributes, including not only age but also independence-dependence, authority, rights, abilities, knowledge, responsibilities, and so on (Durham 2004: 593)

In the secondary school of *Baan Naam* students drew, for example, on the connotations of childhood and adulthood in order to attribute senior students with superior qualities and to attribute junior students with inferior qualities. From around the third year of secondary school these senior students are by their junior peers referred to as *phuu nyai* (adults). In contrast, first and second year secondary school students are, like primary school students, referred to as *dek noi* (children) by senior students. Other derogatory terms used to set these junior students apart from their seniors and compatible with the notion of *dek noi* are *huafu*, and *huanyôông*. These terms convey child-like characteristics to junior students, as it means having a wild, uncombed, and possibly lice-infested head of hair as a result of lack of hygiene, running in the dust and climbing in the trees. In contrast, senior students who refer to themselves as *phuu nyai* (adults) convey to themselves a high awareness of physical appearance, and the ability to maintain their looks implies that they do not involve themselves in what is regarded as childish behaviour anymore (Life-history, Buadeng, 9/1/2008).

The Lao phrase *dek sen* [lit. string/connected children] also draws on the notion of child (*dek*). *Dek sen* refers to the client position in patron-client relations (Mayes 2009: 96) and although the *dek sen* is mostly an adult, use of the term *dek* highlights the state of dependency and relative powerlessness of the client vis-à-vis the patron. Another example of usage of the term *dek* in relation to adults is found in the expression *paxaaxon dek noi* (lit. child population, instead of the ordinary term *paxaaxon* for 'population'). This is often used in combination with the term *phuu nyai*. As we have seen above, *phuu nyai* is generally used as meaning 'adults', yet it literally means 'big people', or 'powerful people', and refers to the Lao political elite (Evans 2002: 105). Combining the term *phuu nyai* with the construct *paxaaxon dek noi,* presents the political relations in Lao society as analogous with adult-child relations. Attributing to the general population (*paxaaxon*) the relational position of children in adult-child relations, in which children are expected to listen and obey their parents without questioning, amounts to a powerful critique to the authoritarian Lao political regime.

This brief detour tracing the use of notions of adulthood and childhood beyond the direct reference to ages and stages has shed further light on the connotations attributed to these terms. This reinforced the earlier observation that childhood, in the sense of being regarded
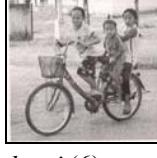
as *dek noi*, is not seen as something that should last any longer than necessary as to be a child implies being in a socially inferior position and at anyone's command.

5.3.4 Children and young people's shifting rights and obligations across the life course

So far, the discussion on stages and ages has suggested a rather linear process of moving through the life course from one stage to the next. This ignores, however, the inter-relatedness of various stages in the life course within the field of the household. This section analyses how children's rights and obligations vis-à-vis their parents change as both progress through the life course. The data used in this section was obtained through the eight FGDs discussed above and in chapter three. Table 5.2 summarises the eight FGDs with regard to the changing obligations of parents and their children as both move through the life course. The discussions were triggered by pictures from the *Vientiane Times* (see 1st column). Below the pictures in the first column the precise term is listed that the FGDs used to refer to the depicted persons. The numbers in brackets refer to the number of FGDs that used these respective terms.[32]

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[32] Note that the total number may exceed 8 in case in an FGD more than one term was used. The total may also be lower than 8 in case no stages were named in relation to one or more picture (for example, if participants simply talked about 'this one', or 'that one').

Table 5.2: Rights and responsibilities of parents and children over the life course

Picture *referred to as (in nr of FGDs)*	What parents need to do for persons depicted		What depicted persons need to do for their parents/household	
	Acc. to children & youth	*Acc. to parents*	*Acc. to children & youth*	*Acc. to parents*
1. *Èè noi* (5), *dek noi* (4)	Bath; give love; give warmth; give milk; carry; hug	Give medicine; give milk; take care; take to hospital if needed; give three injections	Cannot yet do anything	Cannot yet do anything; make parents feel loved; if it is the first born it gives parents a lot of love
2. *Èè noi* (3), *dek noi* (2)	Sit & play with; clean; feed; make it wear clothes; let it go out to play	Give toys; give more food than before; make a fence so they don't fall from the house or tie them	Cannot walk or go anywhere so cannot help; can smile and make parents happy; make parents happy by growing	Cannot yet do anything; parents feel happy if they do something
3. *Dek noi* (5)	Send to school; teach how to do domestic work; give them money to buy sweets	Ensure they go to school everyday; constantly look after them and tell them what to do; care when ill; we need to shout at them like 'don't be naughty'	Can do most work in the house but not yet all; look after younger siblings; get food	Can start earning money; herd cattle; do work; look after younger siblings; can clean dishes; we don't want them to help yet but they insist on helping; fetch water
4. *Dek noi* (6)	Teach to be a good person; buy clothes; keep an eye on them so that they don't go far from the house or play with dirt	Send them to school; buy a bicycle if they need one	Steam rice; do dishes; fetch water; do laundry	Collect wild vegetables; collect food; steam rice; feed poultry
5. *Dek noi* (5)	Wash their clothes; teach them how to be good; explain how to find food and do work	Teach them how to be good; start sending them to school; tell them not to be naughty; teach them to find food and how to fish; be strict now they don't obey well	Can help catching fish; finding food; do housework; steam rice, do dishes; sweep the ground; collect vegetables; feed poultry	Can start doing errands; and look after younger siblings; share the housework with the mother; catch fish; steam rice

6. *Dek noi* (3), *nak hian* (2), *nyauwaxon* (1), *xao nhum* (1)	Put to work; buy school things; send to school; dress them neatly; tell them to pay attention in school; buy a bicycle for going to school	Now easily influenced by friends so check if they have good friends; give them 1,000-2,000Kip per day if they go to school, buy school equipment; you need to give them anything they need	Help transplanting rice; cook food	They work but make a mess; can help to earn money and earn money for themselves; passing their exams makes parents happy; can cook food; help working in the fields; fetch water
7. *Wai nhum* (2), *xao nhum* (1), *pen sao* (1)	Nothing; can earn money themselves; parents now believe them since they are grown-up	Give them good ideas but now they decide themselves; ensure they don't go out at night; tell them what is good and bad; now they know things and don't need parents advice; help them only a little	Work the fields; earn money, harvest rice; do hard work (carrying rice, clearing fields, ploughing)	Can become a soldier; can join the Party; can do any kind of work, can earn money; can do all work like adults; if the girls get married parents cannot tell them to work anymore; can 'repay' their parents (make merit)
8. *Wai nhum* (3), *xao nhum* (1), *sao noi* (1), *not yet adults* (1)	Can do everything adults do; nothing, they can take care of themselves; parent worry about them; need to give them money to go out; tell them what is good and bad	Decide by themselves, they don't need to talk with parents anymore; if parents have, they give them money, land or cattle if they get married; tell them to be careful with who to befriend; buy a motorbike for them	Earn money for parents and themselves; transplant rice; cook food; work the fields; give knowledge to parents	Have their own family but can help their parents with everything (but not too much because they don't have time); can do all work like adults and life for parents is easy
9. *Phuu nyai* (2)	Parents teach them how to grow rice; they only need love from their parents; parents observe how the family is fairing	Parents don't need to do anything they have now everything	Plough parents' fields; repair fields, and do difficult work; goes to meetings on behalf of parents; do everything for parents to make them comfortable	They can help the Party; help parents with farm work; support parents in all matters
10. *Phuu nyai* (1)	Nothing they have their own families	Nothing they know everything already	Don't let their parents do hard work but do for them	They can explain things to parents and others; support parents with everything

A key observation emerging from Table 5.2 is the reciprocity that is attributed to various activities. This is even recognised in relation to the youngest children (picture 1 and 2). Parents, children and youth list a whole series of responsibilities on the part of parents for the very young, yet they also recognise that the very young are able to respond to this in meaningful ways that pleases and even rewards the carers.

A second important observation is that when young children (*dek noi*) are seen as ready to go to school (picture 3-6) the responsibilities of parents towards children and that of children towards their parents and the household are already quite balanced. Parents are expected to send their children to school, buy stationary, uniforms and possibly a bicycle, and provide them with some daily petty cash to buy snacks. Children on the other hand are expected to do a range of tasks for the household such as looking after younger siblings, collecting food, herding cattle, clean dishes, and fetching water. Importantly, parents, children, and youth agree on the age-appropriateness of these activities.

The parental comments presented in column three for picture three and five suggests that young children's performance of a wide range of tasks does not mean that parents view these young children as knowledgeable, responsible or capable. This is explicitly confirmed by the parental remark related to picture six (column 5), which states that children may do a lot of tasks but also make a lot of mess when doing this. This is particularly the case with boys according to the parents.

Children and youth did not necessarily disagree with their parents' judgements on young children's level of knowledge. Yet, their use of the verbs 'explain', and 'teach', instead of the parents' use of the terms 'shout' and 'tell' suggests greater faith in their own ability to reason than what parents tend to attribute to young children. This corresponds with observations of how children learn doing everyday tasks. Although parents claim that they teach and explain their children about various everyday tasks, in practice this was hardly observed. In fact, the most common way in which children learn is by observation and gradual participation. This often leads to a process of trial and error which may indeed reinforce dominant adult perceptions that young children lack knowledge illustrated by acting, at times, stupidly in the eye of adults:

> The first task I really did on my own was steaming rice. My parents were not at home and since I had seen my mother doing it, I wanted to do this work by myself this time. So, I made a fire, placed the rice in the basket on top of the pot with water. When the water started to boil I started hearing sounds (my note: the widely used aluminium pots start to sound when used for steaming rice) and I was suddenly worried that I was doing something wrong. Therefore, I ran to our neighbours and asked

When children have become adolescents or youth (pictures 7 and 8) parental responsibilities are increasingly of an immaterial nature, such as providing advice and guidance. This corresponds with related observations that once children have become adolescents or youth, parents regard them as capable of reason and explanation and prefer these modes of exchange above the one-directional shouting and telling which is often considered most effective for younger children (*dek noi*). This parallels remarks from youth themselves, who observed that at this stage parents would start believing and listen to their children.

Furthermore, in the youth stage of the life course parents' responses illustrate that children's responsibilities are not limited to the immediate and the sphere of the household anymore. Partaking in national developments by joining the army or the Party was in this respect suggested. Also, parents stressed that in this stage their children should start repaying their debts to their parents by making merit for them. This is in Theravada Buddhism particularly important for mothers, who are largely dependent on their sons for gaining merit. Sons can earn merit for their mothers by being ordained into the Buddhist Sangha as a novice or a monk for a shorter or longer period of time (Keyes 1984; Keyes 1986). This way, sons are said to repay their mothers for the hardships of pregnancy, child-birth, and child rearing. Although daughters can become a nun, this does not yield the same amount of merit. Daughters, therefore, have to repay the debt to their mothers in more material terms. This is one of the elements underlying the notion of 'dutiful daughter', which is in the literature frequently discussed in relation to girls' entry into migrant work, including sex work (Keyes 1984; Muecke 1992; Mills 1999: 76-80; Rende Taylor 2005a: 413).

Despite the importance parents attach to their children's merit making, hardly any of the sons of *Baan Naam* got ordained at the local monastery (*vat*) for other than funeral related purposes. This can partly be explained since ordination in the Buddhist Sangha has lost its educational attractiveness now that basic state-education has become widespread. In addition, the costs associated with ordaining a son in the Buddhist Sangha, financially and in terms of loss of labour are significant for peasant households, which are further factors contributing to a decline in ordaining sons (see also Sparkes 2005: 131). Furthermore, out of the three cases of ordination the research touched upon, only one was ordained in the local *vat* and two were called over by relatives in north-eastern Thailand to enter the

Buddhist Sangha on the Thai side of the border. In one case this was explained in terms of superior quality of the Thai *vat* in the other case the Thai relatives had no sons available to enter the Buddhist Sangha. The latter is indeed another example of the inter-relatedness of different constructs of childhood between the two sides of the border discussed in chapter four.

A decline in ordaining sons in the Buddhist Sangha may suggest that sons, like their sisters, are also resorting to more earthly practices of repaying their debt to their mothers. Indeed, when talking about the use of migratory and local earnings sons, like daughters, stressed that they had given at least a good part of their earnings to their mother. However, when taking a closer look at these stories it often emerged that daughters performed considerably better in actually putting the deed to the word.

Once children have become adults themselves, the FGDs argued that the balance of rights and responsibilities had reversed entirely because by then adult children are regarded as fully responsible for their elderly parents' well-being. However, none of the FGDs picked up on the important observation that 'a man…is at the height of his 'career' as an authoritarian figure, when he has many sons-in-law working his land and providing a percentage of the harvest and profits' (Sparkes 2005: 78).

5.3.4.1 Differences in social position between siblings in a household

So far, the discussion on stages and ages has suggested a rather linear process with little attention for important internal variations. However, rights and responsibilities of children and their parents are only in part shaped by stages in the life course. Other important factors are gender, birth order, and the combined working of gender and birth order. The role of gender has already received some attention above and is discussed in more detail below. The general point is that expectations and actual contributions of sons versus daughters differ within most households. This is reinforced by the ideology of uxorilocal residence patterns amongst ethnic Lao, meaning that after marriage the young couple tends to stays with the bride's parents till they have a child and/or have built their own house.

Further differences may stem from birth order, which is, for example, illustrated by the practice of teknonymy. This puts first born children in a special position as parents come to be known by the name of their first born child (Enfield 2007: 101). In addition, the practice of ultimogeniture can also be observed amongst ethnic Lao (Sparkes 2005: 21). This term refers to a preference for the last born sibling. This is in the ethnic Lao context particularly

the last born daughter who is often expected to stay with her parents and look after them into old age.

Put together, these different dynamics illustrate that in the long run the relation between sons and parents is very different from that of daughters and parents. Sons are likely to move into the household of their wife's family after marriage, and descent is through the female line. These long term dynamics may affect everyday intergenerational relations within the household as the interests of sons versus daughters in terms of sticking to the ideal role of a good son or a good daughter are very different. Parents and daughters are thus more inclined to act within a framework of longer term reciprocal rights and obligations than is the case with sons, and parents' behaviour towards sons. This may indeed lead to the following observation of parent-child relations amongst ethnic Lao: 'parental control over daughters is much stricter than control over sons' (Sparkes 2005: 78).

The dynamics described above do not, however, necessarily correspond with empirical material obtained in *Baan Naam*. Table 4.1 in chapter four already indicated that uxorilocal norms do not in practice necessarily determine actual residence patterns. In addition, the interview excerpt below illustrates that the norm that the last born daughter is the one looking after her parents in old age is not necessarily reflected in everyday practices in *Baan Naam*:

> Paai: Do you think you will remain in this house since you're the last-born daughter?
>
> Dalay: I don't know, but I see in this village that the last-born is actually not the one looking after the parents when they get old. In fact, the last-born is often the one moving away. And it is mostly an older sister or brother staying behind. Here, it is often the first-born looking after the parents when they get old.
>
> Paai: Why is it like that you think?
>
> Dalay: Mostly, the first born is married already and lives with the parents, and, therefore, last-born children tend to move and *liang mèè nyaa* (take care of the husband's mother)
>
> Paai: Is this special to *Baan Naam*, or do you also see this in other villages?
>
> Dalay: In other villages it is the same. If, for example, the mother has one son and the son gets married, the family tends to keep the son which means that the wife of this son has to move into the house of the *mèè nyaa* (husband's mother)
>
> (Excerpt from interview with Dalay, a last-born daughter who was at the time of interview single and 15 years old, 14/3/2009)

Appreciating that social norms may not correspond with observed social reality, and perhaps have never done so, implies that socio-cultural frameworks at best only inform differences in social position between siblings in a given household and do certainly not determine this. Socio-cultural norms are, therefore, elements that enter bargaining

processes, rather than determining bargaining relations when it comes to the migration decision-making processes analysed in later chapters.

5.4 Children and young people's work: Discourse and practice

> The sooner you have children, the sooner you can put them to use *(Mii luuk kôôn dai xai kôôn)* (Lao proverb)

> At three, children run small errands for their mother. At four, they may be sent to collect firewood around the compound, and at five, may carry small baskets of water. At six they are permitted to assist in carrying the rice seedlings to the fields, and are given the responsibility of watching younger sibling for brief periods of time. At seven, they fish in the paddy fields and hunt crabs. By eight, a child is expected to care for him for protracted periods of time. At ten, they must feed and care for the buffalo and oxen; at twelve, they assist in weeding in the rice fields and small vegetable gardens. Fourteen year old girls are taught to sew, weave, pound rice, cook, wash clothes, and begin to carry the regular, large baskets of water from the well or river. When they reach fifteen, both boys and girls help with transplanting and harvesting. (Kaufman 1964: 45-46)

In the Lao context children start making significant contributions to reproductive and productive functions of the household from an early age (Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black 2004: 68-72). This is particularly true for Lao peasant households and the Lao proverb quoted above embodies a Chayanovian wisdom that was well-recognised by most women in *Baan Naam*. These women would, for example, attribute improvements in quality of life solely to life course dynamics which had changed the demographic structure of households, and thereby the division of labour within the household favourably. Having older children releases women from a series of immediate care and nursing tasks, whilst older children are also more able to contribute to the productive and reproductive function of the household than younger children thus improving women's and household welfare in important ways (see also Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black 2004: 66). Kaufman's qualitative description of children's contribution to the domestic economy, as observed in the Vientiane countryside of four decades ago remains instructive today. The main difference is that, at least in *Baan Naam*, children perform these activities in addition to going to school.

5.4.1 Representations of children's tasks in and around the household: Help, duty, work, or play?

The various tasks children and young people perform in and around the house and in the fields are seldom recognised as work (*viak*) by the children and young people themselves or by their parents and other adult observers. Instead, it is commonly described as helping parents (*xvoy phôô mèè*), their duty (*nhaathii*), or at best helping with work, or helping with their parents' work (*xvoy viak [phôô mèè]*). The tendency to refer to children's work as 'help' is illustrated by the texts accompanying Picture 5.1 and Picture 5.2 taken from the

Vientiane Times (2009c; 2009b). The problem with the 'helping' discourse is that it belittles children's significant contributions to the household and it blurs the considerable level of independence children display when doing these tasks.

Picture 5.1: Children's work as 'helping' (I)

Two girls in Napong Village, Saravan province, help out in their family's barbeque business, skewering chicken pieces. Napong village is on Road No 13 heading south from Vientiane. Most people travelling to the southern provinces stop here to buy the area's specialty, "ping kai". Both sides of the road are lined with stalls selling grilled chicken.

Picture 5.2: Children's work as 'helping' (II)

Two children in Luang Prabang province sell *mak beng*, small pyramids made of banana leaves and marigolds used for worship in homes and temples. The children help their families by making and selling these items after finishing school for the day.

Another common tendency is to regard children's productive contributions to the household as mere 'play'. Again, this can be illustrated by the texts accompanying Picture 5.3 and Picture 5.4 taken from the *Vientiane Times* (2008a; 2009a). In both pictures the children depicted are without doubt engaged in productive activities, nonetheless, the *Vientiane Times* editor chooses to stress the leisure and play factor.

Picture 5.3: Children's work as 'play' (I)

Children in Sanghuabor village of Xaythany district, Vientiane, spend their school holidays caring for their family's buffaloes and cows. It is one way the children can help their parents and enjoy their holiday break.

Picture 5.4: Children's work as 'play' (II)

Children enjoy playing with a horse in Houayxai district of Bokeo province.
–*Photo Khamphan*

Just like constructing children's work as 'helping' representing children's contributions to the household as play also undervalues children's contributions to the household. Both representations constitute significant obstacles for rethinking the very construct of childhood as a period of dependency, lacking knowledge, and immaturity that is central to the notion of *dek noi*. There is, however, ample reason to rethink these constructs as the pictures in this section illustrate.

Critiquing the representation of children's work as 'play' is not to deny that children may be enjoying their tasks, and that work may provide an opportunity for play. Indeed, the problem is rather that the line between what is leisure or play and what is work is often vague (see also Katz 2004: 67). The difficult separation between play, leisure and certain types of work is, for example, illustrated by an 11 year old primary five student in her explanation of the pictures she has taken of her own working activities:

Picture 5.5: Picture E6 (auto-photography, primary 5-girls)

Here I'm herding cows. I do this work during the weekends and school holidays. My family has 16 cows, but we just got a newborn calf this week. I do this work alone, and like it better than the work in the other pictures [sweeping, and cleaning surroundings of her house], because when I do this work I can just go and sit on a rock and sing songs, that's fun! Looking after the cows is not difficult. This time of year [October, after the rains] it is easy because there is plenty of grass everywhere so you don't have to walk far. (Notes from auto-photography)

The difficult distinction between work and play is also exemplified by the various catching and hunting activities especially popular amongst boys and young men. These activities are certainly seen as fun and adventurous. Yet, their catch may be an important and nutritious supplement to the family meal and may thus be regarded as a productive activity. In addition it also provides boys with some early experiences of earning their own money.

> I first earned money when I was still small, by digging up crickets. I caught the animals myself in the fields and sold them in the village. It was my own idea to do this and I earned about 5,000 Kip. This money I used for buying snacks and I gave some to my mother. (Notes from life-history interview with Saang, 22/1/2008. He was 17 at the time of interview)

Another approach to the question of how to interpret children's activities, and why it is in the Lao context seldom attributed the status of work is by turning to the meaning of the Lao term for work (*viak*). Barber (1979: 131-132) argues that the Lao term *viak* refers to all 'necessary activities'. These are activities that ought to be done at a particular moment in time and may according to Barber include attending festivals and ceremonies as well as working the fields. In contrast, Rehbein (2007: 113) argues, on the basis of more recent research, that Lao villagers 'clearly distinguish between labour, work and leisure activities' and that the Lao term *viak* should be translated as 'labour' as, according to her, it refers to activities that need to be done to ensure survival and are regarded as unpleasant. Rehbein

fails, however, to explain which Lao term(s), if at all, are used for forms of 'work' that don't fit this definition of labour.

Regardless of whether we follow Barber (1979) or Rehbein's (2007) interpretation of the Lao term *viak* the Lao expression for being busy, *kha viak* (lit. detained by work (Barber 1979: 131)), means that one is engaged in something that is regarded as more necessary than the proposed alternative. For understanding the value attributed to children's activities it is revealing to observe that *dek noi* can generally not claim to be 'busy', whatever they are doing, if adults or social seniors ask them to do something. This suggests that an important reason why children's work is valued lowly, and can be downgraded as mere play or helping, is the simple fact that it is performed by children and not adults (see also Elson 1982; Nieuwenhuys 1996).

It is only when young people have left the stage of *dek noi* (child) behind and are regarded as *wai nhum*, *phuu bao* or *phuu sao* (youth/adolescents) that their work related activities are starting to be referred to in terms similar to adults. At this point they also become actively involved in exchange labour practices and start participating in wage labour. In both cases their work is valued as adult work. In early adolescence, work patterns also become more gendered following the adult male-female division of labour. Young women become more oriented towards domestic activities, often in addition to work in the fields, and young men generally cease doing domestic work which they may have done as younger children and take a greater role in what is seen as the harder, masculine parts of agricultural work, such as ploughing (see also Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black 2004: 69).

5.4.2 Common activities undertaken by children and youth: An overview

Table 5.3 gives an impression of the kinds of activities children and youth in *Baan Naam* perform and gender patterns in this. This impression is by no means a complete picture as it is limited to observations accumulated from eight rounds of bi-monthly interviews only which are described in chapter three. These interviews did by no means exhaust the many kinds of activities the 26 young people did in a single day. In addition, Table 5.3 does not show the differences in regularity or intensity between 13 boys and 13 girls surveyed, in performing these activities, as it only indicates whether the activity was observed at all. Hence, the value in each cell cannot exceed 13, which is the total number of participants of

each sex. The highlighted cells indicate activities that were observed amongst at least half of the respondents.

Table 5.3: Children and youth's involvement in common types of work by sex

Types of work	Sex		Types of work	Sex	
A. Work in/around the house	Male (n=13)	Female (n=13)	*C. Work in the family field/livestock*	Male (n=13)	Female (n=13)
1. Steam rice	8	12	1. Herd cattle	5	6
2. Cook	8	13	2. Raise poultry	0	3
3. Fetch water	7	13	3. Work vegetable garden	2	6
4. Do dishes	7	13	4. Soy bean harvest	3	10
5. Sweep floor	5	11	5. Weeding	1	2
6. Clean surroundings	2	2	6. Transplant rice	1	5
7. Work kitchen garden	3	6	7. Fencing	1	0
8. Look after younger siblings	2	4	8. Clearing fields	6	5
9. Care/nurse for sick	2	3	9. Other	1	7
10. Do laundry	8	9	*Sub-total*	20	44
11. Chop firewood	1	0			
12. Raise livestock around house	2	6	*D. Catch/Collect*		
13. Run errands	4	5	1. Fish	7	0
14. Tutoring younger siblings	0	4	2. Firewood	3	2
15. Process agri products	0	6	3. Frogs	5	2
16. Handicraft production	1	2	4. Medical plants	2	0
17. Construction of new house	0	3	5. Wild vegetables/fruit	1	6
18. Other	2	3	6. Grass for roofing	2	1
Sub-total	62	115	7. Lizards	2	0
			8. Other	0	1
			Sub-total	22	12
B. Other activities in/around the house			*E. Work outside the household*		
1. Watching TV	9	13	1. Day labour	9	13
2. Play games	13	12	2. Wage labour	5	1
Sub-total	22	25	3. Petty trade	3	2
			4. Exchange labour	1	8
			Sub-total	18	24
			Grand total	**144**	**220**

Table 5.3 shows that girls and young women are involved in a vastly wider range of activities than boys and young men (see also Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black 2004: 68-69). Importantly, this difference does not stem from the fact that girls and young women perform a wider range of domestic activities solely. Girls and young women were also found to be engaged in a wider range of extra-household activities and household related farm activities than their male contemporaries. In fact, it is only in the area of catching and collecting in which boys and young men were observed to be involved in a wider range of activities than girls and young women.

Table 5.3 illustrates a division of labour by sex, yet, it also shows that this division of labour is not enforced very rigidly as there are relatively few activities that are performed

by girls or boys solely. The possible exception is ploughing and harrowing of rice fields. This was commonly done by older boys (from about 14 or 15 years, but a boy of 11 claimed he was just starting to learn harrowing) and not by any of the girls and young women. Another possible exception may be weaving and embroidery which is in the Lao context considered a women's thing and something that girls learn at a young age, although this varies by ethnicity. However, some boys and young men claimed to have done weaving and/or embroidery, although this may refer to the fact that they have done this in school.

5.4.2.1 Day labour: Local and cross-border

As stated above, boys may have some early money earning experiences when selling insects, birds or fish they have caught. Girls' first earning experience usually comes much later in life. However, some young girls may be seen hawking in the village or running a shop and may get to keep some of the earnings. Yet, this work is typically done on behalf of adults and it thus does not constitute the same kind of earning autonomy as boys' first earning experiences when selling their own catch

It is in early youth or adolescence that young people of post-primary school age become more substantial money earners by getting involved in wage labour which pays between 20,000-30,000 *Kip* per day. Day labour may be undertaken in the fields of fellow villagers, however, it is more commonly performed on the Thai side of the border in the village of *Baan Fangthai*. Out of the 13 girls and young women participating in the bi-monthly interviews only two were not observed participating in day labour on the Thai side of the border. These two were, however, involved in local day labour. Out of the 13 boys and young men, four had never performed day labour in Baan Fangthai. These were the three youngest participants who were still in primary school and one boy who was in lower secondary school. Unlike the two girls who were not involved in cross-border day labour, these four boys were also not observed to be involved in local day labour.

Recruitment for local day labour and cross-border day labour follows similar patterns. For local wage labour the employer directly recruits a team of local workers the day before the work commences. For cross-border day labour, recruitment is done by local villagers, on behalf of employers in *Baan Fangthai*. These recruiters are boat owners with contacts in *Baan Fangthai* who recruit a Lao work team and profit from the shipping fee they charge

the Lao commuters. Importantly, young villagers negotiate directly with recruiters for local and cross-border day labour and generally decide about this independently:

> Malee is around 13 years old when we meet her for an interview in September 2008. For the past months she has been busy with transplanting rice. She has done this in the fields of her older sister in *Baan Naam* and in the fields of her older brother in a neighbouring village. In addition, Malee has also worked her parents' fields and worked in fellow villagers' fields in order to generate exchange obligations for her parents. In addition, Malee worked for approximately 10 days in *Baan Fangthai* on a commuting basis. Malee explains that boat owners often ask her to join their team to work in *Baan Fangthai* since they know that she is good at transplanting rice. Sometimes she joins them, she explains, and sometimes not. Also, she doesn't always go with the same boat owners, it just depends who asks her first and whether she has time to go. Malee further explains that she does not need to ask her parents for permission to go. She decides herself because she knows perfectly well whether she has time to go, or has to work for her family. (Notes from interview with Malee, 4/9/2008)

The earnings young villagers are able to make through day labour in *Baan Fangthai* can be substantial. Several young villagers claimed to have earned between 2,000 and 3,000 *Thai Baht* over the 2008 rice transplanting season alone, which coincides with Lao school holidays. Day labour in *Baan Fangthai* is mostly done on a commuting basis. Yet, occasionally young people may stay over for a couple of nights in order to cut out the shipping fees across the Mekong. Furthermore, by working in *Baan Fangthai* young villagers may hear about, or may be approached about other work further afield in Thailand. Day labour on a commuting basis in *Baan Fangthai* thus constitutes a bridge between local work practices and migrant work practices. On the one hand, work and work-related practices in *Baan Fangthai* are similar to those in *Baan Naam, Baan Fangthai* is part and parcel of *Baan Naam's* wider social environment, and young people have a great level of autonomy in becoming involved in either form of work. On the other hand, young people's very involvement in cross-border day labour may lead to migrant experience of longer duration and further afield.

5.5 *Institutionalising a modern Lao childhood: Manifestations and tensions*

The analysis of kin relations and other local frames of meaning concerning constructs of childhood and youth presented above are by itself insufficient for fully comprehending constructs of childhood and youth in the transitional context of the contemporary Lao PDR. This also requires taking account of the various ways in which being young has become institutionalised along modern lines in which, apart from local actors, the state and global agents like UNICEF also play and important role.

In Chapter two it was argued that the modern institution of childhood is characterised by a separation from adulthood. Childhood has in its modern conception become seen as a

preparatory stage for adulthood which is best illustrated by the amount of time children spent in schools (Qvortrup 2001). The modern construct of childhood is also characterised by a shift in value of children, away from the economic and towards the emotional (Zelizer 1994).

Such modern concepts of childhood sit uncomfortably with some of the main observations emerging from the previous sections. Some important conclusions thus far are that amongst the ethnic Lao of rural Lao PDR children and young people remain of important immediate economic value even though this reality is muted by constructs of childhood that suggest the opposite. In addition, the previous sections have also shown that in the context of *Baan Naam* children and young people's lives are in many spheres of lives intimately included in the adult world, albeit in a socially inferior position.

The following sections turn to three manifestations of the project of institutionalising a modern childhood in the Lao context; the institution of the law, the institution of the school, and the Lao Revolutionary Youth Union. The analysis focuses in particular on how modern and more traditional constructs of childhood interact, and how villagers, young and old, as social actors engage with, modify and resist these various constructs. Similarly, the Lao state is also recognised as an actor. Attempts to modernise childhood at the national level are heavily influenced by global power relations but the very act of institutionalising a modern childhood also offers opportunities of a distinct nationalist nature.

5.5.1 The role of law: (Inter)national code, local interpretations

> Responsibilities of Children: 1. To respect their parents, guardians, family members, teachers, leaders, and elders, and the rights of others; 2. To help their parents, families, friends, elderly persons and disabled persons according to their abilities; 3. To study diligently and achieve at least primary education and to strictly observe school rules; 4. To care for their [own] health and hygiene, and to protect public property and the environment; 5. To respect and implement the Constitution, and the laws and regulations of the State; 6. To be honest, patriotic, love the nation, love persons having good deeds towards the nation, and respect fine national culture and customs; 7. To contribute to social activities based on their individual abilities (2006b: Art 5)

Like most socialist states, the Lao PDR was quick to become a states party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC). However, a report from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (1997) that responds to a Lao state report on the implementation process of the UN-CRC that was submitted to the UN Committee in 1996 (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 1996) suggests that quick accession to the UN-CRC should not be understood as an uncompromised embracing of the principles underlying the UN-CRC. In fact, the UN Committee responds with a long list of concerns including:

> Of particular concern is the fact that the State party does not appear to have fully taken into account the provisions of the Convention, especially its general principles as contained in its articles 2 (non-discrimination), 3 (best interests of the child), 6 (right to life, survival and development) and 12 (respect for the views of the child), in its legislation, its administrative and judicial decisions, and in its policies and programmes relevant to children. (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 1997: 3)

The recently adopted Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Children (2006b), the LPRIC, has been formulated in a response to this high level critique. The LPRIC has succeeded in evening out many of the inconsistencies and omissions in the Lao legal framework concerning children that were pointed out by the UN Committee. At the same time the LPRIC also illustrates the international bargaining processes that shape the drafting of many a children's law in various contexts. The case in point is the inclusion of 'Child friendly schools' (2006b: Art 27) in the LPRIC. This cannot be seen in disconnection from a similarly named UNICEF programme, particularly since UNICEF is the designated IGO concerned with local implementations of the UN-CRC.

Concluding that the LPRIC merely reflects international power relations, would ignore how States Parties like the Lao PDR actively employ the implementation of international conventions for specific national ends. For example, the UN-CRC does not make mention of children's responsibilities. Yet, the quote above illustrates that a section on children's responsibilities features prominently in the LPRIC and that these 'responsibilities' serve a series of distinct nationalist interests. Furthermore, the notion of 'child friendly schools' illustrates the influence UNICEF has had on the drafting process. However, this influence has not been all-encompassing. This is illustrated by the inclusion of a set of 'prohibitions for children' including the prohibition of 'playing games that are outside the curriculum during school time' (2006b: Art 48). This suggests that from the perspective of the Lao state two distinct objectives underlie the drafting of the LPRIC. Ratification of the UN-CRC and subsequent national implementation through the LPRIC contributes to the Lao state's standing in the international arena. At the same time though, the LPRIC has been used to reinforce a series of distinct national interests.

Awareness of legal codes, let alone the extent to which everyday life is shaped by it, is relatively low in the Lao PDR. UNICEF has, however, embarked on an ambitious mission of raising awareness about children's rights in the Lao PDR. This is illustrated by Picture 5.6 (MK. Vongsam-Ang 2007), however, the pictures also illustrate that the UNICEF sponsored dissemination efforts in practice tend to reinforce traditional Lao adult-child relations rather than altering these as some sections in the LPRIC aspire to. For example, the dissemination exercise consists of adults lecturing and children listening, whilst the

latter are also responsible for a good share of the work required for this dissemination exercise.

Picture 5.6: Dissemination of LPRIC in rural Lao PDR

The National Assembly member for Saravan province, Mr Phouvieng Saithammavong (*left*), speaks to schoolchildren.

Students from Saphon Primary School in Naxaynoy village, Saravan province, carry chairs back to their classroom after hearing about some aspects of the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, from National Assembly members of constituency 14 in Saravan province on Tuesday.

Source: *Vientiane Times* (2007a; 2007b)

This continuation of traditional adult-child relations is perhaps unsurprising given that a UNICEF study (Medlicott 2002: 6) found that nearly half of the surveyed teachers had either never heard of the term 'rights' (13%) or had heard about the term 'rights' but did not know what it meant (35%). Furthermore, only 52 percent of the teachers had ever heard of the UN-CRC and only 24 percent was aware that the Lao PDR was already a states party to the UN-CRC for over a decade. Moreover, these figures look only slightly better for the government officials that participated in the research.

The gap between legal discourse and everyday reality is further widened by the terminology employed in LPRIC. The LPRIC adopts the term *dek* for child, and defines *dek* as any person below 18 years of age (2006b: Art 2.1). Yet, using the term *dek* in relation to young people of post-primary school age leads even in government and INGO circles in Vientiane, who are arguably most comfortable with it, to considerable confusion:

> During a research presentation in Vientiane of an NGO-financed study on vocational training conducted in the Lao PDR, a Lao participant from AFESIP, an international organisation working with victims of human trafficking, explained the kinds of vocational training AFESIP offered to victims of trafficking. When elaborating on the AFESIP's activities (in Lao language) the AFESIP representative used the term *dek noi* (children) exclusively. Confronted with confused faces of the other participants, who did not see how 'children' would need vocational education, she quickly corrected herself, emphasising that she was in fact talking about *dek nyai* (lit. big children). When I later asked her about her choice of terminology she explained that AFESIP works with trafficked children, and in their projects children are defined as anyone below 18 years of age. (RD, 11/1/2008)

This excerpt illuminates two sources of confusion. First, the age-cohort that was the topic of this meeting may be defined as children in the legal sense, yet this corresponds poorly with the segment of the population the Lao public generally associate with the term *dek (noi)*.[33] Second, confusions stems from what is regarded as age-appropriate. Since the term *dek (noi)* generally refers to younger children or infants, the participants could not marry this with the idea of vocational training.

5.5.2 Mass-education and the institution of school

Political content in the form of Lao nationalism and revolutionary rhetoric had a central position in educational curricula at all levels in the years after the proclamation of the Lao PDR (Brown and Zasloff 1986: 239). In line with the revolutionary spirit, mass-education was regarded an important vehicle for bringing the young population into state spaces (Scott 1998), just as has been the case in western Europe (Cunningham 1995) or closer afield in Thailand (Keyes 1991).

In the post-socialist era the Lao educational curricula may have lost most of its revolutionary rhetoric. Yet, this is certainly not the case with the nationalist dimension. Evans (1998: 167) thus elaborates that 'it has been through the school system that the majority of young people alive in Laos today have first come in contact with the state'. He continues that it is in school that these children first participate in state rituals like saluting the flag and singing the anthem. It is also in school that these children first see pictures of their national leaders and a map representing the Lao nation. Evans admits that due to numerous weaknesses and imperfections in the school system, all this may not amount to more than 'general impressions', however, he concludes nonetheless that, 'these are enough for them to clearly identify themselves as Lao' (Evans 1998: 167).

Table 5.2 above has illustrated that sending children to school, for at least some years, is in a village like *Baan Naam* not just a legal obligation, it has become part of the normative framework of reciprocal relations of rights and responsibilities between children and parents (see also Kabeer 2000a). However, partly due to enrolment at a rather late age not all children complete primary education. Primary school teachers observed further that particularly in the transition from primary four to primary five students tend to drop out, something that is also illustrated in Table 5.4. Table 5.4 shows, however, no overall gender

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[33] In everyday speech the formal term *dek* is seldom used, but rather the colloquial term *dek noi*. The suffix *noi* means 'small'. The colloquial term *dek noi* thus carries stronger connotations of dependence, immaturity and incompetence than the formal term *dek*.

difference in enrolment rates at primary level, although this changes at secondary level. At lower secondary level female students are overrepresented, whereas the opposite is the case at upper secondary level. Furthermore, the steady decline in overall student numbers at each subsequent year into secondary school shows that secondary school participation, let alone completion, cannot be taken for granted even in the relatively few villages like *Baan Naam* where full secondary education is within physical reach.

Table 5.4: Enrolment rates primary and secondary school *Baan Naam* (2007-08)[34]

Level/Grade	Total number of students	Gender ratio (male: female)
PRIMARY		
Preparatory primary	28	0.65
Primary 1	50	0.79
Primary 2	46	1.56
Primary 3	46	1.19
Primary 4	56	0.87
Primary 5	36	1.00
Total primary	*262*	*0.99*
SECONDARY		
LOWER SECONDARY		
Secondary 1	128	0.34
Secondary 2	105	0.88
Secondary 3	88	0.83
Sub-total Low. Sec.	*321*	*0.71*
UPPER SECONDARY		
Secondary 4	67	1.68
Secondary 5	41	3.1
Secondary 6	31	2.1
Sub-total Up. Sec.	*139*	*2.09*
Total Secondary	*460*	*0.97*

5.5.2.1 Schools as a disciplinary arm of parents and the state

The utility of spending a certain number of years in mass-education systems is generally beyond discussion, something that is reflected by its inclusion in the Millennium Development Goals and in the UN-CRC. This dissertation does not wish to question the many positives mass-education systems may contribute to, whether this relates to a Freirean process of empowerment, to straight-forward economic growth (Bils and Klenow 2000), or to processes of nation building discussed in the previous section. However, a dimension that has received relatively little attention is the role of school in inter-generational power struggles, between the state and its young population but also between parents and their children.

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[34] Note that the primary school enrols children from *Baan Naam* and one neighbouring village (2km away) only. The secondary school draws students from a total of 10 villages (*Baan Naam* included) within a range of about 10km.

Murdoch (2002: 29) observes in this respect that Lao parents regard 'the institution of the school as an important and trusted partner in looking after their children'. This observation is easily supported by data from *Baan Naam*. Parents, for example, fully supported a policy imposed by the secondary school which meant that the area in which students parked their bikes and motorbikes would remain locked till the end of the school day. This policy was implemented as a means to address an apparent problem of students skipping afternoon classes without their parents' and teachers' knowledge and approval. It also meant that students whom, for several reasons, spent their lunch break at home had to make this journey on foot in the heat of the day as they were not allowed taking their bicycles or motorbikes out anymore, much to their dislike (RD, 4/1/2008).

Another school-imposed measure which received approval of parents but was unpopular amongst students was the practice of fining students (30,000 *Kip*) when they were seen by teachers participating in *lamvong* dancing at local village festivals or at neighbouring village festivals (RD, 8/4/2008). Other disciplinary measures which are generally more popular amongst students' parents than their children on whom it is imposed include a prohibition for boys to wear their hair long and for girls to wear it short, and a general prohibition on dying hair during term time. Although students are occasionally punished (by losing marks) for inappropriate hairstyle, and also for inappropriate dress, this seems to have little effect and appears to be a battle already lost (RD, 5/12/2007).

A clear example of the disciplinary function of school in relation to the Lao state is found in Lao school uniforms. Like the case with hair-dress described above, Lao school uniforms are modelled on adult dress and particularly in relation to girls school uniforms are directly related to government attempts of preserving culture (Phonesavanh Sangsomboun 2008). As shown in Picture 5.7, boys wear trousers and shirts, and only some boys in pre-primary or early primary may be seen wearing shorts.[35] Girls wear from a young age and without exception the traditional Lao (long) skirt (*siin*) and a blouse.

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[35] Note though that photos in Evans (2009: 394, picture 14.3) from the pre-communist era display school-going boys who seem to be of secondary school age wearing shorts.

Picture 5.7: Lao national school uniforms (*Baan Naam* Secondary school, 2007; photo taken as part of auto-photography method by Secondary 6 students)

5.5.3 The Lao Revolutionary Youth Union

> The objectives of the LRYU committee are to encourage every *xao nhum* [youth] to carry out the revolutionary objectives of the Lao Revolutionary Party [ruling party] and to continue carrying out the new transformational policies based on the regulations of the Lao Revolutionary Party (LRYU 2006: Preamble)

The Lao Revolutionary Youth Union (LRYU) is one of the Lao mass-organisations. The LRYU has been an important political instrument in the history of the Lao revolutionary movement (Brown and Zasloff 1986: 170) and it resembles similar state-led youth movements in other (former) socialist states, such as the *Komsomol* in the former Soviet Union (Grant 1970: 63-72; Riordan 1987). The *Komsomol* no longer plays an active role in contemporary Russia (Andersen 2008). In contrast, the LRYU seems to have survived the global collapse of communism as the LRYU boasted a total of 243,500 *xao nhum* members (15-35 years) in 2008 (www.laoyouth.org.la), about 12.5% of the corresponding population. Moreover, this figure would undoubtedly increase significantly if affiliation with the lower, school-based, divisions of the LRYU were included (that of *aanuxon* (6-9 years) and *nyauwaxon* (9-15 years)). A further sign of the LRYU's vitality in the post-socialist era is the fact that the Lao commercial Television channel *Lao Star Channel* dedicates a weekly programme to the *nyauwaxon* division of the LRYU.

The quote above illustrates without any lack of clarity the important political premium placed on winning the young population for revolutionary, but these days increasingly nation building objectives (Evans 1998; LRYU 2006: 1-4). This ideological dimension of

the LRYU is something that the international development community may not necessarily agree with, or even be aware of. Yet, the LRYU is the default Lao counterpart for any international intervention concerning children and youth and its relevance and vitality in the contemporary Lao PDR is, therefore, in part maintained by the international development community.

Apart from its school-based wing, the LRYU also has a village based division called the *xao nhum baan*. In contrast with its school-based equivalent the *xao nhum baan* does not apply the entry criteria and a period of observation on which basis school-based LRYU membership is granted (LRYU 2006: Art 1, 2). In fact, the village based wing of LRYU simply targets all out-of-school youth of at least 15 years of age because otherwise there 'is no organisation to control them and to be responsible for them', which may cause young people to 'do wrong things' (village-based LRYU leader in *Baan Naam*, 9/7/2008). This illustrates the importance the Lao state attaches to maintaining the legibility of the young population by keeping them within the space of the state (Scott 1998).

As stated in the previous chapter, the institution of the LRYU and the school are also examples of the presence of the state in the village. This is clearly illustrated by the flag raising ritual depicted in Picture 5.8.

Picture 5.8: Flag raising ritual at *Baan Naam* Secondary school (picture taken by Sec 6 student, autophotography, October 2007)

The flag raising ritual is a miniature reflection of the political structure of the contemporary Lao state. The two highest ranking *xao nhum* members take central stage and raise the Lao flag. Right behind them are the ordinary *xao nhum* members (all in blue shirts), flanked by *nyauwason* members (wearing red scarves). The bulk of the students is, for various reasons, not a member of the LRYU, and can be seen as representing the ordinary population (*paxaaxon*). This ritual can thus be interpreted as reinforcing Lao state-population relations, including the role of the party.

Furthermore, the internal hierarchy of the school-based *xao nhum* and *nyauwaxon* divisions are modelled on the formal structure of village organisation and the military respectively, and inspired by the principle of democratic centralism described in the Lao constitution (2003a). School-based *xao nhum* members are led by an overall leader and his, or her, secretary (the flag raisers in picture 5.8). Next, all members are organised in units and each unit has its own leader and vice-leader, resembling the formal village structure. The *nyauwaxon* members are organised in a similar hierarchical fashion, yet here the model and the terminology is derived from the Lao military (interviews with secondary school teachers responsible for *xao nhum* and *nyauwaxon* division, 22/5/2008).

Through LRYU membership young people may also be actively drawn into state practices beyond the sphere of the school such as safeguarding national security at the *That Luang*. Picture 5.9 shows *xao nhum* members (in blue shirts) performing body-searches on festival-goers.

Despite the importance of a record of LRYU membership and favourable letters of recommendation of LRYU divisions for obtaining government related positions, only a minority of the students in *Baan Naam* are LRYU member. This can partly be explained by the entrance requirement for obtaining LRYU membership and the role of teachers in selecting suitable members. However, some children and young people also actively resist becoming a member and thereby becoming part of the state structure by making sure that their behaviour falls short of LRYU standards. This appeared less the case with the village-based wing of the LRYU, probably because membership of the village-based LRYU places young villagers under hardly any form of state scrutiny. Members are, for example, not required to wear specific dress and they normally meet only once every three months. In addition, absent members are only followed up and fined (5,000 *Kip*) if they have missed three such meetings in a row.

5.6   Conclusion

The analysis presented in this chapter has illustrated that the role and position of children and young people is shaped by several structuring relations, ranging from the traditional social system of *phiinôông* to the international UN-CRC and the nationalist LRYU. Moreover, in the transitional context of the contemporary Lao PDR these different

structuring frames increasingly interact and actors at different levels of analysis, including children and young people themselves, actively engage with and negotiate these structuring frames producing new, hybrid and constantly evolving frames of meaning.

Underlying these structuring relations is the important question of control over the young population. Here, interests between the state and peasant households diverge. For the state, the young population is primarily of importance as 'becomings' and it is, therefore, of key importance to maintain its legibility by keeping the young population within the space of the state (Scott 1998). In peasant households, however, children and young people are also important in the immediate sense as 'beings', although precise roles differ and vary in important ways between children across and within households.

This leads to two important sets of observations concerning the involvement of children and young people in migration. The first set of observations is based on childhood and youth as a lived reality in rural Lao PDR. From this perspective migration for work at a young age fits with children's important role as 'beings' in peasant households, and can in this way simply be understood as a household response to changing socio-economic and political realities. Furthermore, this chapter has also illustrated that non-involvement in migration should be no means be equated as a childhood or youth free from work. Hence, whether working conditions in migration, or the work itself, are better or worse, or more or less attractive, than its alternatives in and around the village is something that cannot be assumed but has to be established empirically and may vary considerably between children within and across households. Furthermore, this chapter has also illustrated that migration neither necessarily constitutes young villagers' first money earning experience, nor their first experience of cross-border work. Migration for work can in the context of *Baan Naam* thus not be reduced to a response to an absolute lack of earning possibilities in the local context. This sheds a critical light on the claim that generating local employment opportunities will reduce young people's involvement in migration (e.g. Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2003: 55). The material presented in this chapter has also shed doubt on the naivety that is often attributed to young rural Lao migrants (e.g. UNICEF and MoLSW 2004). This chapter has shown that young migrants arrive at migration destination with considerable work experience, albeit often of a rural nature, obtained in and around the village and on a commuting basis in Thailand. As the following chapters illustrate in further detail, simply knowing how to work and to get on with things in work settings is an important resource that young migrants draw on in various migration destinations.

The second set of observations refers to the construction of migration involving minors as a problem that needs to be put to a halt. The importance the Lao state places on maintaining the legibility of the young population by keeping young people within state structures explains in part the paradox of why migration for work involving minors has become such a major concern despite the fact that so little is still known about it and that the information that is available shows by no means that this necessarily leads to worst-case scenarios of abuse and exploitation (Huijsmans 2008). In case young villagers migrate internally or across the border to Thailand they act beyond the direct sphere of influence of the state and beyond the direct disciplinary gaze of their parents, this is particularly true in case of migration for work through non-state authorised channels. In contrast, in case of fostering, entering the Buddhist Sangha, migration for education, migration through Lao recruitment agencies, or migration in order to join the army, children and young people remain within the gaze of the state and/or parental authority. This not only allows the state to carry out its legitimate protective function, it also ensures the legibility of these young migrants. The argument put forth here does not deny that the Lao state has a genuine concern about the welfare of its population, and the young population in particular. Rather, it is to say that this concern is not limited to a motivation based on protecting and improving the human condition of its population solely, but that it is also shaped by nation building objectives and the important role of the young population in this, which are in part legitimised through international conventions.

The following chapter turns to the important question of who the young migrants are by looking at how migration involving young people is distributed across and within households. This analysis builds, in part, on the work of young people's social position in the household developed in this chapter. This analytical work is also returned to in chapter seven which unravels some of the main processes by which young villagers become young migrants, or due to which they continue to stay in the village.

6 Migration and Non-migration by Young People from *Baan Naam*: A quantified view

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of three that concentrates on migration and non-migration of children and young people in *Baan Naam* specifically. In contrast with the main orientation of the dissertation, this chapter engages with a series of questions demanding quantified responses. However, the aim of the chapter is not to tease out statistically significant conclusions as this would have required a different methodology. Instead, the quantified view presented in this chapter serves to give an overview of some striking patterns concerning migration and non-migration involving young villagers. This chapter, thereby, allows situating the qualitative analysis presented in the previous and subsequent chapters.

The analysis presented in this chapter is for an important part based on household survey data collected from 54 households as described in chapter three. However, the analysis is not limited to survey material but is enriched with data obtained through several other methods of a more qualitative nature.

Given the quantitative orientation of this chapter, this chapter first discusses conceptualisations of migration before introducing a working definition that underlies the analysis presented in this, and in the following chapters. Next the chapter turns to a series of distributional features of the young migrant population such as age, sex, destination of migration and purpose of migration. In the final part of the chapter, the analytical focus turns away from individual characteristics of young migrants and young non-migrants to household characteristics of migrant and non-migrant sending households, in order to highlight some of the key household characteristics that affect the distribution of young migrants across households.

6.1.1 Migration: Concepts and practice

Migration has been defined in numerous ways, but virtually all definitions comprise a spatial and a temporal component. However, for how long exactly one has to be away in order to call something, or stop calling something, migration, and what kinds of boundaries need to be crossed in order to consider something migration tends to vary from one definition to the other. Cohen (1987) has argued in this respect that when these definitional components are stretched to the extent that childhood events like moving for the first time

from a cradle to a bed or leaving home for the first day at school become defined as migration (see Jackson 1969: 1, IN: Cohen 1987: 33), definitions of migration have effectively become useless. In such cases it may be better to distinguish between mobility and migration, and conceptualise migration as a particular sub-set of the wider phenomenon of mobilities (Hannam *et al.* 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006).

Apart from setting criteria, definitions of migration are often also ontological statements. The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology defines migration, for example, as follows:

> Migration involves the (more or less) permanent movement of individuals or groups across symbolic or political boundaries into new residential areas and communities (Marshall 1998: 415)

In this definition it appears that migration is understood in opposition to settled residency, with the added qualification that it involves crossing a symbolic or political boundary. The underlying worldview is one in which sedentary lifestyles are treated as the norm and migration thus becomes something a-typical. In practice this often comes with negative connotations. Scott (1998) has argued in this respect that from the perspective of the modernising state, stimulating, normalising, and even enforcing sedentary lives are intrinsically related to practices of state-building. Permanent settlements aid the process of legibility, and thereby, create a precondition for the state to impose itself. Migration on the other hand, particularly in its unregulated form, is problematic from the perspective of the modernising state since it amounts to the precise opposite, illegibility, and the creation of non-state spaces. Nonetheless, McDowell and De Haan (1997: 3, original emphasis) have argued that 'in much of Africa and South Asia, however, movement **is** the established pattern'.

The relation between a mobile population and a modernising state is thus a conflictual one. The conflict is one between the everyday micro-level realities of building and maintaining livelihoods by exploiting available opportunities, and the nationalist and modernist vision of the authoritarian post-socialist Lao state. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Lao context offers ample examples of state efforts aiming to curb non-sedentary lifestyles, migration and mobility (Evrard and Goudineau 2004; Baird and Shoemaker 2007; Somsack Pongkhao 2008b), as well as aims to make migration and mobility legible by bringing it into state spaces (Vientiane Times 2005; Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2007; Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008).

The tendency to treat mobility and migration as a-typical is particularly problematic in relation to young people. When it comes to infants there may indeed be good reasons to

view early separation from parents or care-givers with concern. However, these arguments become increasingly less convincing when applied to older children. In fact, separation from parents and establishing an independent household is in many contexts an important rite of passage in the life course. Setting up a new household or moving in with in-laws, even within the same village, involves crossing significant boundaries (Sparkes 2005: 71) and certainly qualifies as a movement into a new residential area or community. It thus fits the definition of migration presented above. A further similarity between relocation for purposes of marriage and other forms of migration is that both practices frequently revolve around questions of labour.

The youth stage of the life course is not only shaped by mobility and migration in relation to the practice of marriage. Migration and mobility are also intrinsically related to a number of other practices associated with the youth stage of the life course, such as becoming involved in the adult-world of work, entering extra-local education (Hashim 2007; Whitehead *et al.* 2007: 20) or in relation to various rites of passage (Kirsch 1966; Jónsson 2008). In other words, in the youth stage of the life course involvement in mobility and migration may well be the norm, and non-migration and immobility the exception.

6.1.2 Operationalising definitions of migration

The questions in the household survey that aimed to capture the incidence of migration in *Baan Naam* were based on rather loose definitional criteria. Heads of household were asked if any of their children or other household members were absent at the time of the survey or had been absent for a period of time over the past 12 months. Positive responses to these two questions triggered a series of follow-up questions. However, whether staying away from the household was in any way significant, and would consequently be considered as a form of migration, was thus in the first place left to the respondents themselves.[36] Furthermore, given the sensitivity of migration in the Lao context and the pitfalls of one-off surveys, the household survey data are undoubtedly plagued by under-reporting and skewed towards particular forms of migration. This shortcoming is, in part, corrected for by adding observations obtained through alternative methods, which is explained in more detail below.

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[36] Here an unresolved methodological issue needs to be emphasised. As household surveys were conducted with parents predominantly, the answer to the question whether staying elsewhere was significant enough to be mentioned at all reflects an adult perspective which may not necessarily correspond with children and youth's own perspectives on matters.

Household members who were on the basis of household survey data regarded as migrants were thus the ones who were recorded as either *absent* or *mobile* (currently present, but absent for a period of time over the past 12 months). Unsurprisingly, marriage featured as a prime reason why children were absent from the natal household. In 47 out of the 98 cases recorded as 'absent', it was marriage that was stated as the reason for this absenteeism. Absenteeism for purposes of marriage can, as argued above, be regarded as a particular form of migration. Here, however, these records were removed from the sample and not analysed further since the focus of this study is on cases in which household members were staying elsewhere but were still regarded as being part of the natal household, which mostly ceases to be the case following marriage.[37]

Once the absent records referring to marriage were removed, a total of 67 records remained constituting a total migration rate of 18 percent.[38] These 67 migrants stem from a total of 39 different households. Hence, in nearly three quarters of the surveyed households, at least one household member was found to be involved in some form of migration. The migration ratio found in *Baan Naam* is significantly higher than the total migration rate (6.5%) found in a large scale survey covering three central and southern Lao provinces, using representative sampling methods (MoLSW *et al.* 2003). This difference is, however, unsurprising since border villages and villages located on the road network generally tend, in the Lao context, to have higher migration rates (MoLSW *et al.* 2003; Messerli *et al.* 2008). Both these geographical characteristics apply to *Baan Naam*.

The 67 migrants emerging from the household survey data can be subdivided into 16 'mobile' records belonging to household member who had been absent for a period of time over the past 12 months but who were currently present, and 51 'absent' household members who were recorded as currently absent. Figure 6.1 organises the data by sex and age, combining the mobile and absent records. It needs re-emphasising though that for reasons stated in chapter five the chronological ages presented in any of the figures in this chapter need to be treated as approximation and not as precise figures.[39]

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[37] Note that marriage may follow from migration. This is discussed below.
[38] The precise procedure by which the total migrant population of *Baan Naam* is constructed is set out in detail in Appendix 5.
[39] Note that chronological ages originally reported in the household survey are corrected if later research found these to be wrong.

Figure 6.1: Total migrant population in Baan Naam by age and sex, based on household survey data (n=67)
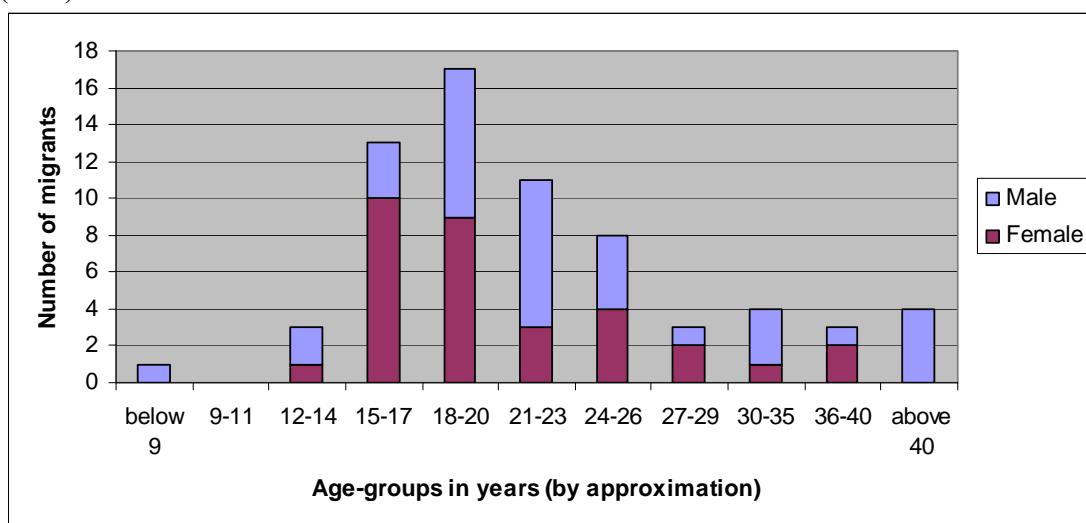
The total migrant population presented in Figure 6.1 shows that, in total, there is no marked difference in overall participation in migration between the two sexes, with a total of 35 male and 32 female migrants. However, some differences can be observed between the distribution of male and female migrants across different age group. In general, in the age groups 15-17 years and 18-20 years, which contain most migrants, females dominate. Since the household survey data lacks historical depth this pattern cannot be explained by era-level transformations, but, most likely follows from gender differences in educational attainment and age of marriage referred to in chapter five.

Table 6.1 takes a closer look at the marital status of the individual records of the migrant population and shows that nearly three quarters of the migrants left when still single, never-married. The observation that it is mainly youth that are involved in migration, and only few adults, bears relation with an observation from a study on Vocational training in the Lao PDR conducted by Concern Worldwide, the Gender & Development Group, and the Lao Women's Union. One of the findings presented by this study was that most young people claimed to have few aspirations to remain as employees in small workplaces long term, but instead, aspired to setting up their own enterprise once they had learnt the skills and earned sufficient capital in order to be freed from the constraints inherent to working for someone else (note from research presentation, RD, 11/1/2008). The social position of employees vis-à-vis employers in small-scale Lao and Thai businesses, which is discussed in more detail in chapter eight, shows some similarities with that of children in adult-child relations, as they are dependent, can be ordered around and are seldom listened to in when it comes to decision-making. For young migrants this position is more or less a

continuation of their social position as children and youth. However, as young migrants become adults in other spheres of life, this conflicts increasingly with being ordered around in the workplace.

Of the young migrants migrating to Thailand, a good proportion, mainly constituting female migrants, found a partner at migration destinations in Thailand and subsequently settled in Thailand. In contrast, most of their non-migrant peers married and settled in the proximity of *Baan Naam*. Out of the 47 cases (17 male; 30 female) in which marriage seems to have been the reason why children no longer reside with the natal household, 33 (11 male, 22 female) are now residing in *Baan Naam* or in the district.[40] This suggests that particularly in the case of women, migration to Thailand is an important route through which young villagers become involved in extra-local marriages, and also, come to reside in Thailand. Furthermore, this pattern also suggests a reversal from observations of several decades ago in which it were mainly young men who were the ones meeting their marriage partners through migratory endeavours (Kirsch 1966).

Table 6.1: Marital status of total migrant population in *Baan Naam* based on household survey data

Marital Status	Male (% of all male migrants)	Female (% of all female migrants)	Total (% of total)
Single, never-married	23 (66%)	19 (59%)	42 (63%)
Married at migration destination (Thailand)	2 (6%)	7 (22%)	9 (13%)
Divorced	2 (6%)	3 (9%)	5 (7%)
Widow	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (2%)
Married before migration	8 (23%)	2 (6%)	10 (15%)
TOTAL	35 (100%)	32 (100%)	67 (100%)

Table 6.1 further shows that five migrants migrated following a divorce in *Baan Naam*. The data further comprise one widow, and ten migrants who were already married when

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[40] This of course does not rule out that these children found a marriage partner through migration, but if so, they at least returned to their village, or district to settle. Furthermore in case married children settled beyond the district (7 cases; 3 male, 4 female), this seemed, but was not researched specifically, to be related to having relatives elsewhere. Lastly, in 7 cases (3 male, 4 female) current place of residency of married children was unclear.

becoming involved in migration. The widow and ten married migrants refer, with the exception of one, all to cases of migration in the age groups above 30 years. Note further that the two female migrants with a marital status of 'married' had migrated together with their husbands. The widowed lady had also originally migrated together with her husband; he, however, subsequently died in a work-related accident at the construction site in Bangkok where the couple were employed. The relative absence of married women amongst the migrant population resonates with Mills' (1999) work with migrants from North-eastern Thailand. Once young rural women, including former migrants, marry and set up a household in rural areas Mills found that they are unlikely to combine this new status with a continued involvement in independent migrant work.

6.2 The young migrant population in Baan Naam

The household survey data presented in Figure 6.1 and Table 6.1 in the previous section has highlighted that in the case of *Baan Naam* migration is primarily undertaken by unmarried youth, involving hardly any young children and few married adults. The observed age distribution of migrants, and the variation observed between the two sexes concurs with large scale observations on migration in the Lao PDR (MoLSW *et al.* 2003).

In this section the analysis moves from cross-sectional perspective to migration involving children and young people only. Furthermore, the scope of analysis is extended beyond household survey data. Combining household survey material with data obtained through life-histories, household-histories, bi-monthly interviews and ethnographic observations adds historical depth and continuity to the snapshot picture produced by a one-off survey. This reduces the temporal and seasonal bias intrinsic to one-off surveys. However, since the additional observations were drawn from a purposefully selected sample (mostly from household members of the 26 children and young people involved in the bi-monthly interviews), the subsequent analysis loses some of its validity in terms of village-wide representation.

6.2.1 Constructing a young migrant only sample

Identification of child and youth migrants is in this study done on the basis of social characteristics, rather than rigidly enforcing arbitrary and problematic age-based constructs, as discussed in the previous chapter. This way, all migrants who had migrated prior to having established their own families or households are considered child and youth migrants, simply since the FGDs analysed in the previous chapter illustrated that having

one's own household is a key criterion for adulthood. Subsequently, 11 out of the 67 records of migrants presented above were deleted, as these records belong to adult migrants, individuals who had migrated whilst already having established their own households. The remaining 56 records belong to mostly single, never married individuals and some young divorcees.

The next step comprised adding a total of 19 records, belonging to children and youth who were identified as young migrants through other methods than the household survey. This included cases of young migrants that were unreported in the household survey, but also children and youth who had migrated prior to the period covered by the survey (prior to September 2006) and who had subsequently returned, as well as migrations observed in the period following the household survey (October 2007-March 2009).

By adding these 19 records, the working definition of migration was further loosened. In spatial terms it now includes migrations involving a mere change of residence within *Baan Naam* (this refers to two cases of child fosterage, and one case of entering the Buddhist Sangha), and in terms of duration it now includes migrations of very short duration. The shortest spell refers to a girl who first got involved in migration at the age of 17 when taking up factory work in Vientiane, only to return two days later due to dissatisfaction with the working conditions and salary. Other short-term work-related trips away from the household such as staying overnight in the family fields or day labour on the Thai side of the border are not, however, considered migration here because these work related mobilities are by villagers regarded as part and parcel of residential village life.

Whilst most migrations undertaken by the added 19 young people took place over greater distances and lasted much longer than the two-days of urban factory work described above, these short spells of migration or migrations covering hardly any physical distance are nevertheless included in the analysis here since especially at a young age such events constitute important formative migratory experiences that affect subsequent migration decisions:

> I don't want to live in Vientiane because people there will look at me since they can see that I'm from *baan nôôk* (the countryside). They will also talk about me since I will make mistakes. This will make me feel shy. I know this is true because I stayed in Vientiane when I was 14. My relatives had asked my mother if I could come and stay with them. I went and worked in my aunt's shop but I left after one week already because I felt I couldn't stay there. (Notes from photo-based interview with Choi on 7-8/2/2008, she was 15 years old at the time of interview)

Adding the additional 19 records raises the total sample to 75 migrant children and youth, from here on termed 'young migrants', consisting of 34 boys and young men, and 41 girls

and young women. The vast majority of these 75 young migrants are so-called 'independent' migrants (Whitehead *et al.* 2007), meaning that they have migrated without parents or adult care-givers. To be precise, in six instances the young migrants migrated in the company of parents or caregivers. This concerns one case of temporary family migration involving a 12 year old girl and her seven year old brother. In another case, two daughters joined their mother to work at a construction site in Bangkok at age 15 and 16 respectively. In yet another case, a daughter left at the age of 14 together with her mother for a factory in central Thailand and finally, a son who joined his father at the age of 14 logging wood in Vientiane Province.

By combining data obtained through several methods, the age of first migration could in be established with relative accuracy in 65 cases. This is presented in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Young migrants by sex and age of first migration (n=75)
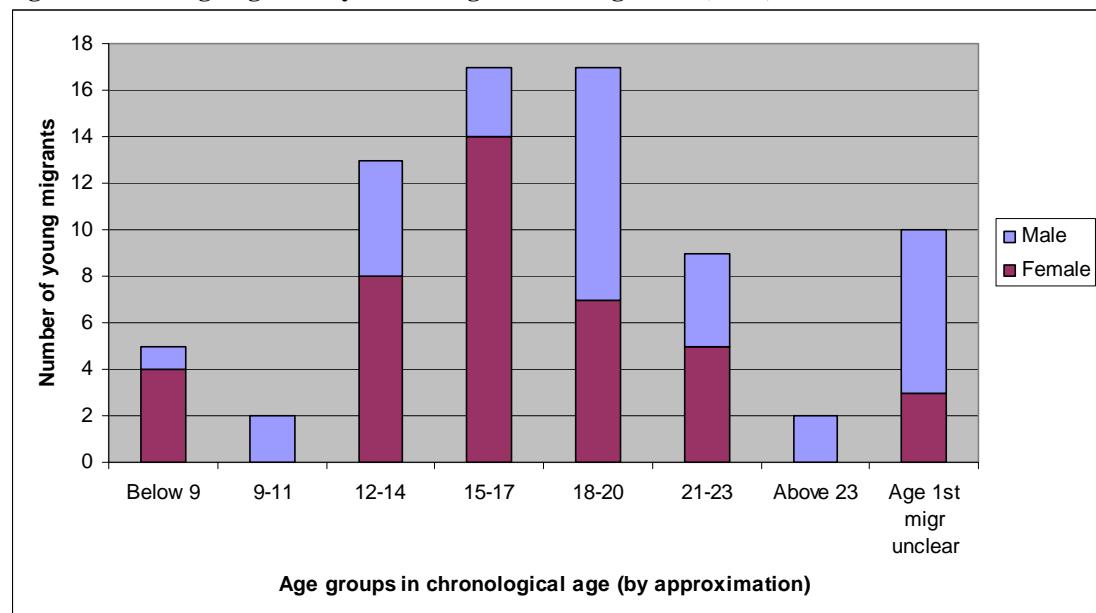
Comparing Figure 6.1 with Figure 6.2, two striking observations emerge. In terms of gender, the gender ratio in Figure 6.2 (34:41), compared with Figure 6.1 (35:32), is reversed with overall more female young migrants than male. Furthermore, basing the analysis on 'first age of migration' instead of 'age at survey', which was used in Figure 6.1, brings out more strongly that it is predominantly girls who migrate at a young age. Second, using age at time of survey, which is also used in the Lao Migration Survey (MoLSW *et al.* 2003), it appears that hardly any children are involved in migration. When adjusting this for first age of migration this initial conclusion needs to be revisited.

A total of seven of these young migrants are observed to have left their natal household before the age of 12. This includes one boy who became a novice in *Isaan* in the village of his maternal grandmother, one boy who stayed together with his older sister and parents for a couple of weeks on a relatives' farm in another district to help out with the harvest, and five cases of fostering (three within the village, two in another district). Whilst novices fill an important part of their day with all sorts of chores in and around the monastery (see e.g. Bilodeau *et al.* 1955), and fosterage of children is often as much about filling labour demands in the receiving household as it is about decreasing the number of mouths to feed, infertility, old-age security, and continuation of lineage (see e.g. Sparkes 2005), these purposes of migration are nevertheless mostly regarded as social and non-economic. Hence, in the case of *Baan Naam* the few young children involved in migration were not found to be involved in migration for purposes of work solely.

6.2.2 Young migrants' educational attainment and the relation between migration and education

Hashim's (2007) work on independent child migration and education in the Ghanaian context shows that the linkages between the involvement in migration at a young age and pursuing an education are complex and can be both negative as well as positive. This section analyses some of these linkages in the context of *Baan Naam*.

The first question is whether young migrants have terminated their education prematurely in order to migrate, or were forced to do so? Considering young migrants' educational attainment in comparison with observed patterns of educational attainment in *Baan Naam* sheds some light on this question. Figure 6.3 plots the educational attainment of the 75 young migrants by sex. It shows that the vast majority (86%) of young migrants have at least completed compulsory education (primary level). This data cannot be directly compared with other data sources on educational attainment like census data since these sources structure data on educational attainment differently by, for example, total population, age of compulsory education only, etc. Nonetheless, the pattern presented in Figure 6.3, largely mirrors enrolment patterns presented in the previous chapter. It seems thus safe to conclude that the pattern depicted in Figure 6.3 is not a-typical for contemporary educational attainment at a village wide level.

Figure 6.3: Young migrants' educational attainment by gender (n=75)
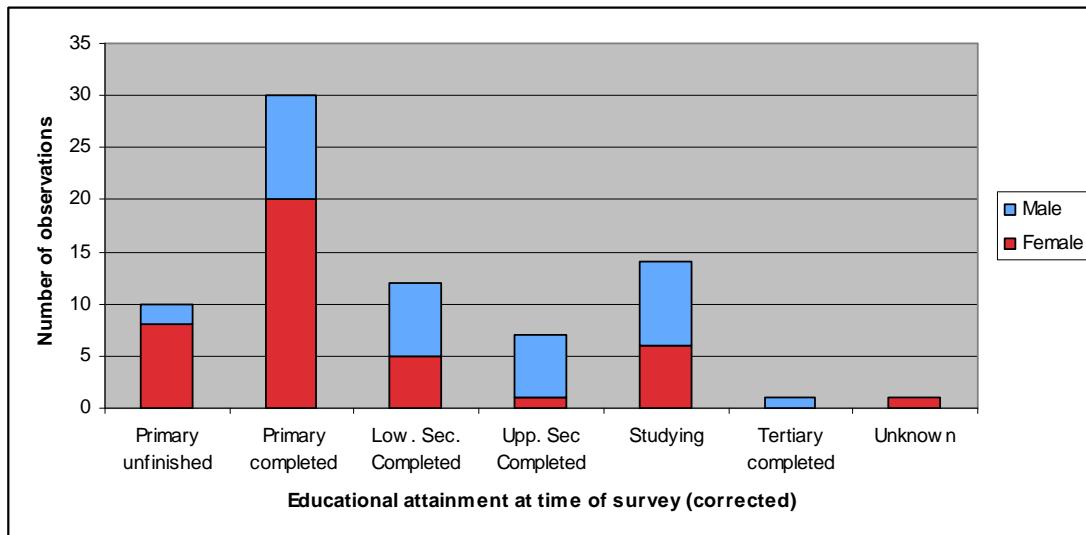
The 'studying' column illustrates that involvement in migration constitutes in the case of *Baan Naam* also a means to participate in education, often beyond what is locally available. A total of 12 young migrants migrated for purposes of education, ten (five male; five female) for post-secondary education, and two (males) for secondary education. With the exception of one young man who has meanwhile completed his teacher training ('tertiary completed') all others are still studying and, therefore, included in the 'studying' column. The remaining three records (2 male; 1 female) in the studying column refer to young migrants who study in *Baan Naam* but who had migrated during school holidays. In one case only, work was the main purpose of migration. In this case, a then 18 year old upper-secondary student worked for a couple of weeks on a construction site in Vientiane city over the long school holiday. Other than this, involvement in migrant work in combination with studying in *Baan Naam* was not observed even though this is, theoretically, quite possible due to the long school holidays.

At this point it is worth noting that migration for purposes of work and migration for purposes of education may in the literature be treated as opposites, in practice they may well be intertwined. Padu, for example, is the first-born daughter of a secondary school teacher couple in *Baan Naam*. She first came to Vientiane at 19 years of age for purposes of study. Since she did not have any relatives in Vientiane who could accommodate her, she settled for accommodation in return for doing domestic work and helping out in a small restaurant owned by her host-family, a family she was not related to. Due to this arrangement most of her days were filled with work, and only a few hours a day she spent studying even though education was her prime motivation for migration. Still, Padu is one

166

of the fortunate few because her family is one of the few families in *Baan Naam* with the means to put children into post-secondary education. For most families, sending children to Vientiane for formal post-secondary formal education is not an option, or at best only possible for one of their children. In such cases migrant work constitutes in fact a more realistic way of learning a skill or a trade than participation in formal education. For this reason precisely Wang was sent to Vientiane at the age of 15 in order to work for her father's younger sister. Wang is the fifth-born in family of six and she was the only daughter still present in the household prior to her migration. As Wang was no longer in school, her father argued that by working for his younger sister who made a living selling chicken dishes in the local market Wang would at least learn to cook and to trade; a valuable skill in his view as Wang might one day start her own business doing this kind of work. Similarly, Paan, the fifth-born in a family with nine children left *Baan Naam* at age 15 with a group of fellow villagers in order to work in a garment workshop in central Thailand. Like Wang, Paan was also already out of school. For Paan, working in a garment workshop was not just a means of earning a salary, but importantly, also an informal training in tailoring. By learning to tailor she hoped that she would one day be able to open her own tailoring shop. Finally, a last born daughter in one of the wealthier, landed households quit school after having finished one year of lower secondary education at the age of 12. Although, a bright student she quit school and took-up an apprentice position in a beauty shop in Vientiane. As a result she was able to open her own beauty shop from her parents' house in *Baan Naam* at the age of 13, something she would not have been able to achieve had she stayed in school (RD, 8/9/2008).

The latter example was the only case observed of a young villager quitting school in order to migrate. However, in several other cases migration of young villagers was observed as indirectly contributing to prematurely dropping out of school. For example, migration of one young household member often effectively increases the workload for the remaining young household members which may lead to quitting school. This dynamic is discussed in more detail in chapter seven. However, it is worth noting that quitting school in such cases is not necessarily a forced course of action, but may also constitute an act of agency on the part of the drop-out. The latter because education is in the Lao context increasingly regarded as unquestionably benign, despite the boredom that characterises the everyday reality in most Lao classrooms and the various school-related disciplinary measures imposed on young people's lives described in chapter five. Putting quitting school in the

framework of filial obligations is one of the few socially appropriate explanations young Lao villagers can give for terminating their education prematurely, apart from resorting to self-derogatory qualification as stupid and lazy. On the other hand, in some instances younger siblings are able to continue their education precisely because of older siblings' involvement in migrant work, if, for example, remittances are in part used to pay for school fees and other educational expenses of siblings. The dynamics described above tend to be shaped by relations of gender and generation.

6.3 Migration at a young age: Purpose and destination

The analysis presented so far suggests that involvement in migration is a singular event. However, many of the cases in which good levels of rapport were established and young villagers were followed over a considerable period of time multiple, rather than singular, involvement in migration seemed to be the norm. This section, therefore, analyses migration involving young people by migration event rather than by individual young migrant. This requires taking note of the various migration events young migrants may have been involved in – as is illustrated for one young migrant in Box 6.1.

Box 6.1: Migration over the young migrant's life course

Ekasone (first born in a household with five children)

8 years	14/15 years	15/16 years	18 years
At age 8 she left *Baan Naam* together with her younger sister to be fostered by her grandparents in another district because her younger siblings grew up and because there were no children in the household of her paternal grandparents to help with daily chores	At age 14/15 her father's younger sister took her and her sister to her home in Bangkok. There, the girls failed to obtain domestic work as was hoped since they appeared too young. Therefore, they worked as child-minder for their aunt in Bangkok.	At age 15/16 they obtained domestic work, in Bangkok and worked in numerous households for about one-and-a-half years.	At about 18 years of age she returned to *Baan Naam* just to move on to Vientiane to start working in construction. This time her younger brother came along and her younger sister remained in *Baan Naam*.

The case described in Box 6.1 is counted as four different migration events. Using this methodology a total of 98 different migration events were observed amongst the 75 young migrants. It should be noted that this total of 98 migration events is only a very conservative number since information concerning a good number of young migrants was

limited to observations recorded during the household survey only. Hence, possible subsequent migrations were not recorded.

Figure 6.4 plots the data by purpose of migration, sex, and age of migration concerning each individual migration event the 75 young migrants were observed to be involved in. In Figure 6.4, the category work comprises the following seven sub-categories: agricultural work; factory work; trade and shop work; joining the army; domestic work (including being a child-minder); work in a bar, restaurant, or guesthouse; and, work in construction. The 'other purposes' category consists of migration for purposes of education, entering the Buddhist Sangha, and fosterage.

Figure 6.4: Main purpose of migration by age and sex for each migration event (n=98)
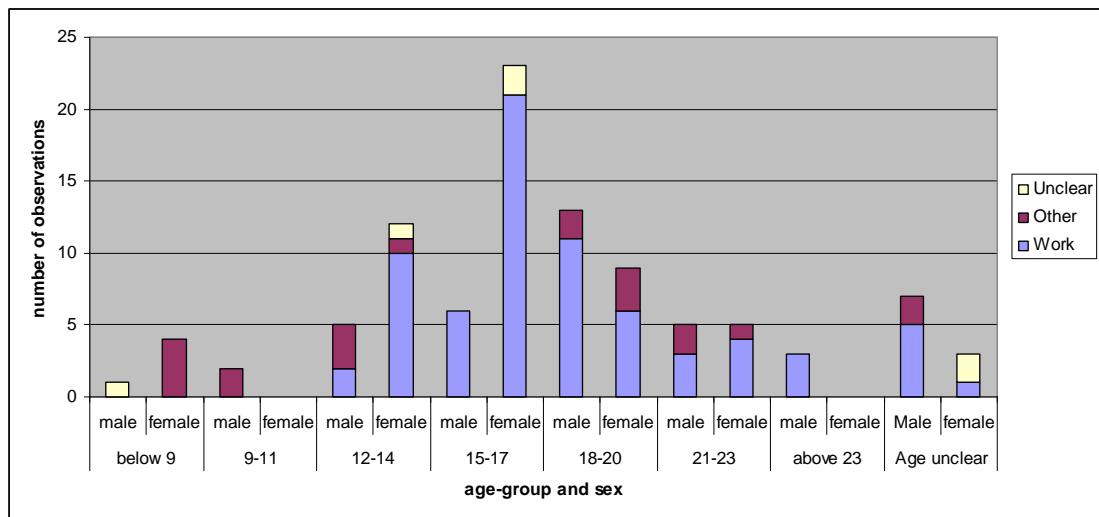
Figure 6.4 confirms that the youngest migrants did not migrate for purposes of work. However, work is the main motivation for migration from the age of 12 onwards. Moreover, Figure 6.4 illustrates that the youngest migrant workers (the age groups 12-14 and 15-17) are predominantly female.

Out of the 98 different migrations, 51 migrations were of an internal nature. These can be sub-divided into seven events with a migration destination within the district in which *Baan Naam* is located, 35 within Vientiane Municipality or Vientiane Province, and in nine cases the migration destination was found in another Lao province. The 46 migration events with a destination in Thailand (in 1 case the destination remained unclear) can be sub-divided into 21 migrations with a destination in the Thai region of *Isaan* and 25 with a destination elsewhere in Thailand. Figure 6.5 plots this data by age of migration and sex.

Figure 6.5: Migration event by sex, age of migration and destination (n=98)
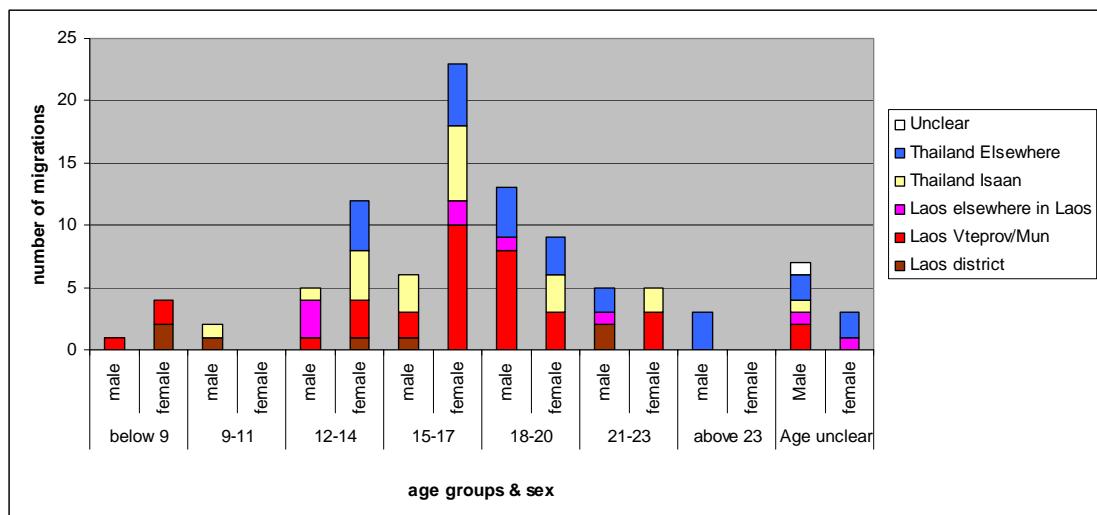
Figure 6.5 shows that all observed migrations undertaken below the age of nine took place took place within the Lao PDR. From the age of 12 onwards young migrants become involved in cross-border migration. However, particularly amongst the younger migrants it is predominantly girls, rather than boys, who become involved in migration of a cross-border type. This is partly so because girls outnumber boys in the young migrant sample in the 12-14 and 15-17 cohort and were also observed in greater number of migration events. In addition, this pattern also follows from the overarching observation that Thailand is the most popular destination for migration for purposes of work, because we have seen above that young migrant girls tend to migrate for purposes of work mainly whereas young male migrants in the 12-14 age group are also involved in migration for other purposes.

Figure 6.6 illustrates the above in further detail. It shows that internal destinations may be most common when all purposes of migration are collapsed, yet, when it comes to migration for purposes of work specifically, Thailand is the main destination. To be precise of the 75 migrations observed for purposes of work, 44 had a Thai destination and 31 a destination within Lao national borders. Furthermore, virtually all migrations undertaken for 'other purposes' had a Lao destination. The single exception constitutes a case in which a ten year old boy entered the Buddhist Sangha in *Isaan*, in the village of his maternal grandmother.

Figure 6.6: Migration by destination and purpose of migration (n=98)
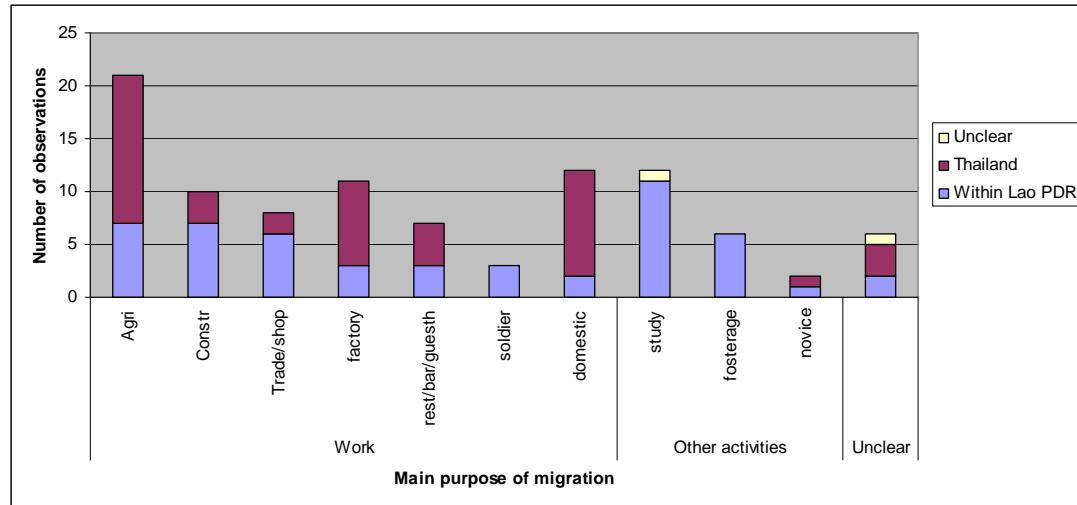
6.4 The distribution of young migrants across households

The analysis presented so far has ignored the important factor of household characteristics in questions of migration and mobility concerning young villagers. A first important observation in this regard is that the 75 young migrants stem from a total of 40 different households. This means that a total of 14 households (26%) surveyed were not observed to have any young migrants amongst their members. Moreover, and as Table 6.2 illustrates, there is considerable variation in the precise distribution of young migrants across the 40 migrant sending households.

Table 6.2: Distribution of young migrants across households

Household by number of young migrants		n	Total number of young migrants	Total number of children and young people in these households	Young migrants as share of total number of children and young people
Households without young migrants		14	0	43	0%
All households with young migrants		40	75	213	35%
Young migrant sending households	Hhs with 1 young migrant	17	17	81	21%
	Hhs with 2 young migrants	14	28	72	39%

Hhs with 3 or more young migrants	9	30	60	50%
Total sample	54	75	256	29%

Table 6.2 shows firstly that the research found a total migration rate concerning young migrants of 29 percent.[41] To recap, these children and young people were observed as involved in migration at some point over the course of the research or had been involved in migration before the research commenced. And, migration includes here a wide range of different forms and purposes. Second, although the young migrants stem from a total of 40 households, 40 percent of all young migrants stem from nine households only. Out of these nine households, seven had three migrant children amongst their members, one household four, and another household five. In these nine households half of the children were identified as young migrants.

The following sections analyse the extent to which a series of household characteristics relate to the variations in distribution of young migrants across households. The analysis focuses particularly on the role of household demographics, households' relative wealth, events in the household developmental cycle such as death and divorce, and the migration history of the household.

6.4.1 Young migrants and household demographics

A striking difference between the migrant sending and non-migrant sending households is the number of young people per household. The median of young people per household in migrant sending households (5) is more than double this median in non-migrant sending households (2). Here, a Chayanovian dynamic is at work. The household developmental cycle is an important factor explaining why some households have only few children; these are mostly young couples with young children. The young age of these children is probably a more important factor explaining why these young people did not become involved in migration than the total number of children in these households.

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[41] Note that the total number of children and young people in a household on which this figure, and the figures in Table 6.2 are based, refers to the total number of children of the main couple (both those still staying in the household and those who have left the household), adopted or fostered children, and other young people staying in the household.

Apart from the role of age, maintaining a minimum supply of domestic child and youth workers may be another reason why households with few children tend to be amongst the non-migrant sending household. However, the fact that one household with six young people and one with nine children were also amongst the non-migrant sending households illustrates that household demographics do not more than shape the distribution of young migrants across households.[42]

6.4.2 Young migrants and households' relative economic standing

As stated in the introductory chapter, *Baan Naam* is by Lao standards certainly not poor. In fact, it is one of the wealthier villages in the district. However, this is not to say that all villagers are wealthy. According to the village headman 21 households were identified as 'poor' in 2008 (notes from interview with village head of *Baan Naam*, 21/5/2008).

Poverty figures are usually based on household income or consumption data, possibly corrected for demographic variations using an adult-equivalent scale (Cockburn *et al.* 2009). Measuring income or consumption accurately is notoriously difficult in peasant households in which a good part of what is consumed and produced does not enter the market, and, therefore, does not fetch a direct price. In addition, consumption, income and asset-ownership is notoriously prone to being misreported as there may be vested interest in appearing poor on paper, ranging from being included in various programmes to tax evasion.

Given these difficulties and the fact that we are primarily interested in variations in economic standings within the village rather than establishing absolute measures of poverty the economic status of the household is here derived at by proxy, using four fairly easy to observe indicators. The indicators are:

♦ *Rice sufficiency*: Households that reported being rice-sufficient for at least 10 months of the year scored '1', households with annual rice deficit of more than two months scored '0'

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[42] One case (hh-id 37) refers to a resettled household of average economic standing. The main couple have four children of their own (oldest 14, daughter) who are all present. In addition, just prior to the household survey a younger sister of the head of household's spouse had moved in with her baby, bringing the total number of 'dependents' to six. The other case (hh-id 43) refers to a household of relatively poor economic standing with nine children of their own. Six children have married and left the natal household (3 within *Baan Naam*). The youngest three (1 son, 2 daughters) are aged between 18-22 years and unmarried and still reside in the natal household and were according to the household survey not involved in migration.

- *Motorbike ownership*: Households owning one or more motorbikes scored '1', households without motorbikes scored '0'

- *Refrigerator ownership*: Households owning a fridge scored '1', those without '0'

- *Quality of housing*: Houses with wooden, brick, or cement walls scored '1', houses with walls made of plaited bamboo scored '0'

Based on this methodology each household earns a score between zero and four points. Households with zero or one point are regarded as relatively poor, households with two or three points as average, and households with four points as relatively better-off.

The first component of the poverty proxy is rice sufficiency. Ethnic Lao peasant households are to a large degree self-provisioning and rice is the staple food. It is then hardly surprising that participatory approaches to poverty measurement found that being rice insecure is according to Lao villagers a main manifestation of poverty (Bounthavy Sisouphanthong *et al.* 2001: 30-33). Rice sufficiency has consequently been used as an important proxy for poverty in many, especially small-scale, studies conducted in the Lao PDR. The advantages are that rural households mostly know quite accurately whether their rice stock sees them through the year, or if not, how many months they are short. In addition, this proxy automatically accommodates for differences in household size. Taking rice shortage as a shorthand for a certain degree of poverty at the level of the household has, however, been criticised by Rigg (2005a: 57-58), who argues that it is far from evident that 'traditional, rice-based lowland systems' ever delivered year round rice-sufficiency, and this measure fails to accommodate specialisation and exchange between households. Further, as household livelihoods diversify and become more spatially diverse, wealth and land-ownership become increasingly disconnected (Rigg 2005a: 82). Further, taking rice-sufficiency as a proxy for relative wealth bears little relation to a growing number of rural households whose livelihoods are disconnected from the land, ranging from shop-owners, traders to school teachers. These households do not produce sufficient rice or sometimes no rice at all, but belong mostly to the better-off households. Lastly, involvement in migration may also compromise rice sufficiency, but this may be easily mitigated if the migratory earnings allow for buying rice. It is on the basis of the above that rice sufficiency is here not used as a single proxy, but only as a component in a composite proxy. It is also on the basis of the above that being rice sufficient for at least ten months out of twelve is here regarded as an indication of not living in poverty.

The other three indicators are kinds of investments households will typically make if they are financially able to do so (e.g. Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black 2004: 32) and thus an indicator of relative economic standing of the household. Moreover, these three types of investment all involve considerable amounts of money for villagers as purchase on credit as is common practice in Thailand is, so far, still relatively rare in *Baan Naam*. These indicators are thus relatively slow-changing unlike, for example, the acquisition of cheaper items such as mobile phones, satellite dishes or VCD sets. This is important for distinguishing between cause and effect. In other words, earnings of short term migration are unlikely to affect these indicators and thereby the household's observed relative economic standing. However, in case of multiple migrant children in one household or long term migration, accumulated migration earnings may well be considerable and thus affect the indicators. In such cases it is impossible, on the basis of these indicators alone, to establish whether relatively better-off households have arrived at this economic status due to their migrant children, or whether this was achieved prior to their children's involvement in migration.

This ambiguity is well-illustrated by the two relatively better-off households in the 'three or more young migrants' category in Figure 6.7. In one case (hh-id 36), five out of the seven children are regarded as young migrants. This is a settler household with a fairly narrow resource base as their total land-ownership falls below one hectare, which includes less productive upland (*hai*). Yet, since only four household members are present on a regular basis they are usually rice sufficient for at least ten months. In addition, much due to the contribution of migrant daughters, the family lives in a solid concrete house, owns a motorbike, and various other consumption goods. In this case the household's relative economic standing has been achieved due to their migrant children. In the other household (hh-id 18), in which three out of the four children were regarded as young migrants the household's relatively better-off standing was achieved prior to the children's involvement in migration. This is best illustrated by the household's landholding which comprises a total of eight hectare, of which five is rented out in return for rice.

Figure 6.7: Incidence of young migrants per household by relative economic standing of household (n=54)
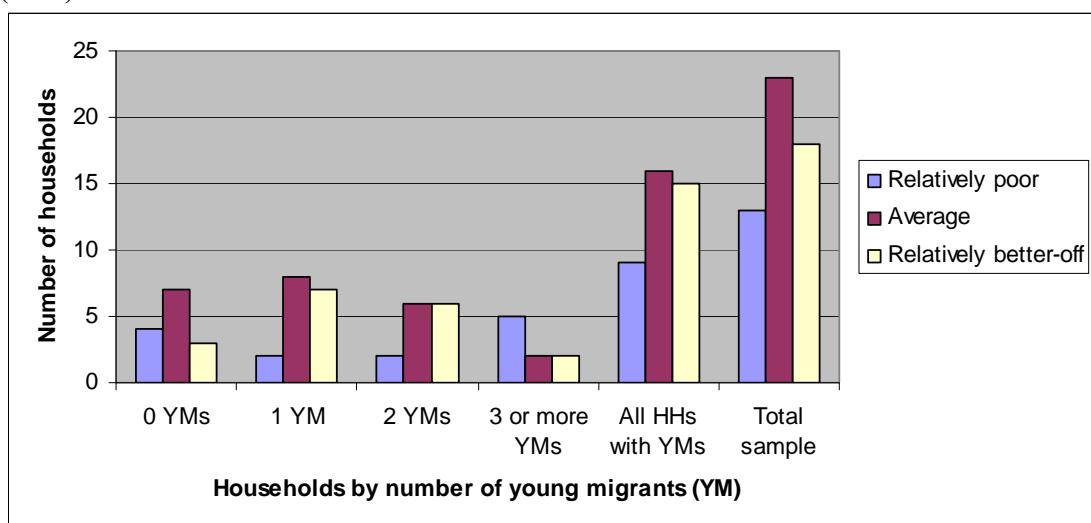
Figure 6.7 plots the distribution of young migrants across households by household's relative economic standing. The graph firstly shows that relatively poor and relatively better-off households can be found amongst the young migrant sending households and the households without any young migrants amongst its members. Looking at this more precisely, Figure 6.7 shows that relatively poor households are slightly overrepresented amongst the households without young migrants (0.29 vs. 0.24), but are proportionally represented amongst the young migrant sending households (0.23 vs. 0.24). This pattern is reversed when it comes to relatively better-off households. These households are slightly overrepresented amongst the young migrant sending households (0.38 vs. 0.33) and underrepresented amongst the households without young migrants (0.21 vs. 0.33).

Looking at migration for purposes of education specifically sheds some light on the patterns described above because participation in extra-local post-secondary education requires significant resources. Out of the 15 relatively better-off migrant sending households, six households had young migrant students amongst its members. This concerns a total of seven young migrants, comprising almost one quarter of the total number of young migrants stemming from relatively better-off migrant sending households. However, five young migrant students (from 5 different households) stem from households which were either classified as average (3) or relatively poor (2). Interestingly, in the latter two cases sending a child away to study elsewhere was both a survival strategy, in the sense that it was one mouth less to feed and did not affect the household labour supply, but also a future oriented strategy as these children were regarded as bright students and could possibly obtain employment in the future.

A further pattern displayed by Figure 6.7 is that the share of relatively better-off households decreases as the number of young migrants per household increases. Conversely, the share of relatively poor households increases as the number of young migrants per household goes up. These two trends become particularly strongly visible in the migrant sending household with three or more young migrants. In this category, five out of nine households are regarded as relatively poor, which only holds for a quarter of the households in the total sample.

In Figure 6.8, the first age of migration of each of the 75 young migrants is plotted by their household's relative economic standing. This shows a striking pattern, illustrating that young migrants from better-off household tend to migrate later in life, whereas their peers from relatively poor households migrate earlier in life. This pattern can, again, be partly explained by the involvement of young migrants from relatively better-off households in migration for purposes of education. With one exception, all migrant students from relatively better-off household migrated for post-secondary education and are, therefore, logically found in the above 17 years age-group.

Figure 6.8: First age of migration of individual young migrants, by household relative economic standing (n=75)
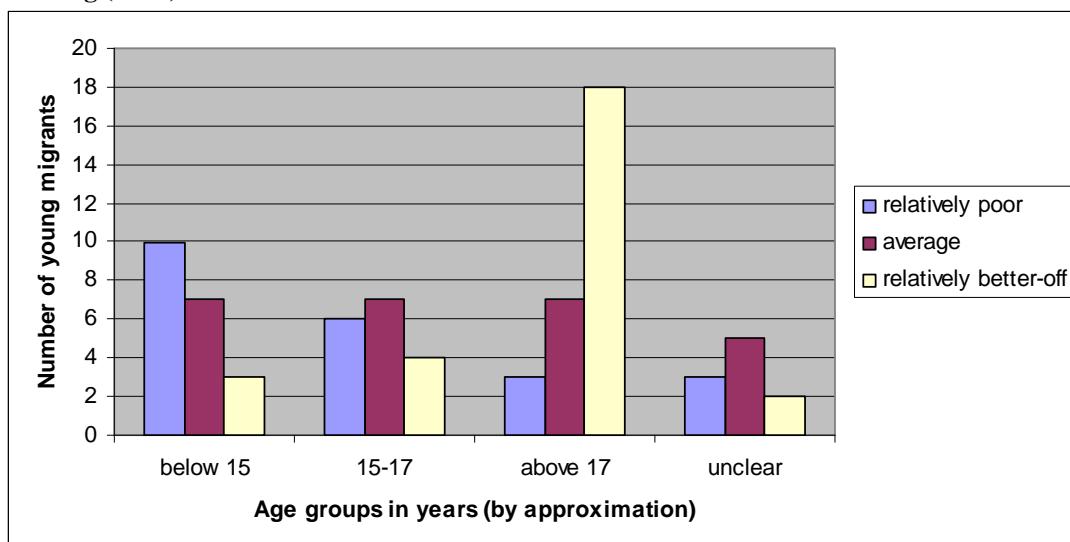
A further explanation underlying the pattern of young migrants from relatively better-off households can be found in the peculiarities of migration through recruitment agencies. These companies, which are described in more detail in chapters four and seven, apply a minimum age of 18 years for recruitment of migrants. In addition, the fees charged by recruitment agencies are substantial, and migrating through formal channels such as these agencies also requires processing passports and other costly documents (see e.g. McKenzie

2007; Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008). Although most of the fees and other costs are usually deducted from subsequent migrant earnings, the significant amounts of money involved nonetheless make poorer villagers think twice before signing up for such schemes. Hence, out of the seven young migrants from *Baan Naam* which the household survey found to have migrated through recruitment companies, six stem from relatively better-off families. As these young migrants were only just half-way through their contracts at the time of the survey there can be no doubt that household wealth was a pre-existing factor in these cases.

In sum, young migrants stem from households of all economic standing, and households of all three categories of relative economic standing can be found amongst the non-migrant sending households. This partly results from the fact that different forms of migration are here lumped together. Migration for post-secondary education and migration through Lao recruitment agencies require substantial amounts of money. This skews participation in these forms of migration to the relatively better-off households, and suggests that migration in these cases constitutes, from the perspective of the household, a consolidation or accumulation strategy. When it comes to the relatively poor migrant sending households, migration seems to be more of a survival strategy, particularly since the youngest migrants stem from these households predominantly.

6.4.3 Young migrants, events in the household developmental cycle, and household migration history

Chapter four listed a total of 16 households in which the male head of household and spouse were both not born in *Baan Naam*. Although reasons for coming to *Baan Naam* varied amongst these so-called settler households, amongst the ten settler households that arrived in Baan Naam since 2000 five had been involved in failed government resettlement schemes. In a publication on resettlement in the Lao PDR, Evrard and Goudineau (2004) argue that government resettlement programmes in the Lao PDR frequently fail to channel resettled households into sedentary lifestyles, one of the objectives underlying these programmes. In fact, they argue that government resettlement programmes lead to quite the opposite, an 'increased and diversified rural mobility' (Evrard and Goudineau 2004: 954). Below, this observation is considered in specific relation to young migrants. However, the analysis here is not limited to settler households involved in government resettlement schemes only, but also considers other settler households.

Ordinary events in the household developmental cycle such as death of one or both parents are also likely to have an impact on child migration as the household needs to find ways to adjust to its new demographic composition and its economic implications, and may have to find ways to cover costs related to medical expenses and death rituals. Furthermore, in case the head of household or spouse dies this is frequently followed by remarriage and further offspring. Dynamics between step-parents and step-children may induce migration of children. For similar reasons, divorce is also included in the analysis here.

Death, divorce and remarriage were all quite commonly observed and, therefore, called 'events in the household development cycle' (EHDC). Still, the occurrence of such events put the household under stress (see also Rende Taylor 2005b; Rigg 2005a: 154; Sparkes 2005: 25), and becoming a young migrant may be one the ways households and individual household members cope with such events.

Table 6.3 analyses the distribution of young migrants across four different types of households; settler households, households affected by EHDC, settler households affected by EHDC, and non-settler households unaffected by EHDC.

Table 6.3: Distribution of young migrants (YM) across settler households and households affected by ordinary events in the household developmental cycle (EHDCs).

	Total nr. of Hhs	Nr. of hhs with YMs (relative share)	Nr. of hhs without YMs	Nr. of YMs	Average nr. of YMs per household
Total sample	54	40 (74%)	14	75	1.4
Settler	16	13 (81%)	3	28	1.8
EHDCs	12	12 (100%)	0	23	1.9
Settler *and* EHDCs	4	4 (100%)	0	9	2.3
Non-settler, non-EHDC	30	19 (63%)	11	32	1.1

Table 6.3 firstly illustrates that the share of settler households with young migrants amongst its members is slightly higher than that in the total household sample. Furthermore, when it comes to households affected by EHDCs and household with a settler

status *and* affected by EHDCs all households have at least one young migrant amongst its members. In addition, the far right column illustrates that the average number of young migrants per household is also disproportionally high in settler households and in households affected by EHDC, and particularly high in settler households which are also affected by EHDC. In contrast the average number of young migrants is disproportionally low in non-settler households unaffected by EHDC. In spite of this, out of the five households that had been involved in a government resettlement scheme, only three have migrant children amongst their members. However, these three households contribute a total of eight migrant children to the total number of young migrants (28) stemming from settler households.

The disproportionate number of young migrants stemming from settler households can at least in part be explained with reference to land ownership and household livelihood. In *Baan Naam*, which has no irrigated farm land, all land suitable for paddy rice is already under cultivation and the same applies to most of the poorer quality land within a reasonable distance. Hence, settler households, and particularly recent settlers for whom agricultural work constitutes an important part of their livelihoods have a hard time acquiring sufficient land to meet household consumption needs. This is what Rigg (2005a: 114) refers to as 'the trouble with being a late-comer'.

In *Baan Naam* land ownership amongst settler households falls well below the median of two hectares derived from landownership amongst all 54 households surveyed. In fact, only one of the 16 settler households owns more than one hectare.[43] Low land ownership can be seen relating to migration of young household members in two principal ways. First, children in such households are less tied to the household as the family fields can most likely be worked without having to involve the children to a great extent. Second, particularly in settler households in which agricultural activities constitute the household's mainstay (thus not teacher households and trading households) children may due to low land ownership have to migrate in order to make ends meet with their migratory earnings.

In addition, one of the mothers in a settler household argued that since she came from an area in which only upland, dry rice was cultivated her children lacked the experience and skills for common tasks in paddy rice production. Since local opportunities for day labour in *Baan Naam* are largely limited to paddy rice production her children, she claimed, were

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[43] If rented land is taken into consideration, a further two households cross the one hectare threshold, but only just.

regarded as slow workers, and they were, therefore, not hired for common types of day labour within *Baan Naam*. Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black (2004: 92) confirm that transplanting rice in paddy rice production indeed requires a certain skills level. Yet, the 'slow worker argument' for not hiring children from this settler household for local wage labour may here also disguise more deep-seated discriminatory practices between the established village population and recent arrivals. In this respect it is important to note that all settler households that arrived in *Baan Naam* following failed resettlement schemes not only originate from different ecological environments, but are also of non-ethnic Lao ethnicity. At the same time, it cannot be concluded that children from resettlement related settler households have thus little other choice than becoming a young migrant. Notably, two out of the five resettlement related settler households had no young migrants amongst their members, despite having unmarried children in the youth stage of the life course.[44]

The dynamics underlying the disproportional presence of households affected by EHDCs amongst the young migrant sending households are variable. As Rende Taylor (2005b: 334) observes on the basis of research in northern Thailand, divorce, death of a parent and remarriage may lead to migration as fosterage. However, in *Baan Naam* remarriage did not necessarily lead to out-fostering, or only to out-fostering of some children. Hence, a more widespread pattern following divorce or death and a subsequent remarriage is that children of two sets of marriages come to reside in one household. The two sets of children are not uncommonly separated by a distinct age gap. All this does not necessarily lead to children of the first marriage migrating at an early age, but it does create a set of conditions making this likely. This includes, for example, friction between step-children and step-parents (Rende Taylor 2005b: 340), possibly combined with pressure on older children to start earning in order to be able to provide for new-borns from the new marriage. In cases where the death of the head of household or spouse was not followed by remarriage, migration of children and youth was often characterised by survival motivations. This was particularly evident in the following case. Here, first the mother deserted the household and a few years later the father died. The three orphaned children stayed in their natal household and were looked after by the paternal grandmother (who subsequently died), and by a younger brother of the deceased father and his wife. Following these events, two out of the three

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[44] One case refers to hh-id 37 described in footnote 42. The other case, hh-id 55, consists of parents and four own children. The oldest son was 18 in 2007, followed by three much younger children (second born was 10 years old in 2007). When revisiting this household in 2009 the oldest son was away from home, helping out relatives with the harvest in another district. It could however not be established whether this was a short visit only, or a form of migration.

orphaned children became involved in migration whilst the third one remained in *Baan Naam*. Migration was initially primarily a means of survival for the then 16 year old son (Kun) and his 15 year old sister (Tina). In 2009, however, Tina was able to set up a small shop in front of her natal house in *Baan Naam* (see Picture 6.1) with her migratory earnings and with some support from her aunt for whom she had been working whilst in Vientiane. Tina runs the shop together with her younger sister. In addition, the girls' brother had meanwhile turned 18 and had just left through a recruitment agency on a two year contract for Thailand. The sisters claimed that their brother had migrated to Thailand with the aim of earning sufficient money so that the three of them could set up an independent household (notes from interview with Tina, 14/2/2009). Whether this will actually happen needs to be seen, at the very least, however, this case illustrates that it cannot be assumed that adversities such as death or departure of parents lead necessarily to dysfunctional families (see also Whitehead *et al.* 2007: 7). It also illustrates that migrations initially born out of survival motivations may overtime turn into strategies of accumulation.

Picture 6.1: Interview with young returned migrant in Baan Naam. She has set up a shop with her migratory earnings (March 2009).

6.4.4 Young migrants and household characteristics

In this section the three variables affecting the distribution of young migrants across household are combined. Figure 6.9 illustrates, with regard to households' settler status, that the share of young migrant sending households in the relatively poor category is virtually similar to that amongst non-settler young migrant sending households. When it comes to relatively better-off households the difference between settler and non-settler households is, however, more strongly pronounced: 48 percent of the non-settler young migrant sending households versus 15 percent amongst the settler migrant sending households fall in the household category of relatively better-off. Further, about one third of all migrant sending households affected by EHDCs are found in the relatively poor category, against less than one-fifth amongst the corresponding non-affected by EHDCs households.[45] Lastly, and unsurprisingly, there are no relatively better-off households amongst the migrant sending households which are settlers and affected by EHDCs. By the same token, the category of relatively better-off comprises over a half of the observations amongst the migrant sending households which are both non-settler and unaffected by EHDCs, and the category of relatively poor is fairly small in this group of households.

Figure 6.9: Young migrant sending households by relative economic standing, EHDC status, and settler status (n=40)
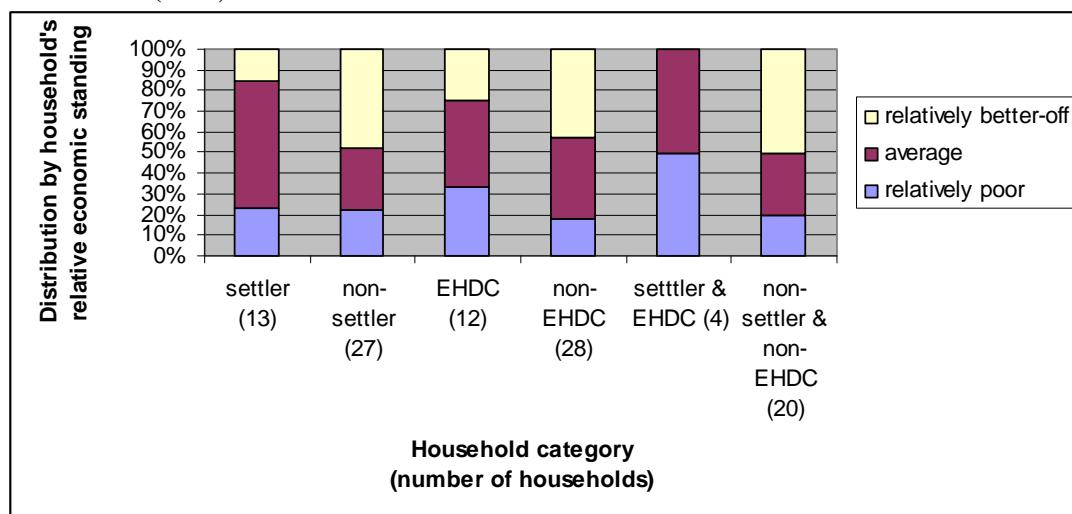
6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a quantified view of migration and mobility as observed in *Baan Naam* which serves to situate the qualitative observations presented in the previous and subsequent chapters. The analysis presented in this chapter was to a large extent based

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[45] Note that the household EHDC can both be a cause and consequence of poverty.

on household survey data but was complemented by data obtained through other methods in order to fill the gaps typical to household survey data.

This analysis first required finding a suitable working definition of migration. Employing this working definition it was observed that it is primarily young people in the youth stage of the life course who are or have been involved in migration and only few relatively young children and married adults were found to be amongst the migrants.

Next, the working definition was further refined in order to identify a young migrant only sample. Here, employing strict age based definitions was resisted for reasons outlined in previous chapters. Instead the working definition of 'young migrant' was based on a range of social characteristics, which nonetheless broadly correlates with chronological age. On the basis of such a definition and by combining several methods a total sample of 75 young migrants was constructed.

The vast majority of the young migrants thus defined were found to have migrated without parents or care-givers. In addition, at least half of these young migrants seem to have first migrated when they were legally speaking still children. This is particularly the case for the young female migrants. Remaining mindful of the fact that data on chronological age are notoriously unreliable in the Lao context, the above nonetheless suggest that the phenomenon of 'independent child migrants', a term coined by Whitehead *et al* (2007), is fairly widespread in the Lao context. In this respect it needs to be stressed that, none of the youngest migrants (below 12 years of age) had migrated for purposes of work and this seldom involved cross-border migration.

These latter observations resonate with some of the findings of the previous chapter on local concepts of childhood. The youngest migrants were, in all likelihood, regarded as children (*dek noi*) when they became involved in migration and their migrations are, by and large, compatible with local norms of childhood. In contrast, the definition of 'independent child migrants' used by Whitehead *et al* (2007) is based on international age-based definitions of the child. However, the previous chapter has argued that young people in their teens are mostly not considered to be children (*dek noi*) anymore and that norms concerning age-appropriate activities are significantly different between children (*dek noi*) and various concepts of youth (*wai nhum*, *xao nhum*, etc). Hence, the moral judgements invoked by the notion of child migrant workers may be similar in *Baan Naam*, Vientiane, or UNICEF head offices. Yet, it is based on very different concepts of childhood.

The educational profile of the young migrants appeared little different from that of the general young village population, amongst the young migrants were young villagers with relatively high educational attainments as well as those with relatively low educational attainments. Interestingly, migration for work was seldom observed in combination with participation in local education, unlike the case with commuting and local day labour, and despite the potential for it given the relatively long school holidays (see chapter five).

The 75 young migrants were observed to have been involved in a total of 98 different migration events. Both figures are, however, in, all likelihood, only very conservative estimations. Overall, most migration events took place within the Lao PDR's national borders, although in the case of migration for work Thailand emerged as the most popular destination.

Out of the total sample of 54 households covered by the household survey an important minority (14) did not have any young migrants amongst its members, whereas in some other households multiple observations of young migrants were recorded. Household demographics, household relative economic standing, household migration history, and households' experiences with 'events in the household developmental cycle' (EHDCs) were considered as possible factors explaining the variation in distribution of young migrants across households.

Having few and relatively young children, mostly related to the household developmental cycle, appeared important for explaining the absence of young migrants in at least some of the non-migrant sending households. Household relative economic standing did at first sight not appear as having much explanatory power as both relatively poor and relatively better-off households were found amongst the migrant sending households. Yet, the impact of households' relative economic standing on the number of young migrants per household seemed to be considerable. In addition, the younger migrants stemmed disproportionally from the relatively poor households and migration for education and through Lao recruitment agencies was generally reserved for the better-off households.

The household migration history and EHDC status were found to co-relate positively to the presence of young migrants amongst the household members, and the effects increased further in case both characteristics applied to the same households. In addition, when the households' relative economic standing was combined with household migration history and EHDC status the effects, again, became more strongly pronounced.

The focus on individual characteristics of young migrants and household characteristics of migrant sending and non-migrant sending households has sketched a useful overview of quantified patterns of migration in *Baan Naam*. This approach has, however, left little room for questions of agency and is largely silent on why some young people in a household migrate whilst others stay behind. These are some of the questions and issues addressed in the next chapters.

7 Agency, Intra-household Relations, and Networks of Recruitment

7.1 Introduction: From push & pull factors to social relations

Chapter six has illustrated that in *Baan Naam* the involvement of children and young people in migration is wide-spread. At the same time, the previous chapter has also shown that the majority of children and young people in *Baan Naam* are so-called 'non-migrants'. They are currently not involved in migration and were not observed as having been involved in migration in the past. Some of these non-migrants stem from the minority of households without any young migrants amongst their members. Most, however, stem from migrant sending households and can, therefore, said to be indirectly involved in migration. In other words, migration and non-migration of children and young people are interrelated. This is most clearly the case at the level of the household, but can also be observed at other levels of analysis.

This interrelatedness of migration and non-migration poses a challenge for understanding migration decision-making processes and, in relation to this, to understanding migration dynamics in terms of push and pull factors. Empirical studies on migration are often based on a distinction between push and pull factors (see e.g. MoLSW and UNIAP 2001; Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2003; MoLSW *et al.* 2003; Berthélemy *et al.* 2009). Push factors refer to the conditions in the sending area such as poverty, unemployment, misfortunes, and the hardships of rural life, that 'push' people to migrate. Pull factors on the other hand are located in the migration destination and include employment prospects, higher salaries, attraction of the bright lights of the city, and other factors that 'pull' people into migration.

Push and pull factors are particularly important in neo-classical approaches to migration. In this theoretical frame migration decisions are made by rational, utility maximising, individual actors, who base their migration-decisions on a reading of the assumed costs and benefits of migration (Lewis 1954; Harris and Todaro 1970; Massey *et al.* 1993). The unit of analysis in such neo-classical analyses is bounded and is usually the household or the individual and it is assumed that all units in a given locality are subject to the same push and pull factors, although these may be mediated by specific unit characteristics, so-called variables.

The problem of this analytical frame is that the only way it is able to shed light on the important question of *why* some young people in a given household migrate and others not, and how migration and non-migration at the level of the household are inter-related is by assuming a joint utility function for the household. This theoretical assumption was problematised in chapter two, mostly based on feminist literature, as it ignores the areas of conflict, relations of power, and various forms of subtle negotiation between household members. The literature on childhood and youth has demonstrated that these issues are equally important in relation to children and young people (White 1996: 831; Levison 2000; Iversen 2002). This means that children and young people need to be appreciated as actors, albeit often constrained, in the field of the household.

Chapter two, therefore, introduced a relational approach to the analysis of household-based migration decision-making processes. In this approach the household is a field of analysis, rather than a unit of analysis. In this, the household is not an isolated space but a porous field which is embedded in wider sets of social relations in which children and adults are situated as social agents. Chapter five analysed in detail the numerous relations that shape children and young people's social position, variations in this over the life course, and differences in this regard between children in a given household and across households. Chapter five also illustrated that children and young people's agency is highly constrained due to their specific positioning in a range of social relations. This chapter and chapter eight, then, furthers these discussions by analysing how these social relations constrain children and young people's agency with regard to migration-decision making processes, and also how children and young people from their particular, and often constrained, social positions nonetheless exercise agency in migration decision-making processes.

7.2   *Migration, non-migration, and intra-household relations*

The quantified perspective presented in chapter six was effectively based on outcomes of household decision-making processes concerning migration of young household members. Here, the analytical focus shifts to the processes and relations underlying these outcomes.

7.2.1   Gender, birth position, and relations of relative seniority

Several scholars (Punch 2001; Rende Taylor 2005a) working on intra-household relations concerning migration by children and young people have pointed at the importance of birth position, often in relation with gender. Punch (2001: 816) argues, for example, on the basis of research conducted in Bolivia, that senior siblings may feel pressure to migrate at an

earlier age than junior siblings since senior siblings may feel that it is their responsibility to go out and earn. Junior siblings, on the other hand, may in turn feel a pressure not to migrate if this would leave their parents alone. Rende Taylor's (2005b) anthropological work in the matrilocal context of northern Thailand, which is similar to the ethnic Lao context of the Lao PDR, contrasts with Punch's findings. Rende Taylor finds that amongst the rural *Khon Müang* of northern Thailand first-born daughters are less likely to migrate than middle-born or last-born daughters. She further concludes that

> … firstborns [daughters] act more as home helpers, and their important role in the home reduces their risk of being entered into child labor outside of the home... Middleborns act more as financial helpers…Middleborn daughters receive the least educational investment, start working and reproducing the earliest, and migrate or work in the commercial sex market in highest numbers. Lastborns, despite receiving high levels of investment and education, are entered into hazardous labor situations at the youngest ages (Rende Taylor 2005b: 422)

Figure 7.1 plots the young migrants and their non-migrating siblings by birth position. An important methodological issue in this exercise is that the different children in each household are here captured at different points in the life course. Hence, the last-borns are, in at least some households, due to their younger age less likely to have become a young migrant. Furthermore, since a good number of couples have more than three children, the category of 'middle-borns' is largest, and it is, therefore, unsurprising that for both sexes most young migrants are found in this category.[46] In other words, the middle-born category does not have a disproportional share of young migrants. Moreover, whilst young female middle-borns seem to participate in migration at a higher rate than young male middle-borns this is not a stark difference and does, therefore, only in part support the findings presented by Rende Taylor above.

More significant is the young migrant – young non-migrant divide in the first-born category, as there are roughly equal numbers of young migrants and young non-migrants. Since the total number of non-migrants (137) nearly doubles the total number of young migrants (75), the proportion of young migrants in the first-born category is disproportionally high. This is especially true for first-born daughters. In the first-born young-migrants category girls outnumber boys, whereas amongst first-born non-migrants the ratios are reversed. In relative terms then, the observations from *Baan Naam* are at odds with Rende Taylor's findings, despite the fact that her research was conducted

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[46] Note that with the exception of five, all 40 migrant sending households have three or more own children. The exceptions constitute four households with two own children (but in one there is also a 'not own child'), and one household with one own child (but with three other young household members living in). In case of two own children only there are no middle-borns, and the household with only one own child is here recorded as a 'first-born'.

amongst a population and in a locality that shares many characteristics with that of *Baan Naam*.[47] In fact, the findings presented here resonate more closely with Punch's Latin American observations.

Figure 7.1: Young migrants and young non-migrants in migrant sending households by birth position (n=212; 40 households)
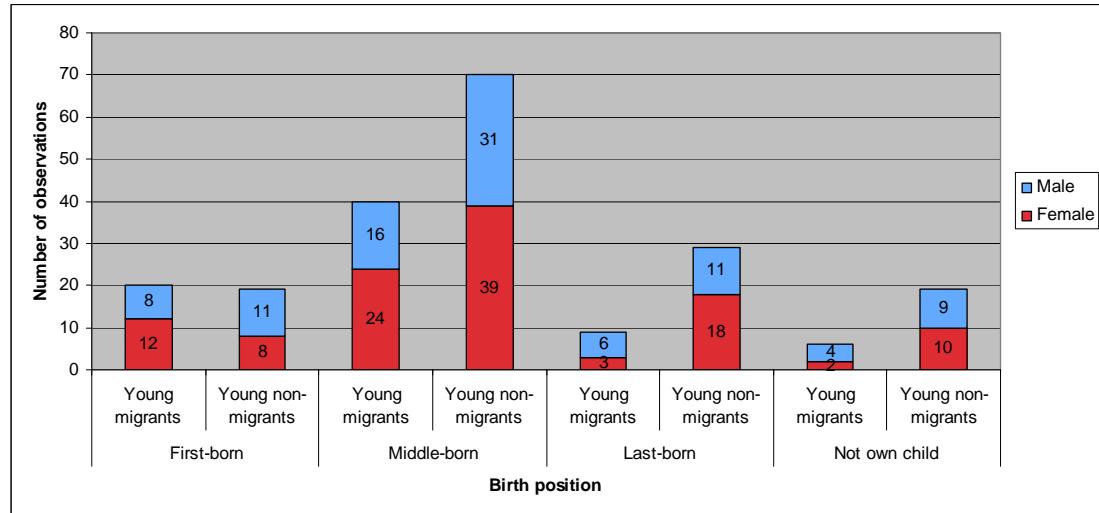
Young migrants are underrepresented in the 'last-born' category, probably for reasons described above. Furthermore, the small number of young migrants in the last-born category makes it difficult to draw any conclusions. That said, it is of interest to note that this is the only category in which male young migrants outnumber female young migrants, despite the fact that there are in total more females than males in the category of last-born. The underlying dynamic may be the practice in which the last-born daughter inherits the natal house and most of the land in return for taking care of the elderly parents, even though the extent to which this social norm shapes actual reality was challenged in chapter five.

7.2.1.1 From birth position to position of relative seniority

The category 'not own children' in Figure 7.1 refers to a range of young people other than the main couple's own children. This includes grand-children and cousins, but also some unmarried younger brothers or sisters of the head of household or spouse, and other young unmarried individuals.

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[47] Note that Rende Taylor's (2005a) work concentrates on migration for work only, focusing particularly on hazardous work, and does not cover other purposes of migration which are included in the analysis here. Hence, Rende Taylor's work provides not more than a sounding board for the data from *Baan Naam* as it is strictly speaking not comparable.

In chapter two it was argued that basing analyses on constructs of 'households', rather than empirical realities is a problematic endeavour. Indeed, an important minority of the households (17 in total; 31%) surveyed were non-nuclear in composition. This includes one child-headed household, four two-generational households with living in cousins, adopted children or brothers or sisters of the main couple, 11 three-generational households, and one four-generational household.

The analysis in the previous section was limited to 'own children' only, based on the implicit norm of the nuclear family. This analytical approach is ill-suited for the flexibility that characterises an important minority of residential arrangements in the Lao context, and ignores the question of whether the presence of young household members other than own children affects decision-making processes concerning migration and non-migration, and if so, how?

In order to address this shortcoming, the category of 'not own children' is in Figure 7.2 distributed across the other categories on the basis of stated age of the concerned young persons. In addition, Figure 7.2 and the analysis below also depart from the preceding section by adopting a dynamic approach to the construction of the categories. In contrast with Figure 7.1, which used the static categories of birth position, Figure 7.2 is based on relations of seniority between young people present in the household at the time of migration of the concerned young migrant. This approach adjusts for changes in relative seniority amongst children and youth in the household following events like migration and marriage.[48] This means, for example, that if a first born moves out of the natal household for purposes of marriage the second born is regarded as having become 'oldest', as far as everyday relations in the household are concerned.[49] If this second born then migrates, this young migrant is in Figure 7.2 subsequently included in the category 'senior', as this second born was at the time of migration effectively the most senior young person present in the household. However, in case the first-born in this example were to divorce and return to the natal household, migration of a second born is included in the category

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[48] The analysis is here limited to the recorded first migration experience of the 75 young migrants only. Further, departing from the snapshot approach underlying Figure 7.1 and the previous section means that corresponding categories of young non-migrants are omitted from the analysis here. Including young non-migrants leads to a methodological problem in case of multiple migrations in one household as the number and composition of young non-migrants is different in each migration event.

[49] Factors determining whom of the children are regarded as most senior of all young household members on an everyday basis may also be affected by issues other than chronological age such as disability or personality. These factors are, however, not considered here.

'middle', because due to the return of the first-born the second born has once again become 'middle'.

Figure 7.2: Young migrants by position of relative age-based seniority in the household (n=75)
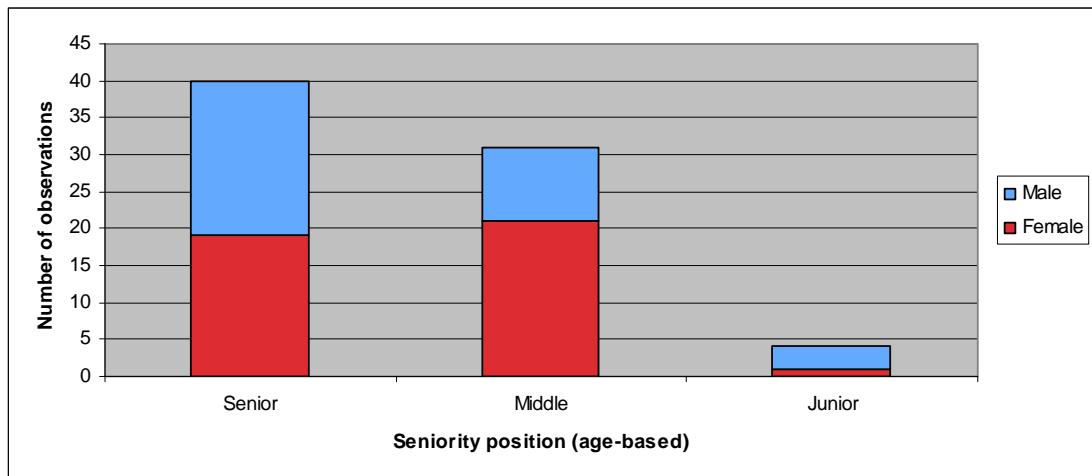
Comparing Figure 7.2 with Figure 7.1 shows that the category of 'senior' includes considerably more observations of young migrants than the category of 'first-born' in Figure 7.1. This is on one level a logical consequence of the dynamic approach towards the construction of the categories described above. However, it is worth noting that this approach has reversed the gender distribution amongst the young migrants in the most senior category between these two different conceptualisations of seniority (see Table 7.1). What has happened is that the in Figure 7.2 compared with Figure 7.1, the total number of male young migrants in the category of most senior has increased considerably, whereas this is only marginally the case for female young migrants. The result, however, is a balanced gender ratio which fits the qualitative observations. Chapter five, for example, discussed uxorilocal residence patterns of the ethnic Lao; yet, it also presented qualitative data illustrating that this social norm does not necessarily reflect the lived experience, which is far more heterogeneous. This also means that the distribution of 'rewards' for staying in the natal household and working in the household or the family fields in terms of inheritance cannot be assumed to follow the female line. Instead, this needs to be empirically investigated. Still, gendered dimensions of parent-child relations cannot be ignored. The excerpt below illustrates that sons generally have greater scope for agency than daughters when it comes to migration decision-making processes:

> Girls will change their minds. Girls listen to, and believe their mother. But boys think they are stronger than girls and can take care of themselves. Therefore, they don't listen to their mothers. (Notes from interview with Choi's mother, 15/3/2009)

Table 7.1: Gender distribution of young migrants between two conceptualisations of seniority

	Across all categories		First-born/senior category		Middle category	
	male	female	male	female	male	female
By birth-position incl. own children only	45%	55%	40%	60%	55%	44%
Based on actual relations of seniority, incl. all young people in hh	45%	55%	53%	47%	32%	68%

In the 'middle' category, the relative involvement of young females versus males in migration increases significantly compared to the 'senior' category. This means that the involvement of young females in migration is to a greater extent related to the actual presence of a senior young person in the natal household than is the case amongst young male migrants. Now we have adopted a more flexible and dynamic approach to the question of seniority and household composition it is worth revisiting Rende Taylor's claim that first-daughters fulfil an important role of 'home helpers'. The two Figures (7.1 & 7.2) and Table 7.1 illustrate that it is in the context of *Baan Naam* not necessarily the case that the first born daughter takes up this role. But, once *a daughter* has taken up this role, younger sisters are more prone to become young migrants. Young males in the 'middle' category appear, however, to become less involved in migration if older siblings are involved in migration. This latter dynamic may relate to the gender imbalance in school participation rate discussed in chapter five. Remittances of migrating older siblings are often, in part, used to finance extended school participation of younger siblings, who tend to be younger brothers, rather than younger sisters.

7.2.2   Fosterage and migration of children and young people

A dynamic conceptualisation of relations of seniority between young household members more than halves the number of observations in the junior category compared to the number of observation in the 'last-born' category (Figure 7.1).[50] This underscores the importance of having a child or a young teenager present in the household for taking care of everyday household chores for (elderly) parents. This difference between the two

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[50] Note that one of the four records included in this category is an ambiguous one. This youngest child (8th born son) was the only child still present, and therefore both youngest and oldest at the time of migration.

Figures relates to a practice in which migration of the last present child may trigger fosterage. This demand dimension of fosterage practices is not considered in Rende Taylor's (Rende Taylor 2005b) otherwise insightful study on fosterage in northern Thailand, which exclusively addresses the supply side of fosterage. Yet, other studies on fosterage show that the practice may well be demand-led (Notermans 2008: 362).

Demand-led fosterage based on filling a gap in domestic labour supply caused by migration of the last present child was observed on several occasions. To give two examples, the second born child (daughter; leaving a first-born son and third-born daughter behind) of the village headman was sent to live with her maternal grandmother when she was in lower secondary school after the grandmother's last present child (a son; youngest brother of headman's wife) left for a teacher training course in Vientiane (RD, 15/11/2007). Second, the two sisters Ekasone and Dam were sent to live with their paternal grandparents in another district at the age of eight and seven respectively partly because the last child present at the grandparents' had left. Moreover, when Ekasone and Dai, in turn, left their grandparents at the age of 15 or 16 to work for their aunt in Bangkok the sisters were replaced by other children so that the grandparents were not left without any young children present to do everyday chores (Dam, 14/3/2009). Note that this form of demand-led fosterage was only observed in relation to long term migration of the last present child, and not following a short-term migratory endeavour of the last present child.

Fosterage practices in which parents, possibly in combination with being affected by EHDCs, send some of their children to live with their own parents in order to carry out the household chores for their elderly (grand)parents can be understood in terms of inter-generational relations both within and beyond the household. The inter-generational dimension runs here across three generations and at least two households. As chapter five has illustrated, it is the responsibility of children to look after their parents in old age. This often takes the form of an adult child remaining in the natal household who then takes prime responsibility for looking after the parents in old age. If, however, migration of the last present child creates a situation in which the elderly parents come to be living by themselves, and none of the adult children is living next-door or considering moving in with the elderly couple, an alternative needs to be found to fulfil filial obligations towards the elderly couple. One such alternative may constitute the sending by parents of their own (young) children to live with those children's grandparents. In this sense, out-fosterage of own children to provide elderly parents with helping hands can thus be understood as a

means by which adult children divert the responsibility of carrying out their own filial obligations to their own (young) children. Fosterage is in this sense a particular form of chain migration set in a framework of inter-generational relations.

The discussion of fosterage presented here has so far paid no attention to any agency on the part of the fostered children. The scope for children's agency in the fosterage decision is indeed often rather limited, especially if it involves young children. Nonetheless, some notable exceptions were observed. First, in one household the second-born son had gone to stay with an aunt in *Baan Naam* when he was in his early 20s (all the other five children were still present in the household). The head of household explained that it had actually been the duty of his first-born (also a son) to move in with the aunt, yet the second-born had volunteered to go. Soon after he had moved in with his aunt he got married and his wife moved in with the aunt as well. This case thus illustrates considerable purposeful action on the part of the fostered (adult) child. In another case, a first-born son lived with his grand-parents in a nearby village from two years of age till he was three or four. According to the concerned son, and his mother, this had happened since he preferred to stay with his grandparents because he liked their buffaloes (life-history interview Mone, 16/5/2008; interview with Mone's mother 22/5/2008). At the same time though this arrangement must have relieved the mother from some child-caring duties, and the fact that the son was taken back into his natal household once he had become less of a care-burden and more of a productive asset also suggests parental interests. In this latter case then, both child and parental agency can be recognised in apparently unconflicting manners.

7.2.3 Migration and intra-household relocation of labour: Gender and generation

The discussion of fosterage above has once again underscored the importance of child and youth labour in Lao households. However, this is not to claim that mechanisation of agricultural production and an increasing shortage of land are not affecting household demand for child labour. In fact, the apparent increase in migration amongst young people may well, at least in part, be related to this. In other words, most households can probably lose some children without much impact on household production, but, at the same time, parents are keen to maintain a minimum supply of child and youth labour.

The above can be empirically demonstrated by the following observations. First, in only one of all the 40 young migrant sending households did migration of a young household

member create a situation in which the elderly couple was left behind without any children or youth present. The exception concerned an eighth born, 18 year old son named Ot who initially left to help out on a relatives' farm in a neighbouring district but who never returned apart from the occasional visit. In this case, migration of the last present child did not trigger fosterage, probably, because six of the elderly couple's eight children got married within *Baan Naam*. Their nearby presence probably ensured that the elderly couple was relieved of many of the everyday household tasks.

A closer look at the social age of the young household members who stayed behind in each case of migration at a young age across the 40 migrant sending households suggests further that it is not just important that *a child* stays behind; non-migration is shaped by age related characteristics. In the vast majority of the cases in which the young migrant was regarded as a youth in terms of social age at least one young household member stayed behind of the same social age. As chapter five has illustrated, once a child is started to be regarded as a youth (*wai nhum*) their contribution to productive and reproductive spheres of the household is considerable, extending well-beyond the range of household chores *dek noi* tend to do. Hence, losing all available youth labour to migration means that the burden of labour per capita increases significantly. This is, given the generational division of labour in Lao peasant households, an unattractive prospect for adults. Adults and elderly have thus not only a vested interest in trying to retain a minimum supply of child labour for various sorts of household chores, but also a minimum supply of youth labour when it comes to working the fields.

In only three out of 40 migrant-sending households, did the migration of a young migrant regarded as *wai nhum* leave the household without any other children of youth-age present. The three exceptions include one case in which the entire household (parents and two own children) migrated to help out on a relatives' farm for a couple of weeks. This did thus not affect household labour arrangements. Another case was the one of Ot described above. In the third case, one of the young migrants was a teenage son who was sent to live with his paternal grandparents in *Baan Naam*. This son remained with his grandparents when his older sisters left for work in Thailand, leaving the parents with only small children. In this case, however, the son's labour could still be drawn upon as he was staying nearby (see for a similar observation in relation to daughters: Rende Taylor 2005b: 347).

Unlike the previous section on fosterage in which migration of young people was found triggering migration in the form of fosterage, the argument pursued in this section is that

migration of some young household members ties other children more closely to the household. The key factor underlying this dynamic is household control over young people's labour:

> Buanoi is 16 years old when we first meet her. She is the third-born in a relatively better-off family consisting of two parents and five children. She has two older brothers, a younger brother, and a younger sister. Her oldest brother left *Baan Naam* in August 2006 for migrant work through a recruitment agency in Thailand; the other siblings remained at home. A year later (2007) Buanoi quit school at the start of secondary 4 against the wishes of her parents. As the only one of the children out of school (apart from the brother in Thailand), she spent her days working the family fields and doing domestic work. Talking about this, Buanoi explained that she would rather work in Vientiane as many of her friends had gone there as well. She argued that it was no fun staying in *Baan Naam* since most of her friends were working elsewhere. However, her parents opposed this idea. They argued that work in Vientiane is much harder than working the family fields and only poorly paid. Despite these claims, retaining Buanoi's labour for the household economy seemed to be another motivation on the part of the parents to discourage her from migration. Although this was not directly expressed, this became apparent when Buanoi's parents suddenly became more relaxed about their daughter's migratory ideas in 2008. This only happened once her older brother (2nd born) had finished his secondary education and became full-time available to the family farm, and when, at about the same time, her younger sister had become a teenaged girl capable of doing most of the domestic work. Buanoi has since worked shortly in Vientiane and for several weeks in the *Isaan* region of Thailand. (Composite notes from interviews with Bouanoi and Bouanoi's parents conducted between Oct 2007-March 2009)

> Choi is the third born (daughter) in a family comprising two parents and four children. Her father and older brother (2nd born) are absent as they have migrated to work in Thailand on a two-year contract through a recruitment agency. Her oldest brother has also left the household as he has gotten married, reducing the household to Choi, her younger sister who has just started primary school and her mother. Soon after Choi's father and her older brother had left for Thailand, the first-born brother married and moved in with his in-laws. Choi's mother argued that she had tried hard to delay the marriage till her husband and son would return to *Baan Naam* in 2008, yet she had failed. Further, although her son had promised to keep working his mother's fields, in practice this rarely happened as he was busy working the fields of his wife's family after having gotten married. The household labour supply thus lost in a period of a few months one adult and two male youths. Subsequently, Choi left school when she was in secondary 4 at about 14 years of age. Choi stresses that she had made the decision to quit school herself in order to help her mother with running the household and working the family fields now that her brothers and father had left. Choi does not aspire to migrate but she would like to earn money by doing more seasonal day labour in *Baan Naam* and in the Thai village of *Baan Fangthai*. However, this conflicts with her, now vital, role in the household, and her mother actively tries to discourage Choi from involvement in day-labour by arguing that working the family fields is much better for her since she can take a rest whenever she feels like it, unlike what she claims to be the case with regard to day-labour. (Composite notes from interviews with Choi and Choi's mother, Oct 2007-March 2009)

The two interview notes resonate with the claim of many villagers that daughters are more receptive to parental advice and requests than is the case with sons. Furthermore, the interview notes are also of interest as they illustrate a tendency on part of parents to achieve retaining children to the household by alluding to the child's own interest, thereby avoiding direct confrontation. For the daughters in question, the motivation to remain in the household does not, however, stem from such considerations, but is largely shaped by a sense of duty towards the parents.

Gendered differences in parental requests related to a gendered difference in sense of responsibility for the household is clearly illustrated by Choi's household described above. Following the migration of the father and the second-born brother, Choi's mother tried hard to convince her remaining son to delay his marriage and thereby retain the only male labour left to the household. However, all she managed to negotiate was a delayed marriage ceremony (after the return of her husband) and a (un-kept) promise that the son would keep working his mother's fields after he had moved in with his in-laws. In contrast, Choi's aspirations to do more paid day-labour described above also conflict with her mother's wishes, yet unlike her brother, Choi foregoes her own interests.

The argument that migration by some young household members ties others more closely to the household implies that there is no significant shift from exploiting household labour towards employing hired labour, as would theoretically be possible on the basis of migrant remittances. In fact, households that had traditionally relied on a combination of household and exchange labour were generally reluctant about hiring labour even if this appeared to be financially possible. Remittances seemed to be used preferably for consumption (e.g. consumer goods like mobile phone, TV sets, construction, etc), whereas the question of labour tended to be resolved, to the extent possible, through traditional means as is illustrated by Choi's household.

In households like Choi's the loss of labour due to migration was in the first place compensated by overexploiting of, and self-exploitation by, the remaining household members. This took two forms. First, the remaining household members put more time and energy into working their own fields. Second, the remaining household members aimed to maximise generating unpaid additional labour through reciprocal exchange labour relations, by involving themselves in unpaid exchange labour whenever possible. Only if these traditional approaches to the question of labour in peasant production prove insufficient did such households resort to hiring additional labour. And, mostly with much regret despite having the financial capital to do so. Hence, the transition from labour allocations based on traditional practices towards mechanisation and wage-labour is not a smooth one, but a transition that is in some ways resisted and in other aspects delayed. This is, however, only possible if parents continue retaining control over at least some child and youth labour in the household.

7.3 Conceptualising migration relationally: Institutionalised migrations and fluid migrations

The previous sections have illustrated that intra-household decision-making processes regarding migration and non-migration of young household members are shaped by relations of gender, birth-position and seniority, and by a desire to maintain a minimum and often generation-specific supply of labour. However, the previous section did not explore how migration decision-making processes are affected by specificities of the various forms of migration young villagers from *Baan Naam* were found to be engaged in. The following sections turn to this issue.

Chant and Radcliffe (1992) discuss in their introductory chapter to *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries* a series of categories commonly found in the migration literature. Some of these categories are based on destination, such as urban-bound, rural-bound and overseas migration, others on temporal dimensions such as relay, seasonal, oscillating and repeated migrations, while other categories combine spatial and temporal elements such as circular and return migration. Further, when it comes to migration for purposes of work specifically, analyses are usually structured by categorisation according to sector or occupation, and possibly further disaggregated by gender and chronological age (see e.g. MoLSW *et al.* 2003; World Bank 2006a).

These common categories certainly serve a purpose, particularly when it comes to the analysis of flows, trends and patterns. For this reason, the analysis presented in the previous chapters was, by and large, guided by such analytical categories. From here on, this chapter departs, however, from this deductive mode of analysis and adopts a more inductive approach. The aim of this inductive approach is to uncover analytical categories which enable capturing the range of different migrations in which young people from *Baan Naam* are involved in a single analytical frame that is particularly sensitive to questions of agency.

Developing an overarching analytical frame requires looking for patterns and commonalities affecting young migrants' agency which run across seemingly different migration experiences whilst also remaining mindful of important differences. A similar analytical approach is, for example, developed by Hampshire (2002) in relation to the notion of 'exode'.

For this purpose, the qualitative accounts of migration were first coded manually by looking at how young migrants are socially positioned in various forms of migration, illustrations of migrants' agency whilst in migration, the nature of the relations which constrain their agency, and how young migrants typically exit and enter various forms of migration.

An important finding emerging from this exercise is that it showed that although migration was undertaken for diverse purposes, including education, religion and work, an element of work featured predominantly in all migration experiences, regardless of the main purpose of migration. Further, this analytical exercise suggested making an analytical distinction between formal and informal migrations. However, the limitations of this widely used analytical dichotomy (see e.g. Supang Chantavanich 2008) became quickly apparent as it directs attention to static characteristics setting certain migrations apart from others, whereas the aim was to develop analytical categories which would illuminate the relational differences between various forms of migrations. Relational dimensions refer here to factors shaping young migrants' social position vis-à-vis that of other actors in, and related to, the migration process (De Haan *et al.* 2002). Whether migration is undertaken through formal or informal channels is certainly one of these factors, yet, relational dimensions are by no means limited to this.

In order to overcome the limitations of the formal-informal dichotomy the following two analytical categories are employed; institutionalised migration and fluid migration. The term institutionalised migration refers to various migrations that are all firmly embedded in social institutions. These migrations are therefore socially, and possibly also legally sanctioned. The notion of institutionalised migration partly overlaps with what is commonly understood as formal migration (migration through formal, state-authorised channels), yet it is broader than this. The term formal generally concerns social institutions which are associated with the state. However, institutionalised migration also includes forms of migration which are socially sanctioned, as they are widely practiced and regarded as part and parcel of non-state social institutions, but not necessarily sanctioned in a strictly legal sense (Van Schendel 2006). Fosterage, for example, is here regarded as an institutionalised form of migration as it is socially sanctioned and embedded in the social institution of the family. However, fosterage remains more often than not an informal arrangement taking place beyond the gaze of the state. Other forms of migration regarded

here as institutionalised are migration for purposes of education, migrating through Lao recruitment agencies, but also entering the army and the Buddhist Sangha.

Table 7.2 summarises the common characteristics of various forms of institutionalised migration. This includes their contractual arrangement and the fact that these migrations are generally speaking socially sanctioned.[51] Further, institutionalised migration, unlike as is often the case with fluid migration, is generally regarded benign, and may even be actively promoted by the state. In addition, institutionalised migrations are typically characterised by considerable entry and exit barriers and are usually of a longer-term nature. For similar reasons, young migrants are seldom able to become involved in institutionalised migrations independently. Becoming involved in institutionalised migration is thus more often than not part of household strategies.

When it comes to fluid migration it is not necessarily the informality that sets these migrations apart from the institutionalised ones. In fact, some fluid migrations may be formal in a strictly legal sense, just as certain institutionalised migrations may be informal. The label fluid stresses the high degree of fluidity and diversity of the relations that sustain these forms of migration. This contrasts with the more static relations underlying institutionalised migration. This fluidity results from lower exit and entry barriers and greater scope for young migrants themselves to manipulate these migrations and move from one migration to the other, or terminate the migration experience altogether. Unlike institutionalised migrations, fluid migrations are more unified in purpose; they all have work as their main purpose of migration. This may be domestic work, agricultural work, or work in the service sector.

Table 7.2: Institutionalised migration and fluid migration

Form of migration	Includes migration for:	At what age?	Relational characteristics:
Institutionalised migration	*Studies, education *Recruitment agencies *Fosterage	*Virtually all migrations in the below 12 years cohort. *A quarter of the migrations in the 12-14	*contractual relations with widespread social legitimacy, and possibly legal legitimacy. *documentation and registration mostly required

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[51] Theoretically it is possible that there are generational differences in this regard, this however did not emerge from the data.

	*Army	years cohort.	*chronological age often matters, social age not
	*Religious	*No migrations in the 15-17 years cohort	*household support essential
		*A third of the migrations in the cohorts of 18 years and above.	*significant exit and entry barriers
			*mostly a long term break with everyday village life
Fluid migration	*Domestic work	*No migration in the below 12 years cohort.	*intimate patron-client relations
	*Factory work		*documentation and registration negotiable
	*Service sector work	*Three quarters of the migrations in the 12-14 years cohort.	*low exit and entry barriers
	*Agricultural work	*Virtually all migrations in the 15-17 years cohort	*chronological age mostly irrelevant, social age matters
	*Etc	*Two thirds of the migrations in the above 18 years cohorts.	*household support not necessary
			*cross border: illegal, but possibly socially sanctioned
			*within Laos mostly condoned
			*temporary break with everyday village life, often counter-seasonal

7.4 Young migrants' agency in becoming a migrant: Negotiating networks, gate-keepers and recruiters

> At the age of 14, Pom first became involved in migrant work when he joined his father, older brother and some other young men on a logging project in another district. Since his return to *Baan Naam* some months ago he has stayed in the natal household, mostly busying himself with herding cattle. One day we find Pom absent and we learn from his mother that he has crossed the border into Thailand with some friends the previous day in order to find migrant work. We are thus surprised to see Pom back in *Baan Naam* the very next day. Talking about this, Pom explained that they had approached several potential employers in and around *Baan Fangthai*. However, they had all turned the young men down, telling them to first get a passport and work-permit before they would consider employing the young men. Getting official documents Pom finds far too expensive. He has, therefore, changed his mind and is now thinking about finding migrant work elsewhere in the Lao PDR where, he gathers, employers don't demand formal documents. (Composite notes from interviews with Pom, 29/2/2008, and with Pom's mother, 28/2/2008)

Contemporary work on migration attributes considerable importance to the role of social networks in migration (Massey *et al.* 1993; Curran and Saguy 2001; Hampshire 2002; Maniemai Thongyou and Dusadee Ayuwat 2005). Social networks are a prime vehicle through which non-migrants become migrants, and a lack of such networks often means that non-migrants remain in their localities. Pom's case above illustrates that this is little

different when it comes to young migrants. Further, Pom's case was exceptional as it was the only case observed in which young migrants left the village with the aim of finding migrant work entirely on their own without any networks facilitating this. This optimism indeed proved futile.

7.4.1 Recruitment into institutionalised migration and young migrants' agency

Institutionalised migration includes here migration through recruitment agencies, entering the army, entering the Buddhist Sangha, fosterage and migration for education. As fosterage is already discussed above, and observations on young people entering the army and the Buddhist Sangha are too few for thorough analysis the focus is here limited to migration through recruitment agencies and for purposes of education.

7.4.1.1 Migrating through recruitment agencies

Recruitment agencies are a recent phenomenon in the Lao PDR, and in 2008 a total of nine recruitment agencies were active in the Lao PDR. Recruitment agencies have developed out of the 2002 Memorandum of Understanding between the Lao and Thai government on Employment Cooperation referred to in chapter four.

Migrating through recruitment agencies is a form of institutionalised migration in which the entrance barriers are particularly high. Recruitment agencies are legally prohibited from recruiting workers younger than 18 years of age, and typically send Lao migrant workers out on two year contracts (2002c; 2002a), charging fees ranging from 15,000-20,000 *Thai Baht* – a small fortune for the average Lao (Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2007; Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008).

Recruitment agencies are envisioned to replace the informal social networks through which the vast majority of Lao migrate (Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2007; Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008; Somsack Pongkhao 2008a; 2009d). The recruitment agency thus acts as a formalised migration network. Recruitment agencies access potential migrants through the formal channels of command. In the case of *Baan Naam* this meant that the village headman, and headmen of other villages, was called to the district to be briefed about migration through recruitment agencies. The headman, once back in *Baan Naam*, then announced through the village speaker system a meeting for all those interested and formally disseminated his version of the briefing. Next, interested villagers

register with the village headman who in turn sends the details of the candidates to the district centre where they are collected by representatives of the recruitment agencies who then start processing passports and other documents.

This Chinese whisper form of communication contributes to the fact that the migrants enter migration agreements with only a vague idea about the details of their prospective migratory endeavour. This lack of information was by one young migrant described as *pai dau*, go guessingly (Nalintone, 14/3/2009). This includes information about migrant earnings. In the various meetings prospective salaries were only given in ranges, which in fact, was similarly the case in the final contracts signed by the migrants. In practice however, few of the migrants managed to earn anything more than the lower end of this range (Som, 15/3/2009). Descriptions of type of work were equally vague (see also Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008). For example, all that Nalintone knew before going for two years to Thailand was that she was going to work in a fruit-processing factory in Thailand (Nalintone, 10/7/2008). The men faired even worse as they were initially told that they were going to work in either a fruit-processing factory or a fish-canning factory, but ended up in a palm-oil plantation instead (Jonnie, 15/3/2009). This happened because the men were told by the recruitment agency, briefly before their scheduled departure, that the two factories no longer required Lao migrant workers. The recruitment agency then suggested the men should go to a palm-oil plantation instead. Although the men would rather go and work in a factory they felt they had little choice as their passports were already processed and valid for three years only. Moreover, they had already signed a contract with the recruitment agency making them responsible for repaying the recruitment fees even if they were not to migrate (Jonnie, 15/3/2009; Som, 15/3/2009).

The five young migrants (four male; one female) from *Baan Naam* who had migrated through a recruitment agencies (all through the same agency) and were interviewed all claimed that they, and not their parents, were the ones initiating the process.[52] In fact, the four young men attended the meeting in which the village headman first introduced the idea of migrating through a recruitment agency in person after they had heard the announcement over the village speaker system. Nalintone had also heard the speaker announcement herself and claims, like the young men, that she was immediately interested.

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[52] For the first round of migration through recruitment agencies (2006-08) a total of 6 young men and one adult man left to work on palm-oil plantations in southern Thailand and 2 young women left to work in a pineapple canning factory in central Thailand.

Yet, her parents attended the introductory meeting on her behalf, again, illustrating the working of gender relations. Although all young migrants claim to have initiated the process themselves, it needs to be remembered that the high fees ensured that only children from relatively better-off households considered participating in this form of migration in the first place. Second, the high fees also create a situation in which parents effectively become the gate-keepers to this formal network of recruitment as the young migrants themselves lack the collateral to sign up for this form of migration. In fact, recruitment agencies enter a separate contract with the head of household of the young migrant, making the head of household responsible for covering any outstanding debts in case the migrating son or daughter quits his/her migrant job prior to having recovered the recruitment fees in full (Sob, 15/3/2009).

7.4.1.2 Migration for purposes of education

Migration for purposes of education, whether formal schooling or informal apprenticeship arrangements, share many of the relational characteristics typifying migration through recruitment agencies. First, studying beyond locally available secondary education is a costly affair. This applies equally to learning to become a beautician through some form of apprentice-arrangement, formal vocational studies, or tertiary education. These different types of education all require financial resources and where the young student migrant has no relatives in Vientiane there is also an accommodation problem to be solved. Hence, like the case with migration through recruitment agencies, young migrants can only become involved in this form of migration if parents actively support it.

To illustrate this, Tunkeo managed to obtain a government bursary for post-secondary education based on her secondary school exams. This bursary covered accommodation in the university dormitory, school fees and included a stipend of 70,000 Kip per month (a bit over 8USD). Tunkeo was in many ways exceptional as she was the only migrant student from *Baan Naam* participating in the research who received any state support for education.[53] Even so, Tunkeo's parents still had to support her with approximately 300,000 *Kip* per month as her stipend, and the money she earned herself by doing contract-based embroidery work in her spare time, as most other female students in her dorm did, was insufficient (Tunkeo, 10/2/2008).

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[53] To give an example of school fees, Padu, who is enrolled in a general health workers course in Vientiane, has to pay 1.2 million *Kip* a year. To put this into perspective, this well-exceeds the combined monthly income of her two parents who are both secondary school teachers.

Tunkeo is not only fortunate in the sense that she receives government support; she is also exceptional as she seems to have earned a university place on the basis of her academic merit alone (Somsack Pongkhao 2007b). Murdoch's (2002: 36-39) research shows that obtaining a place in tertiary education is only, at best, partially earned on the basis of academic achievements. Murdoch (2002: 36-39) finds that every non-quota placement in tertiary education obtained by students in the two villages he studied was bought. Amounts paid for such placements ranged from 5,000 to 20,000 *Thai Baht*. Moreover, Murdoch states that one household, although uninvolved in this practice, regarded such informal payments to obtain a place in tertiary education as official policy.

The importance of financial resources for paying regular and irregular fees and the importance of parental relations of influence in order to secure a place in tertiary education means that children are highly dependent on their parents when it comes to accessing tertiary education. To a lesser extent this also applies to post-secondary vocational education and apprenticeship arrangements in which young people, often for a considerable fee, are taken into a shop or workshop to learn an occupation on the job.[54] In addition, children and young people's agency is not only limited in accessing extra-local education, it is also limited in determining what precisely will be studied. In Tunkeo's case, the conditions of her scholarship determined what she had to study, whilst in other cases parental networks may be more effective in obtaining access to certain types of extra-local education than others and may, therefore, be the determining factor in choice of study.

Furthermore, unlike migration for work in which the place of work and the place to stay are often one and the same, in case of migration for education finding accommodation is usually a separate issue. Rural students with modest means typically resolve this by moving in with relatives. This constitutes another dimension in which migrants for purposes of education are dependent on their parents as parents are usually better positioned to arrange accommodation than the young student migrants themselves (but note Tunkeo's case above).

So far we have assumed that the young migrants themselves are supportive of migration for purposes of education and that parental agency and children's agency are not in conflict

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[54] One young woman who is currently 17 years old and running a small beauty-shop in *Baan Naam* reported having paid 5,000 *Thai Baht* as an apprenticeship fee to an owner of a beauty-shop in Vientiane (RD, 8/2/2008).

in migration for purposes of education. Although this was certainly the dominant pattern, three exceptions deserve attention. First, Saang was sent to Xiang Khwaang province to stay with his brother for one year at the age of 14. Saang had, according to his parents, lost his appetite for studying, but entered the important final year of lower secondary education. Sending him to distant Xiang Khwaang, far away from his friends in *Baan Naam* and under the strict guidance of his older brother was regarded by Saang's parents as the best bet to make him pass his lower secondary exams. Second, Kob's older sister was at the age of 21 sent by her parents to study nursing in Vientiane, although she was staying with her husband in a nearby village and had just given birth to a baby daughter. Here, sending the daughter for study in Vientiane was a means to physically separate her from her husband. Her pregnancy and delivery was plagued by complications, and after having given birth to a healthy daughter the doctor had nonetheless advised the young mother not to sleep with her husband for the coming two years. As her parents regarded this as impossible if the young couple were to remain staying together, they decided to enrol her in a nursing course in Vientiane to protect her from further problems (Interview with Kob's mother, 5/9/2008). Lastly, Hanoi was sent to live with relatives in another district at the age of 12 to start secondary education in a school of better-quality than the secondary school in *Baan Naam*. Although Hanoi agrees that the quality of education was much higher than what he was used to in *Baan Naam* his placement into the relatives' household seems also motivated by questions of labour stemming primarily from adult interests. At the age of 12 he was still too young to be of great help in the fields of his natal household, however, he was old enough to look after the two young children of his relatives, which indeed constituted an important daily activity for Hanoi (notes from interview with Hanoi, 10/7/2008).

7.4.2 Recruitment into fluid migration: From parent-based networks to peer recruitment, and recruitment by unrelated adults.

7.4.2.1 Parent based social networks

Fluid migration lacks the heavy entry barriers characterising institutionalised migration. This means that young migrants are, in principle, less dependent on their parents when accessing forms of fluid migration. Having said this, many of the social networks facilitating access to forms of fluid migration are adult-based networks. Parents are the prime agents in such networks, and young people's agency to manipulate these networks

independent of their parents is thus limited. Moreover, the extent to which these networks are facilitative at all for purposes of migration concerning young villagers depends primarily on the position of their parents in these networks:

> Oy does not know her date of birth but thinks that she is around 17 years old when we first meet her in Vientiane. She is the fifth born in a family with seven children, but only her parents and her younger brother and younger sister stay in the natal household on a regular basis. In Vientiane, Oy has started work as a waitress in a popular Mekong-side restaurant some months earlier. The mother of the restaurant owner lives in *Baan Naam* and this connection links the restaurant to a constant source of labour. However, the number of young villagers interested in working in this restaurant exceeds the demand considerably. Hiring practices of new staff tends, therefore, to be selective and skewed towards relatives. Oy, for example, got the job through her father because Oy's family is closely related to the family owning the restaurant as another daughter of Oy's father (older sister of Oy) was married (but now divorced) to a son of the mother of the restaurant owner. The importance of selective recruitment based on relations of kin was also illustrated when Oy tried getting her friend a job in this restaurant. In spite of Oy's recommendation this friend did not get the job as the restaurant owner preferred to hire a girl, also from *Baan Naam*, who was more closely related to her family than the girl Oy recommended. (Composite note from interview with Oy, 13/4/2008, and with Oy's parents in *Baan Naam*)

An additional example is provided by Tukta. Tukta's father is one of the boat-men from *Baan Naam* acting as local recruiters to meet demand for Lao day-labour in the Thai village of *Baan Fangthai*. He regularly recruits for a local authority in *Baan Fangthai*, and when this local authority needed a girl who could look after his four year old child, Tukta's father was quick to suggest his daughter for the job. This way, Tukta got to stay and work at the age of 13 for slightly over a month in *Baan Fangthai* for 2,000 *Thai Baht* a month, all due to her father's close connection with this employer in *Baan Fangthai*.

7.4.2.2 *Young people based social networks, and the differential scope for peer-recruitment*

The prevalence of kin-based informal recruitment practices stems in part from an economic reality in which 'most Lao enterprises have very few 'employees', who are mostly members of the owner's family or regarded as such' (Rehbein 2007: 67). In such family-run businesses, like the restaurant in which Oy works, most shop and trade work, and all sorts of domestic work, young migrant workers typically sleep at the place of work, and start work once they get up and finish when they go to bed. However, the intensity of work usually varies considerably within each working day. As a result, a young migrant like Oy sees very little of the wider social environment of Vientiane and knows virtually no people in Vientiane apart from regular customers and some Vientiane based colleagues. Consequentially, even though Oy is a current young migrant she is hardly in a position to facilitate any migrant work for her friends in *Baan Naam* who ask her to do so. This tends to be different in those cases where young migrants work in larger workplaces like

factories, in which current workers may even be financially rewarded for recruiting new workers.[55] In such cases social networks between young persons have considerable facilitative capacity for migration and are relatively unmediated by adults. In such cases one can speak of peer recruitment:

> Tula is the second-born (daughter) and her family consists of two parents, one older brother, a younger brother and a younger sister who all reside in the natal household. Tula has briefly worked as a nanny for an aunt in Bangkok when she was 13 or 14. Since, she has been in *Baan Naam* working the family fields and doing household chores. In April 2008, at age 17 Tula left again for Thailand. Over the Lao New Year (April) she had met a young couple from a neighbouring village. As Tula was in school with a younger sister of one of the couple she started talking with them. She learnt that the young couple (early 20s) was working in a pineapple canning factory in Rayong. They explained that this factory was looking for additional workers, and that they could earn 155 *Thai Baht* a day and could simply return to their village the next year for Lao New Year. After the Lao New Year celebrations Tula and five other young villagers joined this couple on the journey back to the factory. In September 2008 Tula is still working in the same factory in Rayong. Her younger sister (Thanya) explains that her salary is even more than she was promised. She earns 160 *Thai Baht* a day and 30 *Thai Baht* per hour for overtime. Meanwhile, Tula and other young villagers already working at this factory had called back to *Baan Naam* and informed fellow-villagers that the factory was again looking for new workers. In response, another eight villagers (mostly youth) left for Rayong, following the travel instructions they had received by phone. (Composite notes from interviews with Thanya 22/5/2008 and 4/9/2008, and with Tula, 7/2/2008 and 15/3/2009)

Tula's story of recruitment into fluid migration contrasts sharply with the recruitment stories described above of the young villagers who were recruited to work in Thailand through a Lao recruitment agency. Whereas their pre-departure information was vague, misleading, and in some respects plainly wrong, Tula received detailed and accurate information. Further, Tula's case illustrates that young villagers may find migrant work through social networks consisting of young people only and thus relatively independent of, and relatively unconstrained by adults. But as said, this sort of peer recruitment tends to be limited to larger work places like factories.

This also means that peer recruitment tends to be more common amongst 'older young migrants' than younger. This can be explained with reference to the working of minimum age regulations. These child labour regulations are hardly considered in small family businesses but are an important factor in larger work places. Minimum age regulations in the Lao PDR and Thailand stipulate that factories may under certain conditions employ workers below 18 years of age. However, in practice many factories are wary of doing so. A foreign garment factory manager in the Lao PDR argued that his factory refrained from employing any workers below 18 years of age. This was firstly explained as a buffer as many prospective workers overstated their age. In addition, although 15 or 16-year old Lao

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[55] Similar recruitment practices have been observed in relation to sex work, including small establishments (Molland 2008).

could, according to Lao and international law, be employed, they often look much younger in the eye of western observers. Hence, by enforcing a minimum age of employment of 18 years this factory avoids any ambiguity about the age of its workers with the aim of minimising the risk of being associated with child labour, which has a devastating impact, particularly for factories exporting directly to western markets (RD, 23/7/2007).

Where young villagers have friends involved in migrant work, such relations may have potential for facilitating migration. This may be similarly true for having friends or relatives staying elsewhere, as this also amounts to diversifying and widening young villagers' social networks. Here, the family migration history is an important factor. Where a family has resided in different localities and their children have, for example, attended schools in these different places, such children are able to draw on a spatially wider social network than most of their peers who are born and raised in *Baan Naam*. How this may facilitate migration is illustrated by the following examples:

> Kongkeo is the third born in a family with four children. She is a regular migrant as is her older (first-born) brother. Kongkeo quit school after secondary 2 but her older sister still attends, as does her younger sister. Kongkeo's family arrived in *Baan Naam* four years ago from a northern Lao province hoping to find better living conditions in the proximity of Vientiane. Kongkeo first migrated for work when she was about 13 to work in a shop in Thabo, on the Thai side of the border opposite Vientiane. Over the past two years she has migrated regularly, and has interspersed this with periods of time in *Baan Naam*. She has worked twice in a shop in Korat, in the *Isaan* region of Thailand, and once in a guesthouse in Vientiane. All these jobs Kongkeo did together with a friend of hers who was also the one who alerted her about these migrant opportunities. Like Kongkeo, this friend also stems from a settler household. However, this household did not stay in *Baan Naam* but, after some time, moved on to Vientiane. However, the daughters stayed in touch by mobile phone and this is how Kongkeo learnt about these migrant opportunities. (Composite note from interviews with Kongkeo 25/2/2008, 1/3/2008, and Kongkeo's mother, 3/9/2008)

> Malivan is the first-born (daughter) of four children her mother has with her second husband. The youngest daughter of the two children the mother has with her deceased, first husband also stays in the household from time to time, as did two cousins for a period of time. Malivan's household is a settler household, and they arrived in *Baan Naam* around 2002 following a failed resettlement scheme. After an initial brief and disappointing migrant experience in Thailand at the age of about 14 she remigrated, this time to Vientiane. Her second job is a direct result of having visited her older step-sister in the province from where she originates. When visiting her step-sister she met two other girls her age who were planning on going to work in Vientiane. After Malivan returned to *Baan Naam* these two girls got in touch with her by telephone and explained that the garment workshop in which they were working was looking for another girl. (Composite notes from interviews with Malivan 9/7/2008, and Malivan's mother, 29/2/2008)

Both cases described above illustrate that the family histories may contribute to widening and diversifying young people's social networks. In addition, both cases show that young villagers are active agents in such networks and that these direct relations allow peer recruitment to take place beyond the gaze of parents. This sheds another light on Evrard and Goudineau's (2004: 954) observation that government resettlement programmes lead to an 'increased and diversified rural mobility' as discussed in chapter six. Whereas Evrard

and Goudineau focus primarily on households and concentrate on factors forcing households into continued mobile existence, the analysis here shows that in relation to child and youth migration such household histories may also be enabling as it tends to widen young people's social networks.

A third factor contributing to the possibility that young villagers themselves become active agents in networks of recruitment is their own prior migration experiences. The act of migration broadens young villagers' social networks, which may facilitate subsequent migrations. As the case with children from settler households and young villagers with young migrants amongst their friends, young migrants can access these networks of recruitment relatively independently. When it comes to accessing networks of recruitment it thus makes sense to distinguish between first-time young migrants and experienced young migrants. Experienced young migrants are not only better placed to assess the reliability of information about migrant opportunities, and mitigate some of the inherent risks; they are generally also able to draw on wider networks facilitating migration.

How young migrants through the process of migration gradually create more space for exercising agency and shaping their own migration experience can be illustrated by the migration narratives of Wang and Padu. Wang was earlier introduced in chapter six where it was stated that her father had sent her at the age of 15 to work for a younger sister of his in Vientiane as he claimed that this was best for Wang because she would learn a useful skill. In addition, as Wang's father was getting old, he argued, that she was better-off working for a relative since relatives would take over his responsibility towards Wang in case he passed away. Wang's initial migration experience was thus organised through adult networks over which she had had little influence. Once in Vientiane, and unhappy with the heavy work and poor payments at her aunt's, Wang learnt about work as a nanny for a Thai family across the Mekong River in Thailand for considerably more money. Although Wang knew that leaving her aunt was against the wishes of her father, she nonetheless decided to do so. She was able to make this migratory decision relatively independently as she was away from home and could, therefore, access networks of recruitment directly and in a relatively unconstrained manner (notes from interview with Wang, 15/5/2008 in Vientiane). A story from Padu about how a classmate of hers came to live with the family who provides her with board and lodging in return for domestic work and helping out in their restaurant whilst she is studying in Vientiane reflects the same dynamics as Wang's account. Padu knew that her host-family was looking for additional helping hands in their

household and restaurant. Therefore, she introduced her classmate to her host-family who allowed the girl, also a migrant student, to move out of paid accommodation and enter the same arrangements as Padu. In addition, in this way Padu not only got herself some company but it also relieved her workload considerably.

Padu's example also illustrates that migrant students often walk two paths, an institutionalised path through which they access education away from home and a path similar to fluid migration in order to find accommodation.

7.4.2.3 Direct recruitment by unrelated adults

In addition to the scenarios analysed above, young migrants from *Baan Naam* are occasionally also directly recruited by unrelated adults. This includes fellow adult villagers, strangers who come to *Baan Naam* with the specific objective of recruiting migrant labour, and adults whom young migrants get to know when involved in day labour in the Thai village of *Baan Fangthai*.

Recruitment of young migrants by adult strangers is a key ingredient in stereotypical representations of human trafficking (2007d; Molland *forthcoming*). The recruiter in a drama performance put up by students of the National University at a trafficking awareness raising event funded by the United Nations office in the Lao PDR was indeed without doubt an adult stranger (RD, 16/1/2008). Since *Baan Naam* is covered by government and INGO anti-trafficking propaganda, young villagers are well-aware of the risks associated with adult strangers acting as recruiters, particularly, so the trafficking narrative goes, if the destination is Thailand.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the observed cases in which young migrants were directly recruited by unrelated adults concerned, with the exception of one, only more experienced young migrants. In addition, these young migrants all expressed awareness of the dominant anti-trafficking messages and demonstrated a high level of shrewdness and alertness in anticipating any danger. Tukta was, for example, recruited together with a friend of her when she was about 15 years old by a lady in *Baan Naam* who has a doubtful reputation as broker for various sorts of migrant work. This lady escorted the girls across the border into *Baan Fangthai* where she handed the girls over to Thai nationals. When transported further, the girls quickly realised that they were not taken to the domestic job in the proximity of *Baan Fangthai* they were promised. Although deceived, the girls were not defeated and managed to steal a mobile phone once they arrived at their destination, a

karaoke bar in central Thailand (Ayuthaya). With this mobile phone the girls got in touch with their parents in *Baan Naam* and with help of a lady working in the karaoke bar they managed to get out of the karaoke bar and return to *Baan Naam* within a few days (Notes from interview with Tukta, 9/6/2008).[56] Another example is provided by Khik. She had earlier worked in a restaurant in Vientiane and was at the age of about 17, together with three other girls, recruited by an unknown stranger from Thailand for domestic work in Thailand. Across the border in *Baan Fangthai* the four girls were met by a Thai police officer who was part of the recruitment team and who took the girls in a police car to the Thai town of Udon Thani. Although in this case all went as was promised to the girls, the girls had nonetheless decided to use new nicknames so that they could not be traced back in case they would have to run away. In addition, when the four girls were told to decide amongst themselves which two were to stay in Udon Thani, and which two would go to Bangkok for domestic work, Khik decided to stay in Udon Thani. She decided to do so since it was her first time to work in Thailand and her first time to work as a domestic. Staying in Udon Thani in the *Isaan* region, she reasoned she was still not too far from *Baan Naam*, meaning that she could easily make it home in case things would turn out badly (Notes from interview with Khik, 31/3/2008 in Udon Thani).

Young men were also recruited by adult strangers coming to Baan Naam. However, this was only observed in relation to construction work in Vientiane. Unlike the young women, these young men did not speak of any perceived or experienced danger associated with this practice. This may be due to a general tendency of interviews with girls' and young women reaching greater qualitative depth (see chapter three), or to upholding an impression of masculinity on part of the young men. However, it may also reflect other gender relations as the following interview excerpt illustrates:

> Roy: How did you grandmother tried to stop you from going to Thailand?
>
> Jonnie: By talking to me, and telling me how much she would miss me because I had always stayed with her. She was very worried, because whenever we see news about Thailand [on Lao or Thai television] there are often bad things so she was worried that something would happen to me if I were to work there.
>
> Paai: If you had been a girl, would it have been easier for your grandmother to convince you not to go?
>
> Jonnie: It would have been different. Girls would have listened and stayed. For example, I also wouldn't want my younger sister to go and work elsewhere because for girls it is more dangerous than for men. Men look stronger than women and are, therefore, safer. Also when we see the news, it is always girls to which bad things happen. Therefore, I also don't want my younger sister to go.

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[56] Note that the lady in *Baan Naam* who acted as a broker here was fined by local authorities for her role in this case of trafficking, meaning she had to pay compensation to Tukta's parents (see also chapter 3.3.4)

This excerpt echoes the same gender norms as discussed in section 7.2.1.1. In addition, it illustrates how these gender norms are reinforced by popular media and news. Access to Thai television and the popularity of Thai soap operas are frequently quoted as 'pull factors' in studies on human trafficking and migration conducted in the Lao PDR (e.g. Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2003). Interestingly, in this case widespread access to Thai television, and a tendency in Lao and Thai media to reinforce already existing gendered stereotypes of human trafficking and female victimhood is here actively drawn upon in order to discourage young women from involvement in migration. Concerns about young women's safety and morals when working away from the village can thus not be reduced to 'tales [which] are part and parcel of the popular landscape of rural Laos, the subject of discussion, gossip, concern and speculation' (Rigg 2005a: 150). These concerns are actively propelled into the popular imagination by popular media but also by external agents such as the state and INGOs in the form of anti-trafficking awareness raising (see also Walker 1999: 81-82).[57]

Chapter five has illustrated that once young people in *Baan Naam* start being regarded as *wai nhum* (youth) and not merely as children (*dek noi*) anymore they often become involved in day labour in the Thai village of *Baan Fangthai*. As commuting for work to *Baan Fangthai* is regarded as part and parcel of village life in *Baan Naam* it is here not regarded as a form of migration. However, day labour in *Baan Naam* is important in relation to migration as it is an avenue through which young villagers learn about other jobs in Thailand. This may be mediated by parents as was the case with Tukta described above, but more commonly young villagers are approached directly by unrelated adults when working in *Baan Fangthai* on a commuting basis.

7.4.3 Agency and relations constraining agency in becoming a young migrant

One of the key conclusions that emerges from the preceding sections is that it is in institutionalised migration that young migrants' agency is most constrained. With the possible exception of fosterage, children and youth are highly dependent on their parents when entering institutionalised forms of migration, have virtually no scope to influence the migration arrangement, and are often ill-informed about the details of the migratory event.

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[57] This is not to deny that some of these stories have a real material basis in actual experiences of fellow villagers.

However, it is precisely the various forms of migration constituting institutional migration that are regarded as least problematic in relation to migration at a young age. In fact, these forms of migration are often regarded as benign. This contradiction is most striking in migration through recruitment agencies. These agencies are in part created to address concerns over human trafficking which is associated with migration through irregular channels to Thailand (Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008). Ironically, however, the practice of migration through recruitment agencies reflects various aspects of human trafficking. High recruitment fees are demanded and attractive earning and employment prospects are suggested, which often prove to be misleading or even wrong. In addition, the debt incurred by signing up for migration through recruitment agencies creates a situation in which young migrants are left with little other choice than to comply with whatever shape the migratory endeavour takes.

In fluid migration, pre-departure information is not necessarily detailed and accurate but often it is. Furthermore, the informality that characterises fluid migration means that young migrants in fluid migration tend to be more sceptical about promises of high incomes or too good sounding working conditions. This is particularly true for young migrants with prior migration experience, and includes cases of peer recruitment as the following notes illustrate:

> My friend explained that she would meet me at the border together with the employer [Friendship Bridge near Vientiane, an official border crossing]. However, I was still worried because when travelling to Vientiane I had heard stories about how dangerous migration could be. I heard that people were promised nice jobs and easy work, but that they had ended up working in a Karaoke bar in Thailand. Even though it was my friend who informed me about this job, I was still worried, particularly since it was some time ago since I had last seen her. (Notes from interview with Kongkeo about when she was going to work in Korat when she was about 15 years old, 1/3/2008).

Kongkeo's case shows that young migrants, and particularly more experienced young migrants, do not blindly rely on whatever is promised. Instead, young migrants in fluid migration are mostly found anticipative of possible negative surprises. Moreover, the networks providing access to fluid migration offer greater scope for young migrants to influence the migration process and thereby to stay away from situations they would rather avoid, albeit at times in vain. Table 7.3 summarises how the relational characteristics of the networks underlying institutionalised and fluid migration affect young migrants' scope for agency.

Table 7.3: Agency and constraining relations in networks related to institutionalised and fluid migration

Form of migration	Relational characteristics of networks	Young people's agency in influencing migration arrangements
Institutionalised migration	*Institutionalised *Adult-based	*Young villagers are dependent on parents in order to access this form of migration *Young migrants' agency to influence the migration arrangement is highly constrained
Fluid migration	*Informal *Ranging from adult-based networks to peer-recruitment, and direct recruitment by unrelated adults.	*Older youth, children and young people from settler households, experienced young migrants and young villagers who have friends in migration are generally better placed to influence migration arrangements as they often have direct access to facilitative networks un-mediated by adults/parents. *Lacking direct access to facilitative networks, which applies especially to the younger, first-time migrant who are born and raised in *Baan Naam*, means that migration arrangements are largely determined by adults.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has concentrated on children and young people's agency in the process of becoming involved in migration and the various factors and relations constraining their agency. The analytical focus on the working of intra-household relations within the field of the household has illustrated the various subtle ways in which migration decision-making processes are negotiated by parents and children and embedded in normative and intertwined frameworks of adult-child relations, gender relations and relations of relative seniority between children and young people within the household.

As a contribution to existing work on intra-household relations in the study of migration by children and young people (Hoddinott 1992; Iversen 2002; Punch 2002b; Whitehead *et al.*

2007), this chapter has demonstrated the importance of conceptualising the household as a flexible and mutating entity which is not limited to members of the nuclear family alone. Adopting such a conceptualisation has illustrated how the combined working of relations of relative seniority and gender between young household members shapes the outcomes of household based decision-making processes concerning migration and non-migration of young household members. In addition, it has also illuminated how out-migration of the last child present in a household may trigger fosterage as a form of chain migration.

This chapter observed notable gender differences in young people's social position in the household and subsequently in relation to migration decision-making processes. Parents' influence over their daughters' migration behaviour was found to be considerably greater than in case of sons, which is, in turn, at least in part, related to daughter's greater responsiveness to parental advice. From an agency perspective this resonates with Sen's (1990: 127) distinction between agency and well-being discussed in chapter two, and gender differences in this. Judging from a perspective based in the here and now it then appears that boys and young men are, generally speaking, less inclined and also less expected to forego their own interests over that of the household, relative to girls and young women. However, the work of Hoddinott (1992) has demonstrated that there may be sound long term reasons to sacrifice such immediate interests. In the ethnic Lao context this would refer to gendered and generational residence and inheritance patterns.

Due to some degree of mechanisation of agricultural production combined with increasing land shortage households do not have to have all their children present in the household, and certainly not for the full year, in order to maintain economic productivity. At the same time though, most households aim to maintain a minimum supply of child and youth labour. Therefore, it is in households in which some children have already left the household that forms of bargaining about migration decision-making processes between children and their parents is most clearly observed. This chapter has shown that parents can generally draw on a greater repertoire in order to convince daughters to postpone migration than is the case with sons. Moreover, arguments to discourage daughters from migration are more powerful than is the case with sons as these narratives feed on traditional gender stereotypes of female vulnerability and female weakness, which are, moreover, continuously reinforced by anti-trafficking awareness raising programmes and popular media.

Extending the analysis of migration decision-making processes to the sphere of networks of recruitment departs from an exclusive focus on the sphere of the household that has been most dominant in work on child migration (Hoddinott 1992; Punch 2002b; Whitehead *et al.* 2007). Networks of recruitment are the dynamic interface between the field of the household and the event of migration. The focus on networks of recruitment has, therefore, shed further light on the question of children and young people's agency in the process of migration, by taking these questions beyond the direct sphere of the household. In some networks, it was observed, parents acted as gate-keepers. In these cases children and young people's position in relation to networks of recruitment is in effect an extension of their position in the inter-generational relation within the household. In case of peer networks and networks of recruitment in which young villagers directly interact with non-related adults their social position in the process of recruitment may, however, differ significantly from that within the household. Although migration by children and young people through networks unmediated by parents is in the literature generally associated with increased risk of exploitation and deception, the other side of the coin is that in these forms of recruitment young people's scope for agency and negotiating the migration arrangement is considerably larger than in case of parent-mediated migration, which may in fact contribute to mitigating possible harm.

Lastly, this chapter has introduced the concepts of fluid migration and institutionalised migration as a means for understanding differences and similarities in young migrants' position in the migration process across seemingly different forms of migration. This chapter has shown how the relational features of these two categories of migration affect children and young people's agency in terms of becoming a young migrant and failing to do so. The next chapter develops these concepts further in the context of the migration destination, by investigating how, amongst other things, the relational features of these two categories of migration allow scope for but also restrict young migrants' agency at migration destination.

8 Young Migrants in Migration Destinations: Agency and constraints in negotiating working conditions

8.1 Introduction

So far, this dissertation has limited the analysis to dynamics of migration and non-migration playing out in the sending site. Prime attention has in this respect been paid to the field of the household and the working of various intra-household relations. Considering networks of recruitment, as was done, in chapter seven has, however, demonstrated that a study of migration and non-migration of children and young people cannot be limited to the sphere of the household alone. This chapter expands the analysis further by looking at young migrants in migration destinations.

In this dissertation, migration is appreciated as a social process. This implies acknowledging migration as 'one way in which boundaries around social identities may be affirmed, broken down or otherwise changed, including, but not always, through the conscious agency of migrants' (De Haan and Rogaly 2002: 6). This means, for example, that kin relations and socio-economic relations, which were observed as important underlying dynamics in the formation of social identity and, subsequently young villagers' social position in the field of the household and the larger sending community cannot be assumed to have the same explanatory potential when it comes to understanding young migrants' social position and subsequent scope for agency in migration destinations. Equally, young migrants' social position in migration destinations may be shaped by sets of relations and may be articulated by dispositions that play little or no role in the sending site.

This chapter starts with an analysis of relations of place in order to unravel the relational dispositions with which young rural Lao migrants enter various migration destinations. Underlying these dispositions are sets of social relations that are important shapers of young migrants' initial social position in migration destination. This chapter analyses how these and other sets of relations unfold in various migration destinations, how these relations constrain young migrants' agency, but also how young migrants negotiate these relations. The analysis is structured around the framework developed in chapter seven, distinguishing between fluid and institutionalised migration and between internal and cross-border migration.

8.2 Relations of place

8.2.1 Young villagers' sense of place: Spatial identity, rural backwardness, and urban sophistication

In chapter four it was argued that despite being a well-established village, the administrative entity constituting *Baan Naam* as a village should not be understood as comprising a tight-knit community. In fact, in-migration, particularly by families belonging to ethnic minority groups, has been identified as one of the factors contributing to social differentiation within the village and also the existence of different communities within the village administrative boundaries.

Nonetheless, villagers tend to draw on the image of the village as an intimate and unchanging community when talking about *Baan Naam* comparatively, for example, in relation to other villages or Vientiane. This is best illustrated by the use of the common expression *baan hau*, meaning 'our village'. All villagers use this term, regardless of ethnicity, and regardless whether they live in the old centre of the village or in the newly added units on the outskirts.[58]

Widespread use of the expression *baan hau* is illustrative of the important role of the notion of 'the village' in Lao villagers' sense of place. This is illustrated in more detail in the following note:

> I want to stay in Lao [Lao PDR] because my village (*baan*) and my house (*hüüan*) are in the Lao land (*pathed Lao*). (Note from 1st photo-based interview with Phayvanh, 7-8/2/2008. Phayvan's the 6th born (daughter) in a settler household. She was 14 at the time of this interview and studying in primary 5)

The logic underlying Phayvan's sense of place emerged from most responses of young villagers, male and female alike, to the question whether they thought they would be able to live elsewhere in the Lao PDR, or possibly in Thailand, for a period of time. Phayvan's account illustrates that one's sense of place is firstly defined by the household one belongs to; one's home. In the ethnic Lao context the notion of 'home' refers mostly to a fixed locality where one's immediate kin resides. This in contrast with, for example, Van Blerk

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[58] Note that in the Lao language, the term *baan* means 'village' but is also used to mean 'home', the latter in the sense of one's house. *Baan hau* in a literal sense can thus be used to refer to the wider community of one's village, but also to the more intimate community of the home. When speaking of one's house in the sense of a dwelling specifically, the term *hüüan* (house) is mostly used (see also Sparkes 2005: 226fn1). Due to this ambiguity of the meaning of the term *baan* it needs to be emphasised that the analysis presented here is based on discussions in which the expression *baan hau* was used in the sense of 'our village'. This most likely refers to the village as a 'community' and not necessarily to the village as an administrative entity. However, the data does not allow to making any definite claims in this respect.

and Ansell's (2006) Malawian findings where the notion of 'home' is more spatially diverse as it is not limited to immediate kin but also relates to the extended family. In the ethnic Lao context, and in particular in case of unmarried children, home is where one's immediate kin reside and where one belongs. Being away from home thus implies staying away from parents and siblings.[59]

Phayvan's note presented above is further of interest for how she combines in her sense of place traditional components of place, like kin relations and being part of a village community, with modern ones like that of the nation-state (*pathed Lao* lit. 'Lao land' (Evans 2002: xiii)). The same practice also transpires from Phayvan's response to the question whether she thought she would be able to stay in Vientiane. She responded that since Vientiane is located in *pathed Lao* (Lao country) she would be amongst fellow Lao people (*khon Lao*) whom, she expected, analogous to kin, would help her in case she was in need. On these grounds, Phayvan thought that she'd be able to stay in Vientiane. However, Phayvan expressed serious concerns about her ability to stay on the Thai side of the border as she doubted that Thai nationals (*khon Thai*) would help her like she expected Lao nationals to do (Phayvan, 7-8/2/2008). Phayvan thus related the kin rhetoric of mutual help to the modern notion of nationality. This is particularly striking since her response to the question of whether she was able to stay in Thailand followed from a discussion about two pictures of nearby north-eastern Thai towns, which she recognised as such, in which the population is largely ethnic Lao. Yet, Phayvan nonetheless stressed the difference of nationality despite ethnic similarity.

Chapter five drew attention to the role of mass-education as a vehicle for the state's nation-building project. Phayvan's response can be taken as evidence of the relative success of Lao state-education in terms of instilling the young population with a sense national identity. This is particularly remarkably given the fact that Phayvan belongs to an ethnic minority group, is not Buddhist, and her family's experience with a failed government resettlement scheme. In spite of this Phayvan subscribes without a trace of doubt to the idea that she is part of the larger, and in rural areas rather abstract, entity of the Lao nation-state.

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[59] However, for Hen, home is in *Baan Naam* even though none of her parents or grandparents are there and despite the fact that she herself has stayed away from *Baan Naam* for over a year when she joined her mother and older sister in Bangkok, who work there in construction (Hen, 15/3/2009).

8.2.1.1 Spatial relations of power: The rural population as khon baan nôôk

Learnt descriptions sooner or later engage with reality and once young villagers are slightly older than Phayvan they can mostly draw on actual experiences of having been in Vientiane. It is on the basis of such experiences that spatial descriptions quickly leave the sphere of abstraction and become peopled. In interviews with young people who could draw on experiences of staying in Vientiane going beyond the hasty visit, the value-neutral term *baan* (village) was often replaced with the value-laden term *baan nôôk*. In addition, these villagers would start referring to themselves as *khon baan nôôk*, vis-à-vis the urban population and refer to their village as *baan nôôk*, vis-à-vis urban areas.

To come from *baan nôôk* means something like being a country bumpkin, and carries connotations of backwardness, being uncivilised, poverty, and lack of sophistication. Barber (1979: 6-7) explains that the expression *baan nôôk* is 'an urban-centred view, since to consider the countryside as 'the village outside' [the literal meaning of *baan nôôk*] is to assume oneself to be in the town'. Barber further observes that 'it is a view that urbanites have managed to impose on rural dwellers who often refer to themselves as 'merely village-outside people' [*khon baan nôôk*].

Thongchai Winichakul's (2000: 536) discussion on the Thai notion of 'chaubannok' (rural village people) as used in the Kingdom of Siam (present-day Thailand) of about a century ago resonates with the notion of *baan nôôk* in the contemporary Lao PDR.[60] The major characteristic of these 'chaubannok, Thongchai Winichakul argues, was the 'stereotype of the uneducated and backward folk'. The construct of 'chaubannok' functioned, in this sense, as the 'Others within Siam', allowing the urban Siamese elite of the time to regard the rural population as embodying the past, the pre-civilised era.

The work of Barber and Thongchai Winichakul shows that the construct of *baan nôôk* is rooted in the urban centred and linear view of development described in chapter four. These rural-urban dimensions of discourses of development and modernity are not unique to the Lao and Thai context but also transpire from the work of Hsu (2005) on young Chinese migrants from rural areas who work in modern fast-food restaurants in contemporary urban Harbin. Hsu's (2005: 551) young Chinese migrants 'were painfully aware that from a Harbin perspective, they themselves were unspeakably *tu*, the country

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[60] Evans (2002: 37) indeed traces the notion of *baan nôôk* back to modernisation projects launched by the Bangkok based kings Mongkut, and his son king Chulalongkorn, who reigned Siam from the mid-19th century into the 20th century.

bumpkins from the rural periphery'. And just like some of their Lao counterparts 'the question was how could they move from *tu* to *yang* [modern, foreign/western]?'

The negative and derogatory qualifications associated with the countryside in the Lao context, and captured by the term *baan nôôk* are well-illustrated by the lyrics of *B-Hero* presented in Box 8.1.[61] The association of rurality with backwardness also resonates in words quoted from a speech of a Chairman of the Lao National Rural Development Committee which are included in a UNDP published socio-economic profile of Xayabuli province. This chairman is quoted describing rural areas as 'areas which are isolated, remote and uncivilised, in which the ways of living of people are different from others'. Rural people are further described by this chairman as 'poor and backward and unhappy when they lack food and medicine' (UNDP, 1996: 14, IN: Rigg 2005a: 83).[62]

Box 8.1: *Baan nôôk,* **by** *B-Hero*

> …I go to study at the university…
> But I have something in my heart to do with my friends,
> They say to me *baan nôôk*, but I don't care,
> I [first] thought my friends were joking,
> But this person says [it] and that person says [it],
> They like to tease, but is this nice?
> *Baan nôôk* is fine, but *baan nôôk* is also not fine,
> I don't want to be teased, but they keep on teasing,
> To be *baan nôôk*, what's wrong with it? (2x)
> To be *baan nôôk* how is it?
> Why do you talk like this to me?
> To be *high-so*, what is good about it? (note: *high-so*, lit. high society c.f. upper class)
> To be *high-so* already, it is not so great
> To be *high-so*, how is it?
> …
> Patiently studying till year 5,
> I hope to be able to get my certificate,
> My parents and relatives in the village have faith in me and they are happy,
> But I hear people saying countryside doctor (*môô baan nôôk*)…
>
> (B-Hero n.d.)

[61] Official speech in contemporary Lao PDR has ceased using the term *baan nôôk* and instead employs the more neutral term *xonnabod*, best translated as 'rural areas'. Interestingly though, when talking about the difference between *baan nôôk* and *xonnabod* with my research assistant Paai, she argued that, according to her understanding, the terms were complementary and not interchangeable. According to her, *xonnabod* refers to places like *Baan Naam* that have received some development as there is electricity, road access, a school, a clinic, people use toilets, etc. *Baan nôôk*, for her, are all those places not yet reached by development; places of lack (RD, 15/11/2007).
Note further that in the Thai context the *khon baan nôôk* identity has over recent years become viewed as something positive, a counter-identity vis-à-vis the urban elite. This trend has, however, not yet taken root on any significant scale on the Lao side of the border.
[62] This is not to say that romanticised constructions of the 'rural idyll' are absent from the Lao (urban) imaginary. This is well-illustrated by the romantic reflections of a Lao journalist on village life vs. urban life on which basis it is concluded that rural life is an 'attractive option' (Phon Thikeo 2008).

The *B-Hero* lyrics also illuminate the ambiguous role of the Lao state-education system in the reproduction of these spatial relations of power. Lao schools disseminate a nation-building rhetoric which stresses relations of equality and national unity based on a shared national identity. This is underscored by the frequent use of kin terminology in reference to the nation's population in speeches by officials (unnamed 2008a; unnamed 2008b), a population that is in actual fact hardly united given the numerous ethnic groups comprising the Lao PDR's population (see also Anderson 2006: 143-145).

Just like the rural youngsters who tend to start regarding themselves as *khon baan nôôk*, and not anymore as just *khon Lao*, once they can draw on some experience of the urban world, also with regard to rural students the learnt rhetoric of national equality quickly shatters once they continue their education in urban settings. Since participation in tertiary education, and at times secondary education, requires relocation to urban centres rural migrant students are at some point confronted with their *baan nôôk* roots. This may take the form of (playful) teasing as illustrated by the B-Hero lyrics, but it may also be of a more structural nature. Once studying with urban peers young rural migrant students become, in most cases, acutely aware of the sub-standard education they have received in their villages. The Lao formal education may thus at a rhetorical level combat hierarchical spatial relations, yet, the lived experience of post-secondary education in urban areas, just like migrant work in urban areas, in practice, reproduces these relations.

8.2.2 Distinct otherness and everyday relatedness: Young Lao villagers' relations with Thai nationals and Thailand

Nation building efforts often encompass efforts to distinguish the nation from its neighbours (Thongchai Winichakul 1994; Goscha and Ivarsson 2003; Ivarsson 2008). This is particularly important for nation-states like the modern Lao PDR that are still very much in the making and in which geo-political borders are confronted with various everyday manifestations of relatedness stretching across the geo-political divide (Van Schendel 2002; Walker 2009). In the Lao-Thai context, for example, the neighbouring communities on both sides of the Mekong River are, without doubt, part of distinctly different political entities, yet intrinsically intertwined in various other ways (see e.g. Lyttleton and Amorntip Amarapibal 2002).

Nation building efforts of the Lao and Thai states thus revolve, at least in part, about distinguishing oneself from an otherwise very similar neighbour. These efforts find on the

Lao side of the border support in the very different representations of the Lao PDR versus Thailand broadcasted by Lao and Thai media. Radio and television remain state-controlled in the Lao PDR, whereas in Thailand they are heavily commercialised. However, villages on the Lao side of the border all access Thai popular media (Khien Theeravit and Adisorn Semyaem 2002) and the content this offers is indeed distinctly different from that offered by the Lao state channels. This emphasises Thailand's otherness rather than its relatedness.[63]

The influence of popular media in constructing the Lao PDR and Thailand as distinct others despite various everyday manifestations of relatedness can be demonstrated by the results of a series of photo-based interviews with children and young people in *Baan Naam*. For this exercise two photos from Thailand and two from Vientiane were used to trigger responses about the possibility of staying in either of these places (see Appendix 9). The pictures chosen for this exercise featured what the research team regarded as distinct elements of the Lao or Thai nation. Moreover, only pictures that were regarded as familiar to the research subjects were used. Picture 8.1 was included as it displays a well-known landmark in Vientiane and a statue and park dedicated to King Faa Ngum who has been given a central position in contemporary Lao historiography.

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[63] The recent arrival of the first Lao commercial channel has diluted this sharp contrast somewhat, yet only in a limited way because this commercial channel is like Lao national channels expected to conform to national interests set out by the party (Phoonsab Thevongsa 2008).

Picture 8.1: Landmark in central Vientiane (Picture 3 in 1ˢᵗ round of photo-based interviews)

Despite these distinct elements of Lao nationalism a considerable number of young villagers argued that this picture was taken in Thailand:

> I think this is a picture of Thailand. I see so many houses, so it must be in Thailand I think. (Notes from 1ˢᵗ photo-based interview with Suchai, 7-8/2/2008)

> I think this is in Thailand because I see a statue. I think this is a statue of the king [of Thailand], because it looks like what I've seen in [Thai] TV. (Notes from 1ˢᵗ photo-based interview with Tuy, 7-8/2/2008)

The responses illustrate that the interviewees associated a modern urban landscape and statues of kings with Thailand rather than the Lao PDR. These responses were clearly shaped by exposure to Thai media, interestingly, even to the extent that this well-known landmark in the Lao capital Vientiane was regarded as distinctly Thai.

The two responses are also illustrative of the wider observation that Thailand is by most Lao nationals equated with modernity and material progress. The other side of this coin is a dominant consciousness amongst the Lao of the contemporary Lao PDR as backward vis-à-vis foreign countries, with Thailand being the first point of reference (Evans 1998: 190-191). Evans (1998: 190-191) attributes this to the 'endless promotion of "development", and…growing exposure of Lao to the outside world'. Such a consciousness of inferiority also resonates in Thanya's explanation of why she thought she wouldn't be able to stay in Thailand:

> I think I cannot stay in Thailand because I think I don't understand the place. Like how the people are and how they live. (Notes from 1st photo-based interview with Thanya, 7-8/2/2008)

Thanya's response is not unique and resembles that of other young villagers in *Baan Naam*. These responses are surprising since young villagers in *Baan Naam* could virtually without exception draw on actual experiences on Thai soil. These experiences are initially mostly limited to the Thai village of *Baan Fangthai* and often involve visiting trade fairs, relatives, festivals, and other activities set in a frame of relatedness rather than difference. Yet, Thanya's response and that of most other young villagers stresses an essential difference between life on both sides of the border based on the abstract construct of the nation, rather than a sense of relatedness which transpires from various everyday interactions between *Baan Naam* and *Baan Fangthai*.

The perception amongst most villagers of Thailand as a distinct other, which includes the neighbouring village of *Baan Fangthai*, cannot be reduced to the effects of the various discursive powers alone. It is also rooted in significant material differences. These material differences are the results of the very different paths of socio-economic development trodden by the two nation-states as discussed in chapter four. In addition, this bounded sense of difference is also rooted in the experience of the border and the awareness of the illegality of entering *Baan Fangthai* through informal channels and without proper documentation, let alone working in Thailand:

> I don't want to go to Thailand because I'm afraid that the police will catch me, because I know that Lao people are not allowed to stay in Thailand. However, my father plans on sending me to a friend of his in Thailand once I've finished secondary school to become a car mechanic. (Notes from 1st photo-based interview with Panee, 7-8/2/2008)

Since cases of actual arrest or fines were relatively rare young villagers' sense of 'illegality' when crossing the border into Thailand undocumented or through informal channels is rooted in what De Genova (2002: 439) has described as a 'sense of deportability, which is to say, the possibility of deportation'. De Genova's (*ibid* 2002) conceptualisation is based on research amongst Mexican migrants in the United States where, like in Thailand, deportation is seldom the goal of surveillance of illegality; neither would this, for the sheer numbers of undocumented migrants be possible. De Genova (2002) concludes, therefore, that, it is 'deportability' that matters rather than actual deporting. Deportability, De Genova (2002: 439) claims, is vital in the 'legal production of migrant "illegality"'…which provides an apparatus for sustaining their [undocumented migrants'] vulnerability and tractability' (*ibid*: 439). This, De Genova (2002: 439) continues, leads to a spatialised social condition of illegality, in which the physical borders

of nation-states are reproduced 'in the everyday life of innumerable places throughout the interiors of the migrant-receiving states'.

The following section illustrates that like Mexican migrants in the US, young undocumented Lao migrants are often intimately 'included' in Thai society as they work together with Thai workers, take care of Thai children as nannies, clean and cook for Thai families as domestic workers, etc. At the same time, and as Panee's quote above illustrated, the young undocumented migrant workers are ultimately aware of the frail nature of their inclusion. Although Panee's interview notes show that young villagers are aware that formal rules and regulations can be negotiated informally, the frail type of inclusion this produces is contingent on the young migrants' relation with their Thai employer. This form of patron-client relationship is discussed in more detail below.

8.3 Migration destination: Young Lao migrants' social position in the work place

When young villagers leave *Baan Naam* to stay elsewhere for longer or shorter periods of time they necessarily enter and participate in social environments different from the ones they are familiar with. The social position of young migrants at destination may, therefore, be different from their social position in *Baan Naam* (De Haan and Rogaly 2002: 6), which constituted the analytical focus in chapter seven. In the previous chapter it was furthermore observed that long working days, marginal salaries and the practice of being accommodated at the place of work often limits young migrants' spatial mobility at destination. Hence, for most young migrants, the social environment at destination was often limited to the place of work. For this reason, and the fact that the element of work was observed across different purposes of migration, the analytical focus in this section is limited to young migrants' social position in the sphere of work.

Concentrating on social relations in the work environment is further of interest since it is in the sphere of work that young migrants' agency and the relations constraining this are illuminated most visibly as it often bears direct relation to scarce resources such as earnings. Relations in the context of work are thus set in a much tighter frame than relations beyond the sphere of work.

The analysis developed below starts with young migrants in Thailand, and then turns to young migrants at destinations within the Lao PDR. The analysis is further structured

around the notions of fluid migration and institutionalised migration presented in chapter seven, and informed by the analysis of relations of place presented above.

8.3.1 Young Lao migrants working in Thailand

8.3.1.1 Institutionalised migration: The destination experience of migrating through recruitment agencies

To reiterate, recruitment agencies are a new phenomenon in the Lao PDR, and the young migrants interviewed were some of the first Lao migrants who got to work in Thailand through these agencies. A total of seven young men, one older man, and three young women left *Baan Naam* in mid-2006, all through the same Lao recruitment agency. This section draws on interviews with one of the young women, and five of the male migrants.

A sense of safety, rooted in the belief that migration would not lead to exploitation or abuse, constitutes an important motivation for Lao migrants to use the services of a Lao recruitment agency rather than going to Thailand through irregular channels. In addition, by migrating through authorised recruitment agencies Lao migrants also believed they would avoid problems with Lao or Thai authorities (Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008). Various awareness raising campaigns by the Lao governments and INGOs that stress the dangers of working in Thailand in an undocumented manner have contributed to this belief. In addition, anxiety also stems from the fact that with the exception of Hak (see below) who could already draw on some migration experience before migrating to Thailand, migration through this Lao recruitment company was the first time that these migrants stayed and worked away from *Baan Naam* for a significant period of time. Nalintone (see below) added further that her decision to migrate through a recruitment agency instead of going through irregular channels, like her older sister had done, stemmed from the physical distance of her migration destination. In fact, irregular migration she regarded as relatively safe if the destination in Thailand was relatively nearby, as was the case with her sister who works in the north-eastern Thai town of Nongkhai, but unwise if one migrated deeper into Thailand (Nalintone, 14/3/2009).

In spite of the fact that recruitment agencies were partly chosen out of concerns over irregular alternatives, these young migrants did not migrate with a blind belief in the reliability of recruitment agencies. Jonnie (see below) admitted, for example, having been

afraid that the recruitment agency would send him to another place than that was promised (Jonnie, 15/3/2009).[64]

The novelty of staying and working in a distant location in central or southern Thailand constituted for the young migrants an important break from the everyday reality of village life in *Baan Naam*. The characteristics of the workplace itself constituted a further break. Workplaces like Nalintone's pineapple-canning factory and the palm oil plantation where the young men worked are large, modern companies with high levels of organisation and are directly integrated in global markets. This contrasts strongly with the kinds and the nature of work most young Lao villagers are used to in their villages. Hence, initial impressions were certainly overwhelming as Nalintone's account below illustrates. However, it would be wrong to depict these young migrants as naïve peasants who were overpowered by their new environments, the accounts below also illustrate that the young migrants quickly grasped the social organisation of their new work environment and their position within this.

> When I first arrived at the factory I was very excited because it was the first time for me to see such a big factory. But I also heard other [Thai] workers referring to us as *khon Lao* (Lao people). They would say that Lao people are poor, that they don't have any money, and that they are not good. When I heard this I knew I had to change if I wanted to stay here for two years. My work first consisted of putting labels on cans. However, in my second year I got promoted to work together with the [Thai] team-leader. In this job I had to supervise other workers and explain the job to newcomers. When I got promoted, my salary went up from 160 to 164 Baht per day. I got this promotion because I had done well, getting an 'A' for my first year of work in the factory. (Notes from interview with Nalintone in *Baan Naam* on 10/7/2008. At the time of interview Nalintone was about 21 years and had just returned from 2 years working in Thailand)

> When we first arrived at the palm oil plantation none of the Lao workers got to harvest the palm trees. This work was done by Thai people only. Lao workers had to apply chemicals and do weeding. Nobody liked weeding and working with chemicals, and when the work was allocated those who didn't have to work with chemicals were dancing out of happiness. Harvesting the palm trees is not difficult and you can earn more money. For this work you can earn about 4,000-5,000 Baht in 15 days, but for our work, weeding and applying chemicals, we only got about 2,300-2,400 Baht. I have asked many times if I could change my work to harvesting palm trees, but once a job is allocated to you, you cannot change. It is like this, the leaders receive the jobs, and then they choose who can be in their team; after that you cannot change anymore. (Notes from interview with Jonnie in *Baan Naam* on 22/5/2008. Jonnie was about 21 years old at the time of interview and had just returned from working in Thailand for nearly 2 years. Jonnie quit his job prematurely after he was hospitalised for around 10 days suffering from the effects of working with chemicals on a daily basis)[65]

> After some time in the palm plantation, myself and someone else from *Baan Naam* were asked to join a Thai work team. I was very happy to join the Thai team because now I could harvest the trees and earn more money. Others also wanted to change of course, but that is not possible. If everybody

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[64] An ILO funded study of Lao migrants who had migrated through Lao recruitment agencies shows that Jonnie's concerns are not groundless (Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008).

[65] It's important to note that the Lao migrants doing weeding and applying of chemicals only worked half days and the harvesters full days. This explains the significant difference in salaries. Yet, the young migrants had not come to Thailand to work only half-day, but to earn as much as possible in the two years. For them, working only half day was losing half a salary.

only harvests trees there would be no one to cut the grass and apply chemicals. Working in a Thai team was very different from working in a Lao team because in a Thai team you [note: as a Lao person] have to work much harder than your Thai colleagues. Also, the Lao people help each other, but for the Thai, once they have finished their part they just go. (Notes from interview with Hak in *Baan Naam* on 10/7/2008. Hak was about 23 years old at the time of interview and had just returned from working in Thailand for 2 years)

Nalintone's account resonates with the analysis presented in the previous section. Her Thai colleagues point out her Lao identity and attribute a series of derogatory qualifications to this.[66] According to Nalintone workers from Myanmar and Cambodia were subject to similar remarks. Yet, the point to note is that Nalintone is immediately receptive to these derogatory remarks. These remarks gel with how she positions herself, at least initially, vis-à-vis Thai colleagues. Hence, she is not surprised or upset, but accepting of her inferior social position vis-à-vis Thai colleagues. She doesn't challenge these stereotypes, but instead simply works hard and diligently, thereby demonstrating that at least she as an individual Lao has qualities other than those of the stereotypes.

A similar dynamic can be observed in the accounts of the young men working in the palm oil plantations. They realise and, at least initially, accept that as Lao migrants and as newcomers they have entered the social relations comprising the work floor in an inferior position. Therefore, they are not taken by surprise when they find that they are given the least desirable and least profitable jobs in the production process. It is only over time and when it becomes obvious that by hard work alone little changes that young migrants start voicing discontent as Jonnie's account illustrates. Yet, the accounts of Hak and Nalintone show that there is scope for reworking this initial position at an individual level. This was in these cases achieved by demonstrating hard and dedicated work. However, Hak's account shows that improving one's individual position on the basis of individual qualities such as labour power does not necessarily change one's relational position vis-à-vis Thai colleagues in any significant way. Instead, by working more closely with Thai colleagues, Hak became only more aware of how he remains positioned differently and inferiorly based on his Lao identity. This appeared, however, not to be the case with Nalintone.

With the exception of Nalintone who looked back on her two years in the pineapple canning factory fairly positively, the interviews with the five male returnees from the palm plantation were all littered with complaints and disappointments. Apart from Hak and Som

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[66] It should be stressed that the same Lao migrants also mention positive and seemingly egalitarian interactions with Thai co-workers. For example, Lao and Thai workers celebrated festivals and holidays together, and occasionally shared food, drinks, and even accommodation, and some Lao migrants visited their Thai colleagues' homes. Although the analytical focus is here on conflictual relations in the work place, these are of course quite compatible with harmonious relations in other spheres of life.

who managed to get on a Thai work team and became involved in the more lucrative harvesting activities, the other young migrants from *Baan Naam* remained stuck in the ill-rewarded and risky business of chemical application. They nonetheless attempted to change their fates by drawing on the institutional mechanisms designed for these purposes.

> Before we left we were told to get in touch with the recruitment agency in case of any problems. And so we did, but the recruitment company did not like it when I called them and they did nothing with our complaints. Whenever we called, the Lao recruitment company would just get in touch with a Thai middleman. The middleman would then say that the Lao workers were just too lazy. You know, the Thai middlemen and the Lao recruitment company eat and drink beer together, so they believe each other no matter what we say. Also, the Lao recruitment company got their money already from the palm plantation so they didn't care anymore: 'Lao people don't look after other Lao people'. (Notes from interview with Sukan's father in *Baan Naam*, 10/7/2008. He was the only adult in a group of 7 male workers from *Baan Naam*, including his 2nd born son, working at the oil palm plantation. As the only adult he acted as a spokesperson)

Although, the migrants did not blindly trust the Lao recruitment agency as Jonnie's remark above has illustrated, the account of Sukan's father shows that there is a sense of expectation or hope that the state authorised institutional mechanisms will work and improve their fate if need be. The account further illustrates that this faith partly stems from the fact that the recruitment agency is a Lao company, and the, in part, ironic remark that fellow Lao nationals will look after each other. This is the same sentiment that was so confidently expressed by Phayvan in section 8.2.1. However, here it should be stressed that Sukan's father was not oblivious to the political economy of Lao recruitment agencies and the irony in his remark suggests that the idea that Lao people help each other he may have regarded himself also as little more than wishful thinking.

Apart from profit-maximisation, the non-response of the (urban) Lao recruitment company can also be understood as part and parcel of wider sets of relations between rural Lao and the urban Lao elite discussed above. On the whole, there is little sense among the urban Lao working at the recruitment agencies of being in anyway accountable for the fate of their recruitees. This not only emerges from the interviews with the young men from *Baan Naam* who worked at the palm oil plantation, but was also illustrated by a discussion at a workshop in which the initial findings of a study on recruitment through recruitment agencies were presented (Huijsmans and Kabmanivanh Phouxay 2008). Although the representatives of the Lao recruitment companies did not deny problems in current practice, they were keen to emphasise various difficulties arising from working with relatively uneducated, and unreliable rural Lao migrants who had never seen a factory before and lacked the discipline required for production work (RD, 13/5/2008 (see also

Souksakhone Vaenkeo 2009)).[67] These statements may be valid in some respect, but they are also, at least in part, based on stereotypical representations of rural Lao as backward. Directing the discussion towards essentialised characteristics of rural Lao takes the focus away from the complaints expressed by Lao migrants and the role recruitment agencies could play to address these:

> The recruitment agency works well for some people. These are the people who are able to send money home, but it doesn't work well for other people who cannot do this. The company simply says that good workers are able to send money back home but they never ask why others don't manage to send home any money. (Excerpt from interview with Jonnie, 22/5/2008)

Based on the interview material from *Baan Naam* and some sparsely available secondary data it seems that the institutional mechanisms which are meant to safeguard Lao migrants from being taken advantage of (Phaisythong Chandara 2009), contribute to maintaining a status quo. In a well-managed work environment like Nalintone's pineapple canning factory this appears unproblematic, yet, in case of difficulties recruitment agencies provide one more set of relations constraining young migrants' agency. Since recruitment agencies charge considerable fees which are usually deducted from subsequent salaries, and take about a year to pay off, migrants who have migrated through these agencies are at least for the first year tied to the workplace. Once the recruitment fees are paid off, the migrants have more scope to act. This is well-illustrated by Jonnie's case. After having worked for about one-and-a-half years with chemicals in the palm oil plantation he was hospitalised as he couldn't walk or stand anymore. He was discharged after a week, but he took the advice from Sukan's father to heart, who told him to return to *Baan Naam* before he died from working with the chemicals. Jonnie had paid off his debts to the Lao recruitment company and felt free to leave, and left without informing the Lao recruitment company or the palm oil plantation. In fact, he did not even bother to pick up his passport and other documents that were kept by the plantation, but, tellingly, preferred to travel back through irregular channels in order to avoid further problems (Jonnie, 22/5/2008).

8.3.1.2 *Fluid migrants at destination in Thailand: Patron-client relationships, deportability, and exploitation*

Chapter seven has explained the concept of fluid migration. To reiterate, it contrasts with institutionalised migration as the various migration scenarios grouped here under the label

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[67] Along similar lines, a garment factory manager explained that he preferred to hire workers with at least primary education. This was not since the work required this education level, but primarily since workers who had completed primary education had a better sense of discipline than those who had not been to school, and were thus better fitted for assembly type work (RD, 23/7/2007).

fluid migration are characterised by some degree of flexibility and mouldability. Moreover, fluid migrations are usually shorter in duration as the young migrants often move from one workplace to another, or back to *Baan Naam*. Chapter seven has further illustrated that in fluid migration, compared with institutionalised migration, young migrants are generally better positioned to affect the migration arrangements themselves in the pre- and early migration stages. This section analyses young migrants' agency and the relations constraining it at destination in Thailand. We start with three case studies:

Mone quit school when he was in secondary 4 at about 16 years of age, and soon he started working in Thailand. Mone started with construction work on a commuting basis in the Thai village of *Baan Fangthai*, but he was soon recruited for construction work in the surroundings of Bangkok. For a period of about one-and-a-half years he worked on several construction sites in the Bangkok region, earning 240 *Thai Baht* a day. After this, he spent a brief period of time in *Baan Naam* where he and a friend soon learnt about work at a vegetable plantation in the north-eastern Thai province of Sakon Nakhon. The two young men worked for about six or seven weeks at this plantation. The entire team, also consisting of Thai workers, mostly slept at the plantation. Mone recalls enjoying sleeping in the open and playing guitar and singing songs at night. However, Mone was unhappy with his salary since he got only 180 *Thai Baht* a day and he had to work seven days a week at times till 10pm without rest. Mone also complained about the occasional use of derogatory terms by his Thai employer and colleagues. Talking about this in more detail, Mone argued that Thai employers and Thai colleagues tend to command Lao workers, give them a lot and heavy work, and look down on them since they regard Lao workers as just poor Lao people. Mone summarised this as follows: 'you're Lao, and you're a new worker, so they look down upon you'. However, Mone's main concern was his poor salary and long working hours. Since Mone lacked any documentation he did not dare to bring up his concerns, as he feared this would lead him to be reported to the police. Hence, the young men saw no other option than quitting without notice. They asked their employer for permission to visit the Thai town of Udon Thani. Once in Udon Thani, they boarded a bus back to *Baan Fangthai* and paid the bus driver an additional fee to hide them in case of police checks. Once in *Baan Fangthai* they crossed the Mekong River back into *Baan Naam*. (Composite notes from interviews with Mone in *Baan Naam*, 22/1/2008; 27/2/2008)

At about 14 years of age, Malivan worked for a month in a restaurant in the Thai town of Nongkhai, near the Lao capital Vientiane. Malivan was recruited by an unknown lady from the Lao town of Luang Prabang. She had promised her easy work, selling food in a small shop for a salary of 2,000 to 3,000 Baht per month. However, once in Nongkhai she found herself in a big restaurant with more than 20 other workers, both Lao and Thai. Malivan had to clean dishes the entire day as she was the only one responsible for this job. The work was tough and she missed home. She regretted having come to Nongkhai but without any money she had little other choice than to stay. However, Malivan never complained about her work to her boss. Instead, she had already made up her mind and decided to wait for her first salary and then run away. When she received her salary (1,500 *Thai Baht*) at the end of her first month she told her boss that she wanted to visit her parents in *Baan Naam*. With this excuse she left and never came back. When her boss later called after her by phone, she responded that she did not want to return because her salary was too little. (Notes from interview with Malivan in *Baan Naam*, early 2008)

Palivan worked for about seven months in a garment workshop in the central Thai province of Nakhon Pathom when she was about 15 years old. She had gone there together with four other Lao girls, one of whom was related to the workshop owner, and was promised a monthly salary of 2,500 *Thai Baht*. Apart from the four Lao girls there were also four Cambodian girls working in the workshop who had also recently arrived. Palivan got on well with the Cambodian colleagues and they communicated in broken Thai. The girls were all new, since the previous batch of workers had run away out of dissatisfaction with the working conditions. The employer had, however, not revised the work regime and the girls had to work seven days a week, often till deep in the night. The salary was less than was promised and although food was mostly provided, Palivan managed to save only 4,000 *Thai Baht* over the entire seven months. Palivan was regularly in touch with her family in *Baan Naam* using a mobile phone. Hence, her family was aware that she was unhappy in

Thailand and exhausted by the long working hours. Her parents were also aware that she was afraid to complain about her situation to her boss because he had a tendency to get angry easily. Another reason for not speaking up was that Palivan feared she would be reported to the police as an undocumented worker. Hence, Palivan kept her complaints to herself, her colleagues and her family in *Baan Naam*. However, she was desperate to leave the workshop and, therefore, requested her boss to allow her to return home. This was denied. However, when two of the Lao girls eventually returned home and explained his daughter's situation in person to Palivan's father, he finally called the owner of the garment workshop and requested that he send his daughter home with the excuse of badly needing her on the family farm. It was only then that Palivanh was sent home together with the other remaining Lao girl. (Notes from interview with Palivan in *Baan Naam*, 7/2/2008)

A common element emerging from most cases of fluid migration to Thailand is fear on part of the young migrants of being reported by their Thai employers as irregular migrants. Although this is occasionally used as an explicit threat by Thai employers in order to discipline the young migrants (Khik, 31/3/2008, and Raya Muttarak (2004: 516)), it is more commonly observed as an implicit, but ever-present awareness shaping the everyday lives of young fluid Lao migrants in Thailand. This is what De Genova (De Genova 2002: 439) describes as a 'palpable sense of deportability', but it also resonates with Piore's (1979; 1986) sociological work on migration based on the idea of a dual labour market.[68] The notion of deportability is pivotal in the relations between young Lao migrants and their Thai employers. Young Lao workers feel they need their Thai employers' protection in order to avoid being deported, whilst at the same time young Lao migrants fear that these same employers may report them in case relations with their employer start to fracture. Thai employers are well aware of this delicate state of affairs and exploit it accordingly.

The above also suggests that young migrants have little doubt that even though their employers may be legally wrong by employing undocumented migrants, in practice, they know that they are in all likelihood the ones being fined and arrested, and not their Thai employers. This is rooted in a widespread awareness of the corrupt nature of most Lao and Thai authorities (Pasuk Phongpaichit *et al.* 1998; Stuart-Fox 2006; Vatthana Pholsena and Banomyong 2006: 166-167). This dynamic is also reflected in findings from research conducted by Maniemai Thongyou and Dusadee Ayuwat (2005) amongst Lao migrants working in five Thai provinces. Based on questionnaire research (n=276) they find that none of the Lao migrants would consider seeking support from Lao or Thai officials, not even those working in the Thai city of Khon Kaen where there is in fact a Lao Consulate.

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[68] Piore (1986: 24-25) argues that capitalist industrial economies produces two distinct types of jobs, jobs in the primary and secondary sector, with the latter usually of menial social status, lowly paid, and instable. These latter jobs are therefore hardly attractive for national workers. Migrants on the other hand, Piore claims, usually come with short-term objectives and are therefore less concerned with the social status of their job, or long-term career prospects and may find work in the secondary sector acceptable.

The case studies of young migrants in fluid migration in Thailand presented above resemble in many ways that of their slightly older peers who had migrated through institutional channels to Thailand. Migrants in fluid migration also enter their work place in a socially inferior position based on their Lao identity, and their status as newcomers, which is possibly further shaped by relations of gender, generation and ethnicity. Yet, a remarkable difference is that young migrants in institutionalised migration attempted to bring about change in their situation at migration destination by raising complaints and issues of concern with their employers. The young migrants in fluid migration, on the other hand, keep these concerns to themselves, and if the negative aspects of their migration experience have overshadowed the benefits considerably, and if they are financially and otherwise able to do so, they tend to quit without notice. Palivan is the exception here. The reason why she was not able to quit is because her workplace was located in central Thailand, far from *Baan Naam*. Since it was her first migratory experience she did not have the confidence, and the resources, and felt she could not make it back to *Baan Naam* by herself.[69]

The different way in which the young migrants in these two forms of migration exercise agency is directly shaped by the relational characteristics of fluid versus institutionalised migration. The young migrants in institutionalised migration have the confidence that given their documented status in Thailand and the fact that their migration is authorised by a Lao recruitment agency, expressing concerns will not have unintended side-effects. However, young migrants in institutionalised migration also have little other choice than to negotiate for improvements as for them quitting is hardly an option since they are contractually tied to their workplace and have outstanding monetary debts with the Lao recruitment agency.[70] Young migrants in fluid migration are in most cases not tied to the job by a monetary debt; however, an affective indebtedness often creates a situation in which the question of staying or leaving is not a simple rational calculation based on costs and benefits.[71]

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[69] Compare this to Nalintone's motivation for migrating through a recruitment agency in this chapter, and Khik's explanation, in chapter 7, for staying in relatively nearby Udon Thani, instead of Bangkok, when she first migrated to Thailand.

[70] Another motivation for sitting out the entire two years contract is the lucrative prospect of free transportation home. This is particularly attractive since many migrants have bought large consumer items like TV sets whilst in Thailand that they like to transport back to the Lao PDR.

[71] The distinction between monetary debt and affective indebtedness I owe to Cheryll Alipio (personal communication, 2/2/2010).

The notion of affective indebtedness is particularly relevant to the younger fluid migrants who typically work in small workplaces and develop patron-client relations with their employers. Scott defines patron-client relationships as follows:

> The patron-client relationship - an exchange relationship between two roles – may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron (Scott 1972: 92).

Conceptualising patron-client relations as instrumental friendships set in unequal, but reciprocal relations suggests that these relations 'can be broken at the initiative of either party and lasts only so long as both sides gain something from it' (Raya Muttarak 2004: 507). However, and as stated above quitting cannot be reduced to rational assessments of costs and benefits, except for very short migratory encounters lasting little longer than a few days in which virtually no emotional relationship is developed between workers and employers. Affective indebtedness creates situations in which young migrants tend to stay with employers despite levels of exploitation and abuse which are not outweighed by benefits. For example, when visiting Khik at her domestic job in Udon Thani in Thailand we witnessed her employer abusing her verbally and threaten to report her to the [Thai] police for something in which she had no fault (Khik, 31/3/2008). When talking about this with Khik some days later by telephone she explained that this was nothing special but something that happened regularly, and that this was simply how her boss was. When we probed further if this didn't make her want to leave she responded negatively. In fact, she was considering staying longer since her employer had suggested a raise in salary recently (Khik, 5/4/2008).

It's important to note that in these patron-client relations the benefits for young Lao migrants are not limited to salaries. Importantly, it also constitutes protection of their undocumented status, and since young migrants frequently live in with their employers and eat food with, or food provided by, their employers this further contributes to affective indebtedness. Further, work relations may be constructed as 'learning experiences'. Whilst, young migrants may certainly learn new skills through migrant work, constructing the worker-employer relation in these terms blurs the material basis of the relationship and instead emphasises the affective dimension.

Young migrants involved in a range of fluid migrations claimed they were referred to and addressed in derogatory terms by their Thai colleagues and employers. By doing so Thai employers and colleagues (including ethnic Lao from the Thai region of *Isaan*) assert their

superiority over Lao migrants (from the Lao PDR). Here it is important to relate back to the expression *baan phii, müüang nôông* (older brother, younger brother) discussed in chapter four, as capturing underlying relations of seniority and inferiority between Thai nationals and Lao nationals but also between ethnic Lao from Thailand and ethnic Lao from the Lao PDR. The Lao, and particularly the ethnic Lao, from the Lao PDR share numerous similarities with Thai nationals, and particularly the ethnic Lao from *Isaan* (in the expression above illustrated by the use of kin terminology). Yet, as is argued above, both Thai nationals and Lao nationals relate to each other in hierarchical ways (in the expression illustrated by the hierarchy of relative age), with Thai nationals (but also ethnic Lao from *Isaan*) tending towards a sense of superiority and sophistication, and Lao nationals tending towards a sense of inferiority and backwardness.[72] Of course, these are not more than tendencies, and undoubtedly numerous exceptions can be listed. However, the point to note is that this sense of relatedness, which is set in clear hierarchical terms, is highly conducive for the formation of the affective dimension of patron-client relationships between young migrants in fluid migration and their Thai employers. It allows Thai employers to refer to the young Lao migrant workers in kin terms, which strengthens affective ties. However, a shared cultural script facilitates the 'ego enhancement that emanates from having an "inferior" present and validates the employer's lifestyle, her class and racial privilege, her entire social world' (Rollins, 1990: 78, IN: Raya Muttarak 2004). Although this argument is in Rollins' and Raya Muttarak's work used with specific reference to domestic work, the case studies presented above suggest it applies to other forms of fluid migration as well. This may well be another reason why the Thai employers in Raya Muttarak's (Raya Muttarak 2004: 517) study claimed to prefer Lao domestic workers over Cambodian or migrants from Myanmar.

Patron-client types of relationships can arguably also be seen as contributing to the fluidity that characterises many a migration experience, and by implication, contributing to reproducing degrees of exploitation. Since the patron-client relationship is the prime shaper of young migrants' fluid migration experience at destination in Thailand, and because it is principally a dyadic relationship between the young workers and the Thai employer, young migrants in fluid migration tend to assess migrant work in Thailand on a case by case basis, depending on the quality of the patron-client relationship. This resonates with a

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[72] For sake of comprehension, ethnic minority Lao nationals tend to be looked down on by both ethnic Lao from Lao PDR and from Thailand and by Thai from central Thailand.

tendency amongst (young) Lao migrants, to attribute migration success or failure to 'luck' (see e.g. MoLSW and UNIAP 2001: 13; Ginzburg 2004). Young migrants take for granted the inferior position with which they enter the patron-client relationship and blame or relate the overall experience of their migration to the individual characteristics of particular employers, something over which they have, due to their inferior social position, no influence, let alone control.

This is not to say that young Lao migrants do not at times blame the Thai as a people for their negative migration experiences. Yet when probed further they mostly nuance their statements. For example, when they argue that they will 'never go back there', this usually means that they will not to go back to the same workplace and the same employer in Thailand. But, they are happy to go to another, but very similar, workplace in Thailand, hoping that a different 'patron' means a better migration experience. This understanding of the migration process and the perceived source of exploitation contributes to fluidity, as young migrants change one workplace and one set of social relations for the other relatively quickly. However, a tendency to individualise the migration experience and the source of exploitation means that the structural relations that put young fluid migrants continuously in an inferior social position, and which makes exploitation likely, remain unchallenged by this same fluidity which characterises this form of migration:

> I think we were unlucky because we mostly had work, but were not always paid. Normally we were promised 4,000 *Thai Baht* per month, but the employers would often pay our salary bit by bit over the month, and then by the end of the month they would claim that they had already paid us in full, which was not the case. Also, sometimes we did not get any money at all, this happened once or twice to me, but my older sister (Ekasone) had to quit many times because she wasn't paid. (Notes from interview with Dai in *Baan Naam*, 14/3/2009. The sisters started working as domestics in Bangkok when they were about 15 or 16 years of age and stayed in Bangkok for about one-and-a-half years.)

The young men at the oil palm plantation on the other hand, for whom quitting and continuing elsewhere was not an option, were due to their entrapment stimulated to reflect on the structural relations that shaped their social position at migration destination. Although the young migrants in institutionalised migration in Thailand were on the whole a number of years older than their peers in fluid migration, their more sophisticated understanding of the sources of exploitation cannot be put down to age differences alone, but is rather a product of the different relational characteristics of their migration experience.

8.4 Migrating within the Lao PDR

8.4.1 Institutionalised migration for education: Variations in the role of work in migrant students' migratory projects

As in the previous chapter, the analysis of young migrants in institutionalised migration within the Lao PDR is limited to migration for purposes of education. Data on young villagers' involvement in other forms of migration included under this label, such as fosterage, entering the Buddhist Sangha, and joining the army was too limited for thorough analysis.

In chapter seven, it has already been observed that in case of migration for purposes of education, education may have been given as the prime reason for migration but in practice work, mostly unpaid, filled an important part of the migrant students' days at migration destination. Nonetheless, even if the amount of time a migrant student spends on work dwarfs the amount of time spent studying work remains an auxiliary activity in the overall migratory project since work is performed in order to achieve the overarching objective of realising an extra-local education. Work done by migrant students is, therefore, in most cases, set in a different relational framework than work undertaken by young migrants in fluid migration within the Lao PDR.

> Padu moved to Vientiane when she was 19 years old to start a three year general health workers course. Since she didn't have any relatives in Vientiane, Padu stays with a host-family she is not related to. In return for board and lodging she takes care of the host-family's (a couple with 2 young children) domestic work, and helps out in the host-family's Mekong side eating stall whenever she's not in school. An average week-day (a Friday in this case) for Padu goes as follows: She gets up around seven in the morning and does the dishes and the laundry for her host-family. When she's finished this is at about 10am she goes to the market to do shopping for the host-family's eating stall. Next she delivers this to the eating stall and helps out with the lunch peak. Afterwards she has lunch herself and helps cleaning up. She leaves the eating stall at about 3:30pm since her classes start at 4pm and run till 8pm. After class she again goes to the eating stall to help out. As it is Friday, customers keep on coming till late. It is not till 11pm that she is back at her host family's home and goes to sleep. When we meet Padu in 2008 she has spent nearly two years in Vientiane, and has returned to *Baan Naam* about five times. Also the upcoming school holiday she intends to spend in Vientiane, even though her hostess has encouraged her to visit her parents. Padu explains that she feels her work is needed in the host-family's household so she has decided to stay in Vientiane. (Composite notes from interviews with Padu in Vientiane, 4/2/2008, and 8/3/2008)

Padu's work may be unpaid, yet she shows greater diligence, responsibility and commitment than many of her peers in remunerated migrant work. Despite Padu's demanding work schedule she hardly complains about it. She merely observed that in the beginning it had been tough, but she quickly got used to it. Furthermore, the interview notes illustrate that Padu does more than her host-family expects her to do. This is not only illustrated by foregoing a visit to her parents in order to help out in her host-family's

restaurant, but also by things like staying in the classroom to read if a teacher is absent and her friends go to a park because Padu suspects her host-family is more appreciative of the former than the latter (Padu, 4/2/2008).

Padu's diligence can at least in part be explained by the important role of her unpaid working activities in her overall migratory project. Padu has no relatives in Vientiane and she lacks the financial resources to rent privately. Since accommodation in Vientiane is a prerequisite for finishing her urban post-secondary education, doing her duties diligently and leaving her host-family with no doubt about her dedication, commitment, and moral behaviour is Padu's way of ensuring that she keeps on having a place to stay in Vientiane. In addition to this rational means-end calculation, Padu's behaviour can also be understood in the same affective terms earlier discussed in relation to fluid migration with destination Thailand. Having a place to stay in Vientiane may for Padu be a necessity for realising her educational aspirations. Yet, it also creates and affective debt towards her host-family. Padu's continued over-diligence can be understood as an attempt to repay this affective debt. Lastly, at least initially Padu's behaviour was also shaped by an awareness of her relative lack of sophistication and knowledge vis-à-vis her urban-bred host-family, and urban education. Aware of her *khon baan nôôk* identity, Padu feared she would not be able to stay with her host-family, and feared falling short of the academic requirements in urban educational settings (Padu, 4/2/2008). Hard work can in this sense thus also be understood as compensatory strategy for her perceived inferiority.

Hanoi's situation is to some extent comparable with Padu's, but also shows some important differences. Hanoi left his natal household in *Baan Naam* when he was about 12 years old to attend a secondary school of higher quality in the village of his aunt and uncle in another district. In *Baan Naam*, Hanoi is known as a bright student. Yet, his migratory endeavour was not shaped by educational considerations alone. At the age of 12 and as a fourth born son in a household with older sisters and younger brothers Hanoi's household in *Baan Naam* could, in terms of labour, easily do without his presence. His aunt and uncle, however, had two young children who needed to be looked after when the aunt and uncle worked their commercial vegetable garden. This job was well-suited for Hanoi who could combine this with studying at the local secondary school in his aunt and uncle's village (Hanoi, 10/7/2008). Although Hanoi spends a reasonable amount of time looking after his cousins and helping out in his aunt and uncle's vegetable garden, this cannot be compared with the long working days of Padu.

There are three important factors which set Hanoi's and Padu's migratory experience apart. First is gender. As a young man Hanoi is not expected to work with the same intensity and to do the same wide range of tasks as girls his age. Second, unlike Padu, Hanoi stays with relatives. This means that Hanoi does not have to prove his worth as a household member to the same extent as Padu, since there is the element of kin that legitimises his presence. Both these factors also have implications on the affective indebtedness Hanoi builds up with aunt and uncle. Due to gender and kin relations this is considerably less than is the case with Padu. Third, Hanoi's migratory arrangement ensures access to better quality education than available in *Baan Naam*, and Hanoi is certainly aware of this. Yet, unlike Padu's situation, his educational aspirations, which he certainly has, do not fully depend on a continued stay with his aunt and uncle. If worse comes to the worst, Hanoi could simply return to *Baan Naam* and continue his secondary education there. In other words, Hanoi does the duties he is supposed to do, but this is not more or less than what he would have had to do, had he remained in *Baan Naam*, whereas Padu's experience in Vientiane differs considerably from her earlier life in *Baan Naam*.

Tunkeo's case is again different. As has been said before, Tunkeo's case is highly exceptional since she has obtained a government fellowship to study at the National University in Vientiane. Importantly, this fellowship includes accommodation in the university dormitory. Hence, Tunkeo is in the fortunate position that the work she does (contract based embroidery work), is not directly tied into her educational ambitions and is not affected by any monetary or affective debt. This means that Tunkeo has fullest control over her work schedule and is in a position to quit work without directly compromising her educational ambitions as, for her, she only needs to have some work which is compatible with her studies and that brings in some additional cash to complement her stipend and the contributions she receives from her parents. At the time of interview this was contract-based embroidery work which most girls in her dormitory do, and which was ideally suited to Tunkeo's situation as she could do it at any moment and it did not require much space or tools (Tunkeo, 10/2/2008; 6/3/2008).

8.4.2 Fluid migration within the Lao PDR

In contrast with the role of work in institutionalised internal migration, for young migrants involved in fluid internal migration work constitutes the primary purpose of migration. However, this is not to say work, or economics, constitutes the sole motivation for migration. Like their peers in other forms of migration and with migration destination

Thailand through involvement in migrant work young migrants may well realise a number of other objectives which they may regard as equally or even more important than any money earned. This may include seeing the city, staying away from home, meeting peers, and learning a skill. Yet the main difference between work at migration destination in fluid migration and these possible additional objectives of the migratory project, and work as part of migration for formal or informal education, is that in fluid migration the additional objectives are not contingent on any specific form or durability of migrant work. In other words, like their peers in fluid migration in Thailand, work may be terminated, interrupted, or changed without necessarily comprising any of the related objectives of the migratory experience.

> Anu had quit secondary school earlier this year [2008] at the age of 17, much to the annoyance of his parents. After some months at home, his father arranged work for Anu on a rural road construction project elsewhere in the district. Anu did this work for two-and-a-half months, and stayed with the other migrant workers in a road workers' camp. Anu claims he liked the experience, he spoke of feeling 'free' and a sense of comradeship as all workers were staying together in the camp and were subject to the same routine. Nonetheless, Anu decided not to return to his job after a visit to his parents. He returns to his former life of hanging around in the village and it is not till some months later that Anu is employed again. This time in Vientiane, together with some other men he renovates a house. Anu's task is to do the painting and the job lasts for about 15 days for which he earns 30,000 *Kip* a day. Although Anu had never painted before he liked the job, and liked staying and eating together with the other men at the worksite. (Composite notes from interviews with Anu in *Baan Naam*, 6/4/2008 and 4/9/2008)

> Oy first left *Baan Naam* for migrant work when she was 17 years of age to start work as a waitress in a popular Mekong side restaurant. Oy wanted to work in Vientiane, not only for the money but also to prove to herself that as a girl from the countryside (*khon baan nôôk*) she was able to function in an urban environment. She recalls that on her first day at the restaurant she didn't dare to come out of the kitchen. On the second day she had only cleaned tables and swept the floor, avoiding any interaction with urban and foreign customers. It was only on her third day that she first waited, and she can still recall in great detail the experience of taking her first order. Oy regularly intersperses her work in the restaurant with a week or so in *Baan Naam*. She explains that she returns whenever her father calls on her to help out with some farm work. However, Oy explains that she seldom stays long in *Baan Naam* as often most of the work is already done, or her father has already changed his mind about the work he had planned. (Composite notes from interviews with Oy in Vientiane, 1/2/2008, and 13/4/2008)

Oy's and Anu's case are characteristic for most fluid internal migrations amongst young male and young female migrants alike. The common characteristics are that migration is mostly fairly short in duration, or regularly interspersed with periods of time spent in *Baan Naam*. In addition and as the cases illustrate, the migration experiences, even at destination, are shaped by perpetual relations with the natal household.

The two interview notes also illustrate an important gender difference. Oy, like many other female migrants, is regularly called back by her father, who appeals to Oy's moral obligation to help out her ageing parents with agricultural work. As is expected of a daughter, Oy returns, but rarely for long as there is in actual fact mostly little work to be

done. Nonetheless, this pattern of going and coming provides assurance to Oy's parents that city life has not corrupted their daughter's morality as is a widespread concern amongst rural Lao parents (Rigg *et al.* 2004: 993). In addition, and as was evident in some other cases, it also facilitates a regular flow back of migratory earnings, thereby ensuring that this money is not spent in the city by the young migrants themselves. Although, the young male migrants also regularly returned to *Baan Naam*, none of them reported that they had done so following a request from their parents. In fact, Anu's case illustrates the precise opposite, as Anu's father prefers to see his son in migrant employment than hanging around in the village. Between late 2007 and late 2008, Anu's father organised paid employment for his son on three occasions, twice migrant, once local. It was, however, Anu himself who quit on two of these occasions, not necessarily to his father's approval.

The above illustrates how migration is shaped by gender norms that run through inter-generational household relations but stretch well-beyond the direct sphere of the household. In case of sons, migrant employment may from a parental disciplinary perspective be preferable to underemployment in the local village, whilst the opposite is true with regard to daughters. Furthermore, gendered divisions of labour also imply that the utility of daughters in the village is generally higher than that of sons. Lastly, the cases illustrate, in line with chapter seven, that parents are generally, but not always, more successful in influencing their daughters than their sons.

8.5 *Agency, constraints, and fears*

The two cases of internal fluid migration presented in the previous section do not make mention of any serious dissatisfaction on the part of the young migrants with their situation at migration destination. Whilst Oy worked around the clock and was often exhausted when she finally went to bed she preferred this over her more relaxed, but also less exciting, way of life in *Baan Naam* (Oy, 1/2/2008). Also Anu, at least initially, spoke positively of working in a team of similarly positioned young men in the road workers' camp (Anu, 6/4/2008). However, this should not lead to the conclusion that young migrants involved in fluid migration within the Lao PDR have nothing to complain about. Furthermore, it's in the Lao context much easier to raise critical notes about problems encountered on the other side of the border than about internal ones. Hence, not explicitly raising critical notes about work conditions concerning internal migration may well be a form of self-censorship employed by the young migrants.

Comparing how young migrants in fluid migration within the Lao PDR deal with problems or difficulties vis-à-vis their peers in fluid migration in Thailand shows a remarkable difference. We have earlier seen that young migrants in fluid migration in Thailand generally do not dare bring up their concerns with their employers out of fear that it could make matters worse. Internal migration officially also requires formal authorisation in the Lao PDR and may be subject to policing (Somsack Pongkhao 2008b). However, this was amongst fluid migrants within the Lao PDR no reason for not raising issues of dissatisfaction with their employers. Wang, for example, discussed her desire to leave her job with her aunt in Vientiane who was also her employer (Wang, 15/5/2008). Also Mone, when working in construction in Vientiane complained to his employer about the fact that he didn't live up to his recruitment promise of providing food in addition to a daily wage of 30,000 *Kip* (Mone, 16/5/2008). Although, Mone and Wang's negotiations did little to change their situation, the very fact that the young migrants raised their concerns with their employers illustrates an important difference in the way in which young migrants in fluid migration are socially positioned when working in Thailand as opposed to their peers in fluid internal migration. This is further illustrated below in an interview with Malivan who compares her migrant experience in north-eastern Thailand (Nongkhai) with that in Vientiane:

> Paai (Research assistant): How do you compare your work in Thailand and in Vientiane?
>
> Malivan: To work in Thailand and Vientiane is not the same. Working in Vientiane is better, it's easier. Also, the people in Thailand and Lao are not the same. In Thailand, if you don't work well or if something is not good they talk to you in a bad way. But in Vientiane if you cannot do something they talk to you softly and explain it to you. Where I work now in Vientiane, they know that I have never done sewing and cutting before and, therefore, they don't get angry if I do not know how to do something.
>
> Paai: Were you afraid when going to work in Vientiane?
>
> Malivan: Mostly I was not afraid to be in Vientiane because it is in Lao, in my own country.
>
> Paai: And does it matter that you come from the countryside?
>
> Malivan: I'm not afraid to be in Vientiane but I think I look different than people in Vientiane so I'm careful about how to do things because I know I'm from *baan nôôk*...The people in *Baan Naam* and Vientiane are not the same, but for me it is better in Vientiane than in Thailand. (Excerpt from interview with Malivanh in *Baan Naam*, 9/7/2008. She worked in Vientiane and Nongkhai when she was about 14 years of age)

In the interview excerpt above, Malivan brings up the notion of fear. Fear has featured on several occasions in this chapter as indeed fear was observed amongst young migrants in fluid as well as in institutionalised migration and in destinations in Thailand as well as in internal migration. To reiterate, fear based on the notion of 'deportability' has been identified as one of the reasons why young migrants chose to migrate through recruitment

agencies, and a prime factor underlying a tendency to quit without notice amongst young Lao migrants in fluid migration in Thailand. On the other hand, young migrants in both fluid and institutionalised migration to Vientiane spoke of fear based on their identity as *khon baan nôôk* vis-à-vis their urban colleagues, employers and wider social environment.[73]

These two forms of fear are both rooted in structural relations. Fear related to *khon baan nôôk* identity stems from hierarchical urban-rural relations, and fear related to working as an undocumented migrant in Thailand stems from the production of 'migrant illegality' (De Genova 2002). However, there is an important difference in the scope for young migrants to rework this sense of fear between the two. As Oy's case in the previous sector illustrated particularly well, a *khon baan nôôk* identity can through young migrant's agency be reworked, as it is not a fixed identity (De Haan and Rogaly 2002: 6; Hsu 2005). The opposite is true for fear related to working in Thailand in an undocumented manner as most young migrants fail to qualify for migration through formal channels. In these cases, young migrants' agency is, therefore, limited to constantly negotiating the associated risk of 'deportability', whilst the source, the production of migrant illegality based on their Lao identity remains unchanged. A lingering degree of fear thus remains ever present.

Table 8.1 goes beyond the notion of fear and summarises the analysis presented in this chapter. It lists the various aspects that were observed strengthening and weakening young migrants' social position at migration destination across the two categories of migration and across destinations, as well as common and subsequent manifestations of young migrants' agency.

Table 8.1: Young migrants' agency and constaining factors and relations at destination

Migration destination	Migration category	Factors affecting young migrants' social position and other constraints on young migrants' agency		Common manifestations of agency
		Weakening	Strengthening	
Thailand	Institutionalised	Lao identity, young	Documented status	Negotiating better

(cross-border)	migration (recruitment agencies)	age, monetary debt/contract with recruitment agency, urban-rural relations shaping recruitment agency's practices, and possibly gender and ethnicity.	in Thailand, migration is authorised by Lao authorities.	working conditions through institutionalised channels, and displaying good work ethos and assimilation in the work place.
	Fluid migration	Lao nationality, Lao identity, young age, undocumented status in Thailand, affective indebtedness, and possibly gender and ethnicity.	Low exit barriers, and possibly kin relations and prior migration experience.	Quitting without notice.
Lao PDR (internal)	Institutionalised migration (education)	*Khon baan nôôk* identity, young age, position of auxiliary work in overall migratory objectives, and possibly gender, ethnicity and possibly affective indebtedness.	Lao nationality, and possibly kin relations and relations of influence of parents.	Subtle negotiation without risking overall migration objective, displaying hard work.
	Fluid migration	*Khon baan nôôk* identity, young age, and possibly gender, ethnicity, relations of inter-generational influence from the natal household, and affective indebtedness.	Lao nationality, and possibly kin relations, migration experience, and relations of influence of parents.	Negotiating better working conditions, and quitting with or without notice.

The patterns presented in Table 8.1 concur with the conclusions of chapter seven. Also at migration destinations, young migrants' agency is most severely constrained in institutionalised migration. Young migrants in institutionalised migration are, therefore, more poorly positioned to negotiate their working conditions at migration destination than their peers in fluid migration. This would be unproblematic if the various problems young

migrants tend to face in fluid migration were absent from institutionalised migration. However, the analysis presented in this chapter has shown that this cannot be assumed. Ironically then, young people's involvement in forms of institutionalised migration that are generally regarded as benign may in case of troubles turn out to be problematic as the agency of young migrants is considerably constrained. In contrast, young people's involvement in forms of fluid migration is often associated with some form of exploitation. The analysis presented here does not deny the existence of exploitation, yet, it also observed that young migrants are generally much better positioned to negotiate such problems than their peers in institutionalised migration. However, affective indebtedness embedded in patron-client relations creates a situation in which costs and benefits of migration are by young migrants not simply assessed through rational calculation but also shaped by affective dimensions. This is particularly true for younger and less experienced young fluid migrants working in relatively small work places, and tends to become a greater factor the longer the relationship between the young migrant and employer has had to develop.

8.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the analytical focus was shifted away from the sending site to young migrants' position in the work place at migration destinations. This shift in focus follows from the premise of appreciating migration as a social process, implying that relations affecting young migrants agency and young migrants' social position shifts through the process of migration.

Relations of place were taken as an analytical starting point and considered as important shapers of the dispositions with which young migrants, their colleagues and their urban Lao or Thai employers enter, socially speaking, initial encounters at migration destinations. Beyond the initial encounters, the relational framework of the form of migration young migrants are involved in combined with factors stemming from destination (whether cross-border or internal) was used to analyse variations in manifestations of young migrants' agency.

One of the key findings of this analysis is that young migrants in fluid migration, who are generally considered to be at great risk of exploitation, have, again generally speaking, greater scope to exercise agency than young migrants in forms of institutionalised migration. This observation has important policy implications which are reflected upon in

the next chapter. However, this is not to suggest that young migrants in fluid migration are skilful, rationally acting, unconstrained and free-floating actors constantly maximising their migratory project. In fact, affective indebtedness, rather than straight-forward coercion, built up through patron-client relations especially amongst the younger and less-experienced young migrants working in relative small and intimate work-setting, is identified as an important reason why young migrants may stay in exploitative or abusive work places much longer than would be expected on the basis of balancing the costs and benefits of the migration experience. That said, quitting without notice emerged as an important strategy by which young migrants in fluid migration dealt with problems or dissatisfaction in the workplace. This option was generally not available, or came with considerable costs, for young migrants in institutionalised migration. These young migrants, therefore, were more stimulated to come to reflect on the structural relations shaping their migration experience, whereas their peers in fluid migration tended towards an individualising of the migration experiences. The latter tendency, however, perpetuates the fluidity of this form of migration, and thereby various forms of exploitation.

9 Conclusion

9.1 *Recapping the study*

This dissertation has presented a study which can be situated in the larger field of children, youth, and development. Within this broad field, the study concentrated specifically on children and young people's involvement and non-involvement in various forms of migration. This included migration and mobility for various purposes, like work, education but also fosterage. Furthermore, the analysis covered long term migrations spanning several years as well as short migratory spells, the latter at times related to the common practice of cross-border commuting for day labour. In addition, the migration and mobility narratives analysed comprised cross-border migrations as well as relocations to relatively nearby or more distant internal locations.

The intellectual appeal for studying these, on the surface, highly diverse manifestations of migration through a single analytical frame is that it allows drawing out important cross-cutting relations that shape young people's agency across forms of migration as well as highlighting important particularities typical of certain manifestations of migration. This allows overcoming a categorical mindset based on the artificial idea of benign forms of migration (e.g. for education) versus bad forms of migration (e.g. for work) at a young age (Huijsmans *forthcoming*). This binary perspective has plagued the study of child migration because it distracts from the relations and factors affecting young migrants' position in the social process of migration; the latter is a necessary analytical approach for understanding how harm is produced in various forms of migration involving children and young people.

The empirical focus of the research has been on the Lao PDR, or more precisely, on children and young people from one predominantly ethnic Lao village located in the proximity of the Lao capital Vientiane and on the border with Thailand. This empirical focus followed from a series of reports claiming that the involvement of Lao children and young people in cross-border and internal migration is widespread, apparently on the increase, and, at this scale, a newly emerging phenomenon associated with processes of capitalist expansion (Wille 2001; Inthasone Phetsiriseng 2003; MoLSW *et al.* 2003; SCUK *et al.* 2004; Huguet and Sureeporn Punpuing 2005; Doussantousse and Keovongchit 2006; Haughton 2006). The manifestation of migration in relation to capitalist expansion and subsequent processes of rural change are not unique to the Lao context but have been observed across the rural South (Bebbington 1999; Bryceson 2002; Rigg 2005b). The

intellectual relevance of the study of the involvement and non-involvement of children and young people in migration in the Lao context thus goes beyond the case studied as it contributes to the larger intellectual project of studying children and young people as agents in processes of development and change (Nieuwenhuys 1994; Bourdillon 2004; Ansell 2005; Honwana and De Boeck 2005).

The notion of rural change is, therefore, an important background theme in the thesis. This process has been described as one in which rural livelihoods become gradually less tied to the land, farming and the local community, and increasingly occupationally diverse and spatially distributed (Bebbington 1999; Rigg 2005b). As highlighted in chapter one, in the literature on rural change young people are recognised as social actors who through their involvement in migration not only rework their own social position, but, thereby, also actively shape wider processes of social change (Koning 1997; Mills 1997; Rigg *et al.* 2004). This conceptualisation of young migrants as active agents and meaning-makers is also one of the central tenets in childhood and youth studies (Honwana and De Boeck 2005; Ansell 2009). However, it contrasts starkly with the image of young migrants as innocent and powerless victims of capitalist expansion that characterises the human trafficking narrative, a discourse in which many studies on young migrant workers below 18 years of age are situated (Bastia 2005; O'Connell Davidson 2005; Whitehead and Hashim 2005; O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007).

The analysis presented in this dissertation aimed at overcoming the dichotomy of young migrants as either victims of change or agents of change. This has been done by pursuing three interrelated sets of research questions at various levels of analysis. The first set of questions revolved around the deconstruction of the above described dichotomy by unpacking childhood, youth and migration as discursive constructs. The second set of research questions concentrated on the structuring relations and agency observed in relation to young villagers' engagements with migration and non-migration. The third and final research question concentrated on the interplay between discourse and practice, and how this unfolds at various levels of analysis ranging from the micro-level of the household and the village through to the level of the state and the international arena.

The research questions have been addressed by combining two methodological orientations, an ethnographic approach and discourse analysis. This methodological approach required an extended stay in the research context, swiftly moving between various units of analysis, and ideally, developing a multi-site ethnography in order to

capture the idea of migration as a social process. Further, in order to overcome the dichotomy of young migrants as agents of change versus victims of change in a grounded manner the research has to a large extend been inductive. This implied resisting an exclusive focus on particular forms or purposes of migration, resisting adopting a rigid age-based frame for identifying children and young people, and incorporating the question why some young villagers don't migrate into the research.

In the following sections of this concluding chapter the main findings are reiterated in the context of the research questions summarised above and, whilst doing so, the main contributions of the research are pulled out. However, the next section first reflects on some important shortcomings of the research.

9.2   *Shortcomings and suggestions for future research*

The research failed to develop a full multi-sited ethnography and, consequently, most of the data was collected in *Baan Naam*. Only five young migrants were interviewed face-to-face at migration destination. These young migrants were all female. One was interviewed in Udon Thani, Thailand, and the remaining four in Vientiane. The four girls in Vientiane we met repeatedly, which made it possible to develop some basic levels of rapport with the concerned young migrants and their migration destination which is an essential prerequisite for ethnographic research. The girl in Thailand we met, however, only once while she was working in Thailand, and once when she was working in Vientiane.

The failure to develop a full multi-sited ethnography has serious ramifications if migration is appreciated as a social process in which the social position of young people may shift through the process of migration (De Haan and Rogaly 2002: 6). Most importantly, an analysis of young people's social position in migration destinations which is to a large extent based on accounts from returned young migrants, on telephone calls with young migrants at destination, and on accounts from friends and relatives of young migrants in *Baan Naam* is at best only a partial account as it is unable to sufficiently ground these accounts in the social context of various migration destinations. In addition, positionality of the context and the person may in such cases lead to a bias in the responses. For example, in case young migrants claim that they have not earned any money whilst involved in migrant work this may refer to an actual experience of exploitation; however, it may also be a constructed response to conceal having spent all migratory earnings whilst away from the natal village. In such a constructed response young migrants have tuned

their responses to the context and interviewer, in this case, by drawing on the dominant discourse of the 'dutiful child' and the dominant narrative of migration to Thailand as exploitation (for a similar argument in relation to child prostitution see Montgomery 2007: 421). The methodological problem is not so much that respondents tune their responses to the interviewer and social context in which the interview is set, but the limited ability to the analyse this since most observations were made in the social setting of the village.

Developing a full multi-sited ethnography would have required a bigger research team, something that is hard to achieve given the limited resources available for a PhD research project. A second shortcoming also follows from the structural limitations of a PhD research project. Since the research project had to be completed within a relatively short timeframe it was impossible to develop a longitudinal research. However, a longitudinal approach is needed in order to fully investigate how migration decision-making processes embedded in inter-generational relations relate to longer term dynamics across the life course (Hoddinott 1992; Whitehead *et al.* 2007: 40). A longitudinal approach would also allow differentiating between processes of changes limited to life course dynamics and those of a more profound nature. This would shed light on the question of the extent to which young migrants as agents of change contribute to lasting processes of change, or whether we possibly read too much into what are merely the Chayanovian ebbs and flows of life-course dynamics.

Developing a full multi-sited ethnography that ideally follows children and youth from late childhood into adulthood would address many of the shortcomings stated above. Another suggestion for future research, which can be developed without the financial and human resource implications of a long term multi-sited research project and which would nonetheless make a meaningful contribution to the field of children, youth and development, would be the study of border-sites (see e.g. Lyttleton and Amorntip Amarapibal 2002; Hipfl *et al.* 2003). This would allow further developing the analysis presented in chapter four on the various ways in which the communities on both sites of the Lao-Thai border are interdependent, yet part of distinctly different politico-economic and ideological entities. As chapter four has shown this affects the different norms and practices concerning childhood and youth manifested through various forms of child and youth migration observed on the two sides of the border.

9.3 Concluding discussion of research findings, contributions and implications

9.3.1 The question of discourse

The first overarching research question of how the involvement of children and young people in migration and mobility is constructed in the Lao context, departs from one of the main contributions of childhood and youth studies, namely that childhood and youth are social constructs (Durham 2000; Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Ansell 2009: 190). This overarching question has been addressed by analysing the various constructs of childhood and youth featuring in the Lao social landscape, the relations of power shaping these constructs, and by studying how these constructs relate to dominant representations of the involvement of children and young people in migration.

In chapter five it was first established that although the Lao language lacks a word equivalent to the English term 'childhood', villagers in *Baan Naam*, nonetheless use a notion of childhood. The formal Lao language word for child (*dek*) is in everyday language usually suffixed with the diminutive *noi*, hence *dek noi*. The focus group discussions analysed in chapter five illustrated further that the qualities associated with the term *dek noi* emphasise children's lack of understanding, a-sexuality, their state of dependence, and their general lack of responsibility. These qualities are celebrated in case of very young children; however, an important part of the socialisation process revolves precisely about ridding children of these childhood qualities. This shows that growing up is in the village perceived in a teleological fashion; it is about leaving the stage of childhood and progressing towards adulthood. At a conceptual level children are thus regarded human becomings rather than beings (Uprichard 2008). Moreover, there are important gender differences in this respect as girls are socialised into more adult-like roles from a much earlier age than boys, and in the case of girls there is a much stronger emphasis placed on acting responsibly, diligently, and prudently than is the case with boys of similar age. Subsequently, children in the sense of *dek noi* are in village frames of meaning not regarded as competent social actors, which manifests in practice through their inferior social position and the general lack of regard for their opinions and actions.

These discursive constructs of childhood are, however, contested in several ways. At a rhetorical level the recently adopted Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children (LPRIC) speaks explicitly about children as bearers of rights, a position that is

also embraced by many IGOs and INGOs working on children's issues in the Lao PDR. Furthermore, these dominant constructs of childhood are contested by children and young people themselves, who, from a very young age, carry out a wide range of tasks and do so mostly very responsibly and competently. Children and young people also challenged the dominant conception of children (as *dek noi*) as inferior beings by means of argument, by pointing out in the FGDs that children, from a young age, have a greater capacity for understanding things, and act generally with more responsibility and competence than is acknowledged by adults and social seniors.

In contrast, when it comes to migration for work, practice confirms discourse. The idea of migration for work is by young and old villagers regarded as incompatible with their notion of childhood (as *dek noi*) and young people who were according to village frames of meaning regarded children (*dek noi*) were generally not involved in migration for purposes of work. However, young children (*dek noi*) migrate for other purposes such as education, joining the Buddhist Sangha, and fosterage. Children's involvement (as *dek noi*) in such forms of migration was not frowned upon. This shows that staying away from the natal household at a young age is not necessarily seen as problematic. In fact, it may be regarded positively as an important rite of passage (joining the Buddhist Sangha), as a realisation of a modern and extended childhood (migration for education), or as a legitimate alternative to growing up with biological parents and siblings (fosterage). Importantly, children's involvement in these forms of migration is also relatively unproblematic from the perspective of the state as these young migrants remain within state spaces. The involvement of young people in other forms of migration, particularly in case migration takes young people beyond state spaces, is from the perspective of the state more problematic because this undermines efforts of the state to impose itself on the young population, which is pivotal in various nation building projects (Scott 1998).

Once young people are regarded as youth, *wai nhum*, they are, in village frames of meaning, recognised as social agents in their own right, even though the quality of their agency is still regarded as inferior to that of adults. The social status of adulthood is, however, not reached till young people have become parents themselves, and is in this way, like other stages in the life course, not directly related to crossing any age-based threshold. In the case of *wai nhum*, involvement in migration, which may now also include migration for purposes of work, is by villagers regarded as compatible with the stage of *wai nhum*. In fact, for young men mobility and migration has been part of traditional rites

of passage in the sense of *pai thiauw*, going around/travelling, (Kirsch 1966) as observed in chapter four. Young women's involvement in migration appears, however, to be a more recent phenomenon brought about by processes of capitalist expansion (see also Wolf 1992; Curran 1995; Mills 1997; Mills 1999; Elmhirst 2002).

This village level paradox in which childhood and adulthood are at a discursive level diametrically opposed whilst in the sphere of everyday practice children often perform tasks alongside adults and are recognised for their productive potential, is, however, gradually being transformed. The modern childhood ideal as a specific space in which the young population is in various respects isolated from the adult world for an increasing number of years (Dasberg 2001) is in the Lao context embedded in the wider discourse of development. Development refers here to a process of modernisation with connotations of progress and prosperity, which is similarly the case in other Southeast Asian contexts (Rigg *et al.* 1999).

Early calls for the modernisation of Lao childhoods can be traced back to the modernisation aspirations of the French influenced Lao elite of the early days of independence as exemplified by the writings of Souvanna Phouma (1959). It was, however, not till the establishment of the socialist Lao PDR in 1975 that policies contributing to the institutionalisation of a modern childhood were implemented on a large scale, as an intrinsic part of the overall communist project of modernisation (Evans 1995). The measure of chronological age played a pivotal role in the modernising efforts of the Lao state to establish a modern childhood, and this measure has remained of utmost importance in the post-socialist era. As argued in chapter five, it is the measure of chronological age that makes the young population legible (Ariès 1962: 15; Scott 1998), an important prerequisite for implementing government policies and IGO and INGO projects. Legibility of the young population allows the Lao state, and the international development community, to target this important segment of the population, bring it within state spaces and impose itself on it, through, for example, the institutions of the school and the Lao Youth Union (Keyes 1991; Scott 1998).

This political strategy was during the socialist years of utmost importance since children and youth were regarded as the inheritors of the revolutionary ideals of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LRYU 1994; Evans 1998). However, and as argued in chapter five, in the post-socialist era, socialism may have disappeared as a political motivation for the institutionalisation of a modern childhood, but this void was quickly filled by the

nationalist politics of nation-building (see also: Cheney 2007). Moreover, in the post-socialist era the field of childhood became globally recognised as a prime area of intervention for a combination of humanitarian ideals enshrined in the UN-CRC (Ennew 1996; Boyden 1997) and the economics of human capital formation (World Bank 2006b). These motivations, and the international support for these ideas, have in the Lao context contributed to further expansion of the institutionalisation of a modern childhood, with the case in point being the recent adoption of the LPRIC which sets the notion of child (*dek*) in the universal measure of chronological age with an upper threshold of 18 years of age.

This dissertation has shown that at the level of the village, parents and also many children and young people, aspire to at least parts of modern childhood ideals. Yet, the parental aspiration of a modern childhood in which the lives of young people are increasingly separated from the adult world for a number of years that exceeds well-beyond the period of time young people are regarded *dek noi* may not be realised. Or, this may be realised for only some children in a household, possible at the expense of others. Furthermore, some children and young people actively resist the imposition of a modern childhood, or some parts of it, and the subsequent surveillance of the state, by quitting school, resisting membership of the Lao Youth Union, and by involvement in wage labour, possibly of a migratory nature. This does, so far, in the rural Lao context not necessarily pose a challenge to the modern construct of childhood because of the relative irrelevance of precise chronological age vis-à-vis social characteristics associated with stages in the life course. In other words, the modern notion of childhood (but also adulthood) exists in the everyday context in relative isolation from the inflexible format of chronological age in which it is formally set. Cross-border migration is, however, one of the areas in which this relative separation between chronological age and the modern notion of childhood is rapidly reworked for a range of factors that are discussed below.

9.3.2 The question of agency and structuring relations

The second overarching question asked how the participation and non-participation of children and young people in migration and mobility is shaped by the interplay between agency and structuring relations. In chapter six this question was addressed through an analysis of the impact of factors like demographic composition of the household, households' relative economic standing, events in the household developmental cycle (EHDC), and household settler status on the distribution of young migrants across

households. Household demographics, more clearly than poverty, settler status or EHDC status, were found to be a key factor explaining why some households had no young migrants amongst its members. The qualitative analysis presented in chapters five and seven elaborated on this further. This showed that retaining a minimum supply of child and/or youth labour to the household constitutes an important underlying factor why households with few children were seldom observed to have young migrants amongst their members.

The households' relative economic standing did not, in and by itself, shed great light on the overall distribution of young migrants across households. However, differences in household wealth were found related to variations in young household members' involvement in migration. Most notably, it was predominantly young migrants from households of average and better-off economic standing who were found to be involved in migration for purposes of education and who had migrated through recruitment agencies. In addition, the youngest migrants stemmed predominantly from the poorer households and in these households the number of young migrants per household was also considerably higher than amongst the wealthier households. EHDC and the household settler status were found to relate positively to the distribution of young migrants across households, and these effects increased further in case both characteristics applied to the same households. In addition, when the households' relative economic standing was combined with household migration history and EHDC status the effects, again, became more strongly pronounced.

The way these patterns of household characteristics were found relating to the distribution and variations in young people's involvement in migration suggest that the involvement of young household members in migration leads to a widening of pre-existing inequalities as, from a household perspective, migration may constitute a strategy of accumulation or survival (Bebbington 1999; Bryceson 2002). Further, unsettling experiences like household's involvement in failed resettlement programmes and EHDCs relate positively to young people's involvement in migration, which seems, on the surface, to confirm concerns that child and youth migration stems from, at least in part, and furthers, the degradation of the family as a harmonic unit (see e.g. Whitehead *et al.* 2007: 4-5). However, the case of Tina and older brother presented in chapter six demonstrates that it cannot be assumed that young household members' involvement in migration furthers processes of degradation of the family as a unit, or patterns of economic inequalities in a

linear fashion. In fact, the case of Tina and others have shown that migrations initially born out of survival motivations may overtime turn into processes of accumulation (see also: Bebbington 1999: 2027; Rigg 2005a: 144), which may contribute to strengthening the family as a social unit rather than contribute to its collapse.

Relating household characteristics to young people's involvement in migration illuminated some of the underlying factors and relations affecting migration decision-making processes. Conceptualising household based migration decision-making processes as forms of bargaining with children and parents as social agents embedded in sets of social relations, enabled analysing this conundrum in more detail with particular attention to questions of agency (Whitehead *et al.* 2007). This bargaining approach also contributed to overcoming a categorical approach to childhood and youth, which is in the literature increasingly subject to critique (Alanen 2000; Hart 2006; Hopkins and Pain 2007; Ansell 2009), in favour of a relational perspective which takes explicit account of the various ways young people's lives interact with those of adults.

The notions of fluid migration and institutionalised migration introduced in chapter seven further contributed to a relational approach to the study of young migrants' agency. These two concepts allow studying young people's involvement in various forms of migration in a single analytical frame which is particularly attentive to relational dimensions affecting young migrants' agency in the social process of migration. The notions of fluid and institutionalised migration guided the analysis of young villagers' agency in the process of becoming or not becoming a young migrant (chapter seven), and the analysis of young migrants' agency in the work place in migration destinations (chapter eight).

Chapter seven has shown the various subtle ways in which migration decision-making processes are negotiated in and beyond the field of the household, with a prime focus on children and young people's agency. This analysis contributes in four significant ways to existing work on how young villagers become and fail to become young migrants. First, chapter seven demonstrated the importance of conceptualising the household as a flexible and mutating entity which is not limited to members of the nuclear family alone. Second, drawing on the notions of *lun* and *phiinôông* (see chapter five) the importance of relations of relative age between young people within the household was highlighted. Relations of relative age combined with gender relations were found shaping young people's agency in bargaining processes unfolding within the household concerning questions of migration and non-migration. These findings add a further dimension to the theorisation of

household-based migration decision-making processes, which has so far focussed predominantly on *inter*-generational relations within the nuclear household, and not so much, with the exception of gender, on *intra*-generational relations between siblings and other young people residing in the household (see e.g. Hoddinott 1992; Iversen 2002; Punch 2002b; Whitehead *et al.* 2007).

Third, chapter seven extended the analysis of migration decision-making processes beyond the field of the household to networks of recruitment. Networks of recruitment are the dynamic interface between the field of the household and extra-household relations comprising the migration process. Most studies on child migration focus either on young migrants at destinations (e.g. Camacho 1999; Jacquemin 2004) or on the field of the household in sending areas (Punch 2002b; Whitehead *et al.* 2007). A focus on networks of recruitment goes beyond this bipolar approach (see also Iversen 2002) and highlights how migrants' social position may vary in the social process of migration (De Haan and Rogaly 2002: 6). This analysis has shown that networks of recruitment may both constrain young people's agency in the process of migration as well as allow for greater agency on part of the young migrants depending largely on the young migrants' social position in these networks.

Fourth, the analytical distinction between fluid migration and institutionalised migration has shed further light on children and young people's agency in household-level migration decision-making processes and in accessing networks of recruitment across various forms of migration. One of the key findings in this respect is that young migrants' agency was found to be most constrained in forms of institutionalised migration. With the possible exception of fosterage, children and youth in forms of institutionalised migration are highly dependent on their parents when entering these forms of migration, have virtually no scope to influence the migration arrangement, and are often ill-informed about the details of the migratory event.

Similar conclusions were arrived at in chapter eight which focused on young migrants' agency in various workplaces at migration destinations. Young migrants in institutionalised migration were more poorly positioned to negotiate their working conditions at migration destination than their peers in fluid migration, primarily because the strategy of quitting without notice, which was commonly observed amongst young migrants in forms of fluid migration, may come at a considerable cost in the case of institutionalised migration. However, effective indebtedness set in patron-client relations,

which was commonly observed in forms of fluid migration into relatively small and intimate work places, often ensured that the strategy of quitting without notice did not simply follow the moment the overall migratory balance tipped into the negative. In fact, particularly in case of young first-time migrants and well-developed patron-client relations young migrants not uncommonly remained in their migrant job despite a considerable degree of exploitation.

Chapter eight further showed through an analysis of fear how the degree to which young migrants through the social process of migration are able to rework relations of place differs between migrations of a cross-border nature and internal ones. Chapter eight identified two forms of fear, both rooted in structural relations. First, fear related to *khon baan nôôk* identity stems from hierarchical urban-rural relations which was found amongst young migrants involved in both cross-border and internal migration. Second, fear related to working as an undocumented migrant in Thailand stemming from the production of 'migrant illegality' (De Genova 2002). The key difference is that a *khon baan nôôk* identity can through young migrant's agency be reworked, as it is not a fixed identity (De Haan and Rogaly 2002: 6; Hsu 2005). This is, however, not the case with the second form of fear, as the agency of young undocumented migrants involved in cross-border migration was found to be limited to constantly negotiating the risk of 'deportability', whilst its source, the production of migrant illegality based on their Lao identity remained unchanged. Hence, a lingering sense of fear remains ever present in the case of undocumented cross-border migration, which continues to shape young migrants' agency in migration destinations.

9.3.3 The Lao migration regime: Politics, practice and implications of keeping the young population within state spaces

The study of migration and non-migration by young Lao villagers has illuminated how the overall process of transition that continues to unfold in the Lao social landscape (Rigg 2005a) profoundly impacts the lives of children and young people in terms of practice and discourse. Recapping the first set of research questions it was shown that the process of transition rearticulates the very constructs of childhood and youth, and also, albeit slowly, the connotations of migration and mobility. The summary discussion of the second set of research questions showed that this process of transition offers new opportunities, as well

as new vulnerabilities for young people and their families which are negotiated and mediated through a range of relations and factors.

The third research question, of how the practice of involvement in migration at a young age is shaped by discursive constructions of the phenomenon and vice versa, turns the analytical lens to the connections between the two sets of questions presented above. This dissertation has shown that the practice of involvement in migration at a young age is at various levels of analysis shaped by discursive constructs of the phenomenon. It has also shown that discursive constructs are drawn upon and manipulated by agents at all levels of analysis, whom thereby, through exercising agency, rework such constructs from their own position of relative power. This concluding section furthers this discussion but limits itself to the policy sphere concerning young people's involvement in forms of migration, the global-local interactions underlying it and its implications.

Children and young people's involvement in migration encapsulates a serious dilemma for the modernising state. The path of development as modernisation has led to market integration, development of physical infrastructure, modernisation of agriculture. But it has also contributed to the formation of cultures of migration, and has contributed to making migration an increasingly realisable and lucrative component of rural livelihoods. This often takes the form of young household members becoming involved in migration as it may combine with aspirations of self-realisation of young villagers and with traditional roles of children and young people in the household (Mills 1997). Due to the very same processes of development described above the Lao state has lost its monopoly on various aspects of Lao society and an increasingly mobile and migratory population constitutes a further challenge to its unfinished project of nation building, particularly if it concerns the young population. However, its renewed position in the international arena has also presented new avenues for the Lao state to legitimately impose itself on its population, and again, particularly in relation to the young population.

This is especially evident in the global-local interactions concerning childhood, children's involvement in migration and the politics of migration and nation building. In chapters one and four it was argued that the Lao state has, as part of its renewed regional and global position, reluctantly accepted the reality of migration. Importantly, the political acceptance of migration as a reality that is there to stay offers the Lao state greater scope to address concerns that migration may undermine the legitimacy of the state than the previous stance of public ignorance or denial of the phenomenon, because it legitimises a migration regime

which, by implication, extends the space of the state to one of the dimensions of society that fell previously beyond the gaze of the state.

The human trafficking discourse constitutes an important component in the Lao state's migration regime, even though known cases of human trafficking are few (Huijsmans and Baker 2009). The human trafficking discourse is, however, politically appealing as it offers national governments additional tools for combating irregular migration, with a particular focus on the young population, in the name of human rights promotion and addressing international organised crime (Sharma 2003: 58; O'Connell Davidson 2005: 69). The ease with which the human trafficking discourse is mobilised across the globe to address the involvement of young people below the age of 18 in migration for work has, amongst other factors, been explained by several authors with reference to the dominant western constructs of childhood which it embodies (O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007; Goździak 2008; Huijsmans 2008). The analysis presented in this dissertation does not deny this argumentation, but it has gone further by asking why states are particularly concerned about children's involvement in certain forms of migration.

The study has shown that the trafficking discourse allows the Lao state to address a dual concern regarding young people's involvement in migration for purposes of work especially, and in particular if this concerns cross-border migration. First, the human trafficking discourse provides a national and international podium to the Lao state to impose itself on its population in its legitimate role, and through its legal responsibility, of protecting its population, and particularly its population of child age. Second, the trafficking discourse contributes to keeping the young populations within the space of the state as it discourages irregular cross-border migration and enables the Lao state to return young migrants into state spaces by carrying out the anti-trafficking recipe of rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration. In other words, in the Lao migration regime globally dominant notions of human trafficking and childhood contribute to achieving specific national ends.

A consequence of this indigenisation (Appadurai 1996: 32) of global discourses is that the Lao migration regime focuses predominantly on cross-border migration to Thailand and takes little notice of other forms of migration that children and young people are involved in. These omissions can be explained with reference to the global discourses that legitimise the Lao state's migration regime. The United Nations trafficking protocol supplements a UN Convention against transnational organised crime (2000) and is thereby part of a larger

international security agenda which focuses predominantly on cross-border dynamics. Second, the modern construct of childhood is by and large compatible with children and young people's involvement in migration for purposes such as education, fosterage and joining the Buddhist Sangha.

This study has demonstrated that exploitation of young migrants is by no means limited to Thai migration destinations, and that young people's involvement in migration for purposes other than work cannot *a priori* assumed to be benign, problem-free migratory experiences. It has also shown that cross-border migration into Thailand is not in itself exploitative, but may become exploitative due to the various unequal relations in which the phenomenon is set. Lastly, the Lao migration regime of combating human trafficking and irregular migration in combination with efforts to stream migration through state-controlled channels set in a framework of chronological age may find its justification in a series of international discourses, in practice, however, it, at best, only adds further layers to the several layers that already constrain young migrants' agency in migration (see also Busza *et al.* 2004).

These shortcomings, omissions, misrepresentations, and other problem areas are for an important part products of the very narrow policy space in which the issue of child migration remains locked (Whitehead and Hashim 2005). By pointing out the political premium states attribute to their young population, which only increases in times of globalisation and which challenges the very foundations of nation-states, this dissertation has argued that in order to widen the policy space for child migration it is insufficient to merely prove the various wrong-doings and misinterpretations to which the human trafficking discourse amounts from a children's rights or children as social actors perspective. Rather, the political challenge for increasing the policy space for the issue of child migration requires more than taking seriously children and young people as social actors and as bearers of rights. Importantly, it also requires appreciating the political premium that states (Cheney 2007), and also regional entities (King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003: 233-234), attribute to their young population for various political ends. A convincing argument to open up the political space for child migration, and a worthy objective of further research, would, therefore, have to demonstrate that addressing harm in young people's involvement in migration rather than prohibiting their migration, contributes to young migrants' well-being without undermining the political project of nation or region building. Furthermore, such a position may well constitute an urgent, timely and legitimate

opportunity for present-day states, in the confusing times of transition and globalisation, to prove their relevance to important segments of the young population.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Terminology, transliteration, and glossary

In this dissertation the term Lao PDR is used to refer to the contemporary Lao nation-state. Lao PDR is an abbreviated version of the state's full official name Lao People's Democratic Republic. In English language publications the term 'Laos' is, however, frequently used instead of the Lao PDR, this includes the *Vientiane Times*, the state-censored English language daily of the Lao PDR. Hence, the term Laos may well be considered 'semi-official' (Evans 2002: xiv). However, in this dissertation preference is given to the term Lao PDR as it clearly conveys the political history and orientation which has shaped the nation's recent history and which constitutes an important backdrop of this study.

The term 'Lao' is in this dissertation used as an adjective following its use in the Lao language (Evans 2002: xiii) with the exception of its use in the phrase 'ethnic Lao'. The phrase 'Lao population' refers in this dissertation to all citizens of the Lao PDR regardless of ethnicity whereas the phrase 'ethnic Lao' refers to a segment of the Lao population that is formally classified under the Tai-Kadai linguistic group (Enfield 2005a).[74] However, ethnic Lao are also found on the Thai side of the border and particularly in the north-eastern Thai region of *Isaan*. Hence, the dissertation distinguishes between 'ethnic Lao from the Lao PDR' and 'ethnic Lao from *Isaan*' on instances where this is important for the argument and not evident from the context.

Since there is 'no official system for transcription of Lao script into English' (Vatthana Pholsena 2006: xi) common Lao names or terms may appear in quite different Romanised forms as Picture 1 illustrates. Furthermore, in case of published texts there is often a degree of compromise on consistency in transliteration of Lao script in order to retain common Romanised versions of Lao names or words. The case in point is *Vientiane*, which is the generally preferred over possibly more accurate and consistent transliterations such as *Viengchan*, *Viang Chan*, or possibly *Wiang Chan* (Vatthana Pholsena 2006: xi; Askew *et al.* 2007; Evans 2007: 534). Lastly, the tonal structure of the Lao language adds another layer of complexity to accurate transliteration of Lao script (see e.g. Enfield 2005b: 54fn6).

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[74] Figures on the number of ethnicities on Lao soil differ, but the Lao government has set the current number at close to 50 (Somsack Pongkhao 2007a). Contemporary approaches classify these different ethnic groups into four or five main ethno-linguistic groups, of which Tai-Kadai (or Lao-Tai) is one (Trankell 1999: 12; Enfield 2005a). However, in the everyday context a former classification system based on altitude has remained in widespread use. This system identifies three main categories; the lowland Lao (*lao lum*), the Lao of the hills (*lao theung*), and the Lao highlanders (*lao suung)*.

Picture 1: Transliteration, *Patouxay* or *Patuxay*?

These various problems of transliteration are in this dissertation dealt with rather pragmatically. First, in order to increase accessibility for readers who are not familiar with the Lao language this dissertation has limited the use of transliterated Lao language terms to those terms that are key to the analysis and argument. Second, the informal transliteration system that is used in this dissertation does not capture tonal difference, and compromises on consistency by retaining common Romanised versions such as *Vientiane*. In addition, the glossary below lists, for sake of clarity, all transliterated Lao terms and expressions that are used in this dissertation alongside the English translation and the Lao script version. The latter follows the Lao spelling used in the English-Lao Dictionary by Sonchid Siiri (2003).

Glossary

Transliterated script	Lao language script	English translation note
(kaan)phadthanaa	(ການ)ພັດທະນາ	Development
aanuxon	ອານຸຊົນ	Category used by the Lao Revolutionary Youth Union for its youngest (school-based) members aged between six and nine years of age who wear blue neckscarfs. Aanuxon can be translated as 'young juveniles'.
aay	ອ້າຍ	Kinship term for older brother
baan	ບ້ານ	home, village

Baan Fangthai	ບ້ານຝັ່ງໄທ	'Village on the Thai side of the river', alias for the Thai village across the Mekong River from Baan Naam
baan hau	ບ້ານເຮົາ	our village, our home
baan kai, müüang khiang	ບ້ານໃກ້ເມືອງຽງ	Expression used in the Lao PDR to emphasise the relatedness and closeness of the Lao people from the Lao PDR with the Lao and Thai from Thailand.
Baan Naam	ບ້ານນ້ຳ	'River village', alias for the research village
baan nôôk	ບ້ານນອກ	countryside (informal)
baan phii müüang nôông	ບ້ານພີ່ເມືອງນ້ອງ	Lit: the home of the elder brother, the land of the younger brother. An expression used in Thailand to indicate the relatedness between Thailand and the Lao PDR.
Baht	ບາດ	Thai currency (Approximate exchange rates in 2008: 1 Thai Baht=250 Lao Kip; 1 GBP=50 Thai Baht; 1 USD=35 Thai Baht)
dek	ເດັກ	The formal term for 'child'
dek noi	ເດັກນ້ອຍ	The informal term for 'child'. The diminutive 'noi' means 'small'.
èènoi	ແອນ້ອຍ	baby
hai	ໄຮ	less productive, unirrigated land, often upland
hak ngua hhai phuuk hak luuk hhai tii	ຮັກງົວໃຫ້ຜູກຮັກລູກໃຫ້ຕີ	Love [your] cow, tie it; love [your] child, hit it (Lao proverb)
hôônghian	ໂຮງຮຽນ	school

huafu	ຫົວຟຸ	head of uncombed and unruly hair
huanyôông	ຫົວຍອງ	head of uncombed and unruly hair
Hüüan	ເຮືອນ	house
kaikhiang	ໃກ້ຄຽງ	adjacency
Kaxuang pôôngkan khwaamsanghob	ກະຊວງປ້ອງກັນຄວາມສະທ ິບ	[Lao] Ministry of Security
keudmai	ເກີດໃໝ່	newborn child
khaa viak	ຄາວຽກ	busy working
khobkhua	ຄອບຄົວ	household, or family
khon baan nôôk	ຄົນບ້ານນອກ	Lit. people of the countryside, but with connotations of country bumpkin
khon Lao	ຄົນລາວ	Lao nationals (regardless of ethnicity), or ethnic Lao (regardless of nationality)
khon Thai	ຄົນໄທ	Thai nationals in general or Thai from central Thailand
Khôôngkaan baan chadsan	ໂຄງການບ້ານຈັດສັນ	Project to provide housing
khwaamchaleun	ຄວາມຈະເລີນ	civilisation, prosperity, progress, development
khwaamkaonhaa	ຄວາມກ້າວໜ້າ	progress
Kip	ກິບ	Lao currency (Approximate exchange rates in 2008: 250 Lao Kip=1 Thai Baht; 12,000 Lao Kip=1 GBP; 8,500 Lao Kip=1 USD)
lamvong	ລຳວົງ	traditional Lao circle dance
Lao lum	ລາວລຸ່ມ	Lit. Lao lowlanders, and used as an overarching category in a former

		classification system of ethnic groups in the Lao PDR
Lao suung	ລາວສູງ	Lit. Lao highlanders, and used as an overarching category in a former classification system of ethnic groups in the Lao PDR
Lao theung	ລາວເທິງ	Lit. Lao from the hills, and used as an overarching category in a former classification system of ethnic groups in the Lao PDR
liang	ລ້ຽງ	to raise, look after
lun	ລຸ້ນ	Concept indicating differences in relative age. Those of the same 'lun' are more or less of similar age.
lun diawkan	ລຸ້ນດຽວກັນ	being of similar age (cohort)
lun diawkan kaanhian	ລຸ້ນດຽວກັນການຮຽນ	being in the same age-grade
mèè baan	ແມ່ບ້ານ	Housekeeper/Domestic worker
mèè nyaa	ແມ່ຍ່າ	Kinship term for mother of husband
Mii luuk kôôn dai xai kôôn	ມີລູກກ່ອນໄດ້ໃຊ້ກ່ອນ	The sooner you have children, the sooner you can put them to use (Lao proverb)
naaybaan	ນາຍບ້ານ	village chief/head
nak hian	ນັກຮຽນ	student/pupil at primary level
nak süksaa	ນັກສຶກສາ	student at post-secondary level
nhaathii	ໜ້າທີ່	duty
nôông	ນ້ອງ	Kinship term for younger sibling (regardless of sex)
nyauwaxon	ເຍົາວະຊົນ	Category used by the Lao Revolutionary Youth Union for its school-based

		members aged between nine and 15 who wear red neckscarfs. Nyauwaxon can be translated as 'juveniles'.
padthanaa maa lèw	ພັດທະນາມາແລ້ວ	development has come
Pai thiaw	ໄປທ່ຽວ	Going around/travelling
pathed Lao	ປະເທດລາວ	Lit. 'Lao land'. This term may refer to the Lao communist movement, but may also be used to refer to the Lao PDR as a nation-state.
paxaa süksaa	ປະຊາສຶກສາ	Mass adult literacy campaigns carried particularly in the years after the proclamation of the Lao PDR
paxaaxon	ປະຊາຊົນ	population
pen sao	ເປັນສາວ	Refers to a maturing girl who is not any longer a young girl but also not yet an adolescent (phuu sao)
phadthanaa hôôd lèw	ພັດທະນາຮອດແລ້ວ	development has arrived
phiinôông	ພີ່ນ້ອງ	Kin, relatives
phuu bao	ຜູ້ບ່າວ	Adolescent/youth (male)
phuu nyai	ຜູ້ໃຫຍ່	Lit. 'big persons/people', but it may also used meaning 'adult(s)'
phuu sao	ຜູ້ສາວ	Adolescent/youth (female)
phuu thau	ຜູ້ເຖົ້າ	elderly
podpôôi	ປົດປ່ອຍ	freedom/liberation
Puem saamanôô khua	ປຶ້ມສຳມະໂນຄົວ	Household, or family census book
sen	ເສັ້ນ	string, thread

siaw	ສ່ຽວ	Special, close and non-hierarchical relation between two friends of the same age and sex
siin	ສິ້ນ	traditional Lao skirt
siivilai	ສີວິໄລ	civilised, developed
üüay	ເອື້ອຍ	Kinship term for older sister
vat	ວັດ	Buddhist monastery
viak	ວຽກ	work
wai hian	ໄວຮຽນ	lit. age of learning. Refers to being of primary school age.
wai katheun	ໄວກະເทิນ	in between age not a child [deknoi] anymore but not yet an adolescent [phuubao/sao] either
wai lun	ໄວລຸ່ນ	The Thai/Isaan equivalent for the Lao term 'youth' (wainhum)
wai nhum	ໄວໜຸ່ມ	Lit. the 'age of the young' and used as the formal term for 'youth'
xao nhum	ຊາວໜຸ່ມ	Category used by the Lao Revolutionary Youth Union for its main, full members, aged between 15 and 35 years of age. Members can be in and out of school and wear a blue shirt as part of their uniform.
xonnabod	ຊົນນະບົດ	rural areas (formal)
xvoy phôô mèè	ຊ່ອຍພໍ່ແມ່	help parents

Appendix 2: Details on young respondents

Key details of 52 (22 male, 30 female) young respondents who participated directly in the research ordered alphabetically by alias. Young migrants who were not interviewed by the research team are excluded here.

Note:

1. The aliases of the 26 young villagers who participated in the bi-monthly interview series are marked with an asterisk (*).
2. Position in the household: The figure before the slash indicates the birth position of the concerned young person, and the figure after the slash the total number of siblings (who are not necessarily all present). Hence, 7/7 means seventh born out of seven children. In some cases further figures are added in brackets, this indicates that there are other young unmarried people present in this household other than the concerned young person's siblings. Adding a minus (-) means that additional young people are younger than the concerned young person, adding a plus (+) indicates that additional young people are older than the concerned young person. For example, 4/6+(1-/2+) means that the concerned young person is the fourth born child out of six and that there are another three young unmarried persons present in this household of which one is younger and two are older than the concerned young person.
3. The accurateness of chronological age varies. In case a reliable full date of birth was obtained the actual age as of 1/1/2008 is presented. In other cases, best approximations or a range is given.
4. Any involvement in migrant work of a commuting type is not included here.

Alias	Hh-ID	Ind-ID	Sex	Position in household	Approx age on 1/1/2008	Educational note	Ind. migration/mobility note (excluding commuting)	Household members migration/mobility note
Anu*	2	16	M	7/7	17	quit in sec 4	From about 14 years of age he's been shipping commuters across the Mekong to Thailand in his father's boat. At age 17 he works for some months on a road construction project elsewhere in the district and later in the same year works for two weeks on a painting job in Vientiane	Older sister (6/7; Ketmanee) worked as an apprentice in a beauty shop in Vientiane
Buadeng*	16	81	F	1/2	18	completed secondary education and started a computer course some years later in 2009	Left the village in September 2008 (19 years) to start a computer course in another district where she stayed with relatives.	Both parents work for an electricity company and are regularly away from home for some weeks, leaving Buadeng in charge of the household.
Buanoi*	17	87	F	3/5	16	quit in sec 4	In September 2008 (17 years of age) she left with a friend to work in a factory in Vientiane but returned the next day since the girls didn't like the working conditions. Late 2008 through	Father is vice village-headman. Older brother (Hak, 1/5) has migrated through a recruitment agency to a palm oil plantation in

								to early 2009 she worked for about 2 months on a vegetable plantation in the Thai province of Sakhon Nakhon with 12 other young people from Baan Naam. The young people were divided over two plantations. Three in one workplace, nine in the other	southern Thailand twice.
Chanthawy	21	119	F	5/5		about 15	completed primary education	At age 15 or 16 she left for north-eastern Thailand to stay with her grandmother for some time; next she spent some time with her older sister (2/5) in Vientiane; At about 17 years she leaves together with her mother and several other villagers to work in a pineapple-canning factory in Rayong (Thailand). They work in the factory for three months, then the mother returns to Baan Naam, but Chanthawy moves on to Lopburi (Thailand) to stay with a Thai boyfriend she's met whilst working in the factory.	Father is born in north-eastern Thailand and often drunk. Older brother (1/5) has worked for some years in the pineapple-canning factory Chanthawy and her mother also migrate to. Yet, when mother and daughter are there the son had already returned to Lao PDR.
Choi*	26	150	F	3/4		15	quit in sec 2	At age 14 she stayed with her aunt in Vientiane for about one week and worked in her aunt's shop	Father and older brother (2/4, Sukan) have migrated through a Lao recruitment agency to a palm-oil plantation in southern Thailand. Father has gone once, the brother has remigrated a second time.

Name	Age	No.	Sex	Order	Age left	Education	Life history	Notes
Dai	40	246	F	2/5	about 15 or 16	quit after prim 2	Dai and older sister (1/5, Ekasone) were sent to stay with paternal grandparents in another district when they were about 6-8 years old. After about seven years at their grandparents an aunt took first her older sister (1/5, Ekasone) to Bangkok, and some months after Dai was also brought to Bangkok. The girls stayed three years in Bangkok. They first worked for their aunt and later started working as domestics in other households. Dai now stays in Baan Naam with her parents	-
Dalay*	27	159	F	6/6	14	quit in sec 3	-	Two older sisters (1/6 and 2/6) are from mother's first marriage and have stayed with their mother's mother since she split up with her first husband.
Ekasone	40	245	F	1/5	about 16 or 17	quit after prim 3	Ekasone and younger sister (2/5, Dai) were sent to stay with paternal grandparents in another district when they were about 6-8 years old. After about seven years at their grandparents an aunt took Ekasone to Bangkok, and some months after her sister (2/5, Dai) also came to Bangkok. The girls stayed three years in Bangkok. They first worked for their aunt and later started working	-

277

							as domestics in other households. After returning to Baan Naam at about 18 years of age she moved to Vientiane to work in construction.	
Fang	47	299	M	6/6+(3-/1+)	about 18	completed secondary education	After finishing secondary education his older brother (1/6) found him a position in the army which allowed him to start a course in accounting (3 year course).	Household arrived in 2001 from Huaphan in Baan Naam (Tai Deng ethnic group), parents followed children who had earlier migrated to the Vientiane region. Older brother (1/6) is stationed in Vang Vieng (army post).
Hak	17	85	M	1/5	22	completed secondary education	At 19 or 20 years of age he worked for one year in Vientiane, working with electricity. At about 21 years of age he migrated through a recruitment agency to Thailand (two years at a palm oil plantation). At age 23 he re-migrated to Thailand through a recruiment agency, but to a different palm oil plantation in souther Thailand.	Father is vice-village headman. Younger sister (3/5, Buanoi) has briefly worked in Vientiane and longer in agriculture in northeastern Thailand.
Hang*	56	359	F	1/2	11	in secondary education	Over the long school holidays Hang stays with the entire household occasionally with relatives in other districts/provinces to help out with agricultural work and for petty trade purposes	-
Hanoi	24	140	M	4/6+(1-/2+)	12 or	in	He went to stay with his aunt and uncle in	Mother is born in Isaan. Both

					14	secondary education	another district when he was in primary 5 and stayed there till the end of secondary 2	parents migrated to southern Thailand to work in a construction site in 2001. Father died in Thailand in 2005 due to a work related accident. After a return to the village mother remigrated to work in construction in Bangkok taking two daughters (2/6 and 3/6; Hen) with her. Hen later worked in Northeastern Thailand and Bangkok. In 2009, older sister (1/6) migrates with husband to Thailand.
Hen	24	139	F	3/6+(1-/2+)	16	quit after sec 3	At age 16 her mother (who was working in Bangkok) collects her from Baan Naam to send her to a hospital in Baan Fangthai as she's been suffering from illnesses. Next the mother takes Hen with her to Bangkok where the mother and an older sister (2/6) work in construction. Hen is too weak to work in construction and does the cooking and cleaning for her mother and sister. She stays in Bangkok for about one year and then returns to Baan Naam to head the household because her older sister (1/6) and husband leave for Thailand.	Mother is born in Isaan. Both parents migrated to southern Thailand to work in a construction site in 2001. Father died in Thailand in 2005 due to a work related accident. After a return to the village the mother remigrated to work in construction in Bangkok taking first her older sister (2/6) and then Hen with her. Younger brother (Hanoi, 4/6) studies in another district (sec school), staying with relatives. In 2009 older

								sister (1/6) migrated with husband to Thailand.
Jonnie	12	56	M	2/3	19 or 20	quit after sec 5	Jonnie was brought up by his maternal grandparents as his parents got divorced when he was still young. Jonnie migrated at age 19 through a recruitment agency to Thailand to work at palm oil plantation. He returned prematurely after having been hospitalised in Thailand. His girlfriend (also from Baan Naam) worked meanwhile in a factory in Udon Thani. The couple got married and settled in Baan Naam upon return to Lao PDR	Parents divorced in the late 1990s. Subsequently, Jonnie's mother then left for southern Thailand. There was no news from her till 2008. She was assumed dead till Jonnie met her in Thailand.
Ketmanee	2	15	F	6/7	20	completed secondary education	At age 19 or 20 she stayed for about four and a half months in Vientiane with relatives and worked as an apprentice in a beauty shop as a means to learn this profession.	-
Khamsone*	24	133	M	5/6+(1-/2+)	about 12 or 13	in primary education	There are plans that he will become a novice in a temple in his grandparents' village in Isaan	Mother is born in Isaan. Both parents migrated to southern Thailand to work in a construction site in 2001. Father died in Thailand in 2005 due to a work related accident. After a brief return to the village mother remigrated to work in construction in Bangkok

								taking two daughters (2/6 and 3/6, Hen) with her. Older brother (Hanoi, 4/6) studies in another district (sec school), staying with relatives. In 2009 older sister (1/6) migrated with husband to Thailand
Khik	31	177	F	2/5+(2-)	about 17	quit after sec 3	At about ten years of age Khik and her siblings stayed for about a year with their grandparents in *Baan Naam* because their father and stepmother had migrated to Thailand. At 17 years of age Khik migrated to Vientiane to work for a few months in a restaurant (together with Oy, (36/220)). Next she moved with her younger sister (3/5) and two other girls (who seem to be relatives) to Thailand. Khik and one other girl got domestic work in Udon Thani, the other two girls got domestic work in Bangkok. Next she started working in agriculture in North-eastern Thailand and meets a Thai boyfriend.	Khik's father worked in the 1990s for several years in Thailand. Khik's mother died in 1999 but quickly remarried. In 2000 the father and stepmother migrated for one year to Thailand leaving the children with grandparents in Baan Naam. Khik's stepmother has two children with Khik's father. Khik's older sister is married in Rayong (Thailand), Khik's younger sister (3/5) has worked for some years now in Bangkok as a domestic. Her younger brother (5/5) stays with his maternal grandparents in Baan Naam.
Kob*	1	5	M	2/3+(1-)	18	completed higher secondary	In September 2008 (19 years) Kob left for Vientiane to start a police course.	Older sister (1/3) has studied in Vientiane

Name	Age		Sex				Education	Migration history	Household context
Kongkeo	33	197	F	3/4	15		quit in sec 2	At age 14 or 15 she worked together with a friend for a couple of weeks on the other side of the border (northeastern Thailand), doing shop work; At age 15 she left with a friend to work in food selling stall in Korat in northeastern Thailand. At age 15 or 16 she started to work with a friend in a guesthouse in Vientiane.	Settler household from Huaphan, since 2003 in Baan Naam; Older brother (1/4, Mone) is regularly involved in migration.
Kun	35	211	M	(1/3) -1	about 17		Completed primary education	At a young age he stayed for about two years in monastery in northeastern Thailand since the relatives in Thailand had no son to be ordained. At about 14 or 15 years of age, after the death of his father he starts working in construction in Vientiane for about 3 years. At age 18 he migrates through a Lao recruitment agency to work in a fruit processing factory in Thailand.	Mother left the household and some years later (in 2003 or 2004) the father died, the grandmother who stayed in the household died in 2008. The children now stay with a younger brother of their father, his wife and their young child. Younger sister (2/3) regularly works in Vientiane.
Laddavan*	44	276	F	5/5+(1-/1+)	13		in secondary education	-	Father is born in Isaan. Older sister (1/5) works in a bar/restaurant in Nongkhai, another older sister (3/5, Nalintone) has migrated through a recruitment agency to work in a factory in central Thailand. Nalintone has also worked in a factory in north-eastern Thailand

								and a restaurant in Bangkok.
Luny*	28	162	F	1/2	16	quit in sec 3	In January 2008 (16 years of age) she spent about a month at her aunt's in another district helping out with transplanting rice and doing domestic work.	Mother is born in Isaan.
Malee*	19	102	F	5/5	about 14	completed primary education	-	-
Malivan	52	327	F	1/4	14	completed primary education	At age 14 she worked for one month as a dishwasher in a restaurant in the notheastern Thai town of Nongkhai; Later that year she started work in a garment workshop in Vientiane which she interspersed with periods of time in Baan Naam.	Khmu ethnic group; Settler household (resettlement programme) and since about 2002 in Baan Naam. Malivan is the first born in her mother's second marriage. Step-sister from mother's first marriage used to work in northeastern Thailand but is now married and lives in another district.
Mone*	33	195	M	1/4	17	quit in sec 4	At age 2 he stayed for a year with his grandparents. At age 15 or 16 he started work in the Thai village of Baan Fangthai and was soon recruited to work in construction in the Bangkok area. He did this for about 1 to 1 1/2 years. At age 17 he worked for about six weeks	Settler household from Huaphan, arrived in Baan Naam around 2003; younger sister (3/4) is regularly involved in migrant work in Thailand and Vientiane

							at a vegetable plantation in northeastern Thailand, and at age 18 he worked briefly in a garment factory in Vientiane and then for some weeks in construction, also in Vientiane.	
Mu*	50	318	M		early to mid twenties	not been to school	Worked in 2005 for about 4 months in a factory near Bangkok. Remigrated in 2008 to work in a pineapple canning factory in Rayong (Thailand) together with some other villagers.	Parents are both in prison in Thailand, Mu stays with an uncle. His three younger siblings stay with his grandmother.
Mud	22	126	F	5/5+(1-)	about 17 or 18	quit in primary 4	Mud regularly goes and stays with her older siblings in northeastern Thailand and has worked in a restaurant near Udon Thani for some time. However, she remains vague about her precise migratory endeavours and rumours in Baan Naam has it that she's married to a Thai man.	Older brother (2/5) and older sister (3/5) have married in Isaan, they met their partners whilst working there. Older brother (4/5) works regularly in vegetable plantations near Vientiane. Mud's mother works currently in construction in Vientiane (and divorced from Mud's father who's remarried in Baan Naam)
Nalintone	44	274	F	3/5+(1-/1+)	19 or 20	quit after sec 3	At 19 years of age she migrated through a recruitment agency to work for two years in a fruit processing factory in southern Thailand. After coming back from Thailand she stayed shorlty in Baan Naam and then migrated to Udon Thani (Thailand) where she worked in a	Father is born in Isaan. Older sister (1/5) works in a bar/restaurant in Nongkhai.

							garment factory (work obtained through relatives). This job she quit after a few days since she didn't like how she was treated and started working in a restaurant in Bangkok (through her Thai relatives). This she did for about 1 month and then returned to Baan Naam.	
Nin*	29	168	M	1/2	10	in primary education	-	Living-in grandfather stayed for about 18 years in Thailand escaping the Royalist army and returned to the Lao PDR in 1975.
Noi*	6	33	M	(1+)+2/2	18	in secondary education	Noi is the last born son (7/7) and his parents stay in Xayabuly province. He has moved in with his older sister (3/3) in Baan Naam 6 years ago in order study for secondary education. He completed secondary education in 2008 and moved on to an older brother in Luang Prabang to continue his studies there.	-
Ot	20	105	M	8/8	about 18	quit in sec 2	At about 18 years of age he left to a neighbouring province to help out relatives. He's since only returned occasionally and does not intend to come back to Baan Naam.	
Oy	36	220	F	5/7	about 17	quit school in sec 2	Throughout the research Oy has been working on and off in a restaurant in Vientiane	Settler households originally from Xiang Khwaang province and since 1996 in Baan Naam. Older sisters (2/7 and 3/7, twins) are both

								married in Isaan and met their husbands when doing migrant work. Older sister (4/7) regularly works in Vientiane in a shop.
Padu	45	280	F	1/4	20	in post-secondary education	At about 19 years of age Padu moved to Vientiane to start a general health workers course. Since she does not have relatives in Vientiane she stays with unrelated people for whom she does domestic work and work in their restaurant in return for board and lodging.	Parents both teach in the local secondary school and are originally from Huaphan province.
Palivan	54	346	F	5/9	16	quit after prim 4	At age 15 or 16 she worked for about seven months in a garment workshop in central Thailand; at age 17 she left for Luang Prabang province to stay with an older sister and work on a rubber plantation.	Settler household (resettlement programme), ethnic minority (Lao Theung; unspecified); older brother (2/9) worked for a construction company in Isaan (Thailand), and another older brother (4/9) works near Bangkok on a vegetable plantation.
Panee*	46	286	M	1/2	14	in secondary education	-	-
Panthavan*	52	332	F	1/3	17	quit after sec 3	Together with her older (2/3) sister she moved in with relatives in Baan Naam (hh-id 52) leaving the mother and the oldest sister (1/3)	Settler background (resettlement programme), Khmu ethnic minority

							behind in a resettlement site in another province. Soon after the older sister got married and the two girls set up their own household in Baan Naam. Panthavan regularly spends periods of time with her mother in another province.	
Phayvan*	54	347	F	6/9	14	in primary education	-	Settler household (resettlement programme), ethnic minority (Lao Theung, unspecified); older brother (2/9) worked for a construction company in Isaan (Thailand), another older brother (4/9) works near Bangkok on a vegetable plantation, older sister (Palivan, 5/9) worked earlier in a garment workshop in central Thailand and later migrated to work on a rubber plantation in another province in the Lao PDR.
Pom*	34	206	M	6/6	15	completed primary education	After primary school Pom joined his father and other relatives on a logging project in another province interspersed with periods in Baan Naam. At age 15 and 16 Pom regularly works in remote parts of the district in logging. At age 16 he leaves with several other, mostly young	Older brother (4/6) is a novice in local temple

287

villagers, to work in a pineapple-canning factory in Rayong, Thailand.

Name								
Pong*	45	283	M	4/4	12	in secondary education	-	Parents both teach in the local secondary school and are originally from Houaphan province. Older sister (Padu, 1/4) studies in Vientiane.
Saang*	36	221	M	6/7	16	in secondary education	At age 14 he stayed for a year at his older brother (1/7) in Xiang Khwaang province to study secondary 3.	Settler households originally from Xiang Khwaang province. Older sisters (2/7 and 3/7, twins) are both married in Isaan and met their husbands when doing migrant work. Older sister (4/7) regularly works in Vientiane in a shop. Another older sister (5/7, Oy) regularly works in a restaurant in Vientiane.
Som	14	167	M	1/3	mid-twenties	quit after sec 3	After divorcing his wife (after a marriage of 7 years) he migrated through a recruitment agency to southern Thailand when he was in his mid-twenties. After returning from two years in Thailand he remigrated through the same recruitment company but to a different palm oil plantation. However, he quickly had to return to Baan Naam following the death of his father. When last meeting him in 2009 he was not planning on returning to Thailand quickly as he was needed in Baan Naam following the death of his father.	

Sombun*	4	27	M	3/4	19	in secondary education	Worked over the long school holidays in 2007 for about 2 months in construction in Vientiane	Mother and two last born children left Xayabuly province some years ago to move to Baan Naam where a daughter is staying.
Suchai*	3	24	M	6/6	about 12	in primary education	-	Father is born in Isaan. Older sister (Wang, 5/6) has done migrant work in Vientiane and in Isaan.
Sukan	26	149	M	2/4	about 18	completed primary education	At 18 years of age he left through a recruitment agency to work at a palm oil plantation in southern Thailand. In 2009 he re-migrated through the same recruitment agency but to a different oil palm plantation in southern Thailand.	Father joined Sukan and on the first migratory trip to a palm-oil plantation in southern Thailand. Younger sister (3/4, Choi) worked briefly in Vientiane.
Thanya*	18	94	F	3/4	15	quit in sec 2	Stayed and worked at her aunt's in another province together with her older sister for about two weeks to harvest fruits in January 2008	Older brother (1/4) had in October 2007 just returned from a six months teacher training course in Vientiane. Older sister (Tula, 2/4) worked at about 13 years of age for five weeks as a nanny for relatives in Bangkok and migrated in late 2008 with a group of villagers to central Thailand to work in pineapple canning factory for about 4 months.

Tina	35	213	F	(2/3) -1	about 16	completed primary education	Soon after her father's death she started to work for her aunt in Vientiane interspersed with periods in Baan Naam.	Mother left the household and some years later (in 2003 or 2004) the father died, the grandmother who stayed in the household died in 2008. The children now stay with a younger brother of their father and his wife and young child. Older brother (1/3) is a migrant worker, first in Vientiane, later in Thailand.
Tongla	39	238	M	2/6+(1+)	17	completed primary education	Since finishing school he works regularly in northeaster Thailand, sometimes short spells of migration, sometimes on a commuting basis. He's usually doing agricultural or construction work and this work is mostly organised by his father.	Mother is born in Isaan. Father organises day labour for the Thai village of Baan Fangthai. Older sister (1/6) is married in Thailand (Isaan) and met her husband through migrant work. Younger sister (3/6, Tukta) works occasionally in Thailand.
Tukta*	39	239	F	3/6+(1+)	about 14 or 15	quit in prim 3	In October 2007 (13 or 14 years of age) she worked for about 1 month as a nanny/domestic worker in the Thai village of Baan Fangthai, earning 2000 Baht; In April 2008 she left together with a friend for domestic work in a nearby village on the Thai side of the border, a job facilitated by a lady in Baan Naam. The girls ended up in a Karaoke bar in central	Mother is born in Isaan. Father organises day labour for the Thai village of Baan Fangthai. Older sister (1/6) is married in Thailand (Isaan) and met her husband through migrant work. Older brother (2/6, Tongla) regularly commutes and goes for short

290

							Thailand instead but escaped within a few days and made it back to Baan Naam independently.	migrants trips to Thailand (Isaan).
Tula	18	93	F	2/4	17	quit school after sec 2	After quitting school Tula worked at about 13 years of age for five weeks as a nanny for relatives in Bangkok and migrated in late 2008 with a group of villagers to central Thailand to work in pineapple canning factory for about 4 months.	Older brother (1/4) had in October 2007 just returned from a six months teacher training course in Vientiane. Younger sister (3/4, Thanya) stayed briefly with relatives helping out with agricultural work.
Tunkeo	32	190	F	6/7+(3-)	21	in university	Tunkeo completed primary school in Huaphan, and then migrated to Vientiane for secondary education and stayed with an older sister. Secondary 1 through to 4 she did in Vientiane, but then got an eye infection that had to be treated in Huaphan since her older brother had contacts there with a foreign doctor. Secondary 5 she, therefore, did in Huaphan, and secondary 6 in Baan Naam as her parents meanwhile moved to Baan Naam. At about 19 years of age she migrated to Vientiane to study at the National University	Settler household. Parents arrived in Baan Naam in 2004, coming from Huaphan. Some children had first moved to the Vientiane region and parents followed their children.
Tuy*	48	304	F	3/4	14	in secondary	-	Father is prim school headteacher

						education		
Wang	3	23	F	5/6	15	quit in sec 1	At about age 16 she started to work for an aunt in Vientiane as a domestic and for her aunt's food selling business for some months. Next she moved to northeastern Thailand where she worked as a nanny for about three months. After some time in Baan Naam she again works for her aunt in Vientiane, but after some months, interspersed with weeks in Baan Naam, she moves on to work for another aunt in Vientiane	Father is born in north-eastern Thailand

Appendix 3: Questionnaire household survey (English)

Roy Huijsmans (October 2007)

Introduction

READ: (*read out to respondents*)

We would like to ask you some questions as part of a PhD research project conducted by Mr Roy Huijsmans who is a student at Durham University in the United Kingdom. The PhD research is about young people (aged 12-18) and growing up in the Lao PDR. The research is especially interested in what young people do in addition to, or instead of, going to school. The information that we collect will be used for academic purposes and is not related to any development project or government initiative.

In this interview we would like to learn more about the household situation of young people. For this we have randomly selected some households in this village, including yours. In this interview we would like to ask some questions about the people that live in this house, the economic situation of your household and some questions about the children and young people in this household.

Your participation would be very helpful to us, and we would greatly appreciate your cooperation. However, you do not have to participate if you do not want to. Also, if you do not want to answer some questions that is no problem, and the interview can be stopped at any time if you would like to.

Lastly, we will not write down your name so that your information will be kept anonymously. The interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. Would you be willing to cooperate?

INTERVIEW DETAILS:

Interview code [unique identifier]: Village   Unit   House

_____ - _____ - _____

Age of the interviewee:

Sex (cross out):   Male   Female

Position of interviewee in household:

Place of birth of the interviewee:

Ethnicity of interviewee and household members:

Religion of interviewee and household members:

Location of Interview, if not at respondent's house:

List all present during the interview:

Interview Date (d/m/y): _____
Time at Start of Interview: _____
Time at End of Interview: _____

Interview completed by (name and signature)

Additional Observations:

Reason if questionnaire is rejected:

Additional details:

Interview checked by, and date (d/m/y):

Call back required on questions:

Call back date (d/m/y) and time:

Data entry/coding by, and date (d/m/y):
Data entry/coding checked by, and date (d/m/y):

Basic Household Characteristics & Demographics

Read: *We would like to start the interview with some questions about the people that belong to your household.*

1. For how long have you lived in this village (circle and add years)?

   Since birth / Since marriage / ☐ years

2. For how long has your spouse lived in this village (circle and add years)?

   Since birth / Since marriage / ☐ years

3. How many people are there in your household, including yourself?

   ☐ people

4. Out of all the people in your household, how many people sleep and eat in this house everyday or almost everyday (including yourself?

   ☐ people

5. Are you, or any people in your household a member of an organisation, such as the Lao Women's Union, Youth Union, etc?

   a. ☐ (1)Yes (list person and organistion):

   b. ☐ (2)No

Read: *I would now like to ask you some questions about the people in your household that sleep and eat in your house everyday or almost everyday:*

6. Ask for all the people that belong to the household and sleep and eat in this house everyday or almost everyday the following questions (work through from 6a to 6h person by person – enter the information in Table A):

    a. What is his/her relation to the head of household? (use coding)

    b. Is he/she a boy/girl or man/woman (use coding)

    c. Is he/she a baby, child, youth, adult or elderly (read out list) (use coding)

    d. What is his/her exact age in October 2007? (enter age in years)

    e. What is his/her marital status? (use coding)

    f. What is his/her highest educational level? (use coding for highest level of education and enter the completed number of years)

    g. What is his/her main occupation? (use coding)

    h. Did he/she stay for work and/or study in another place over the last year (12 months)? If so, for how many months? (use coding and enter # of months)

Read: *I would now like to ask some questions about the people who belong to your household but who at the moment do NOT sleep and eat here, or only sometimes sleep and eat here?*

7. Are there any people who belong to this household but who do NOT at the moment sleep and eat here, or only sometimes sleep and eat here? If so, how many people?

    (if there are no 'absent household members' skip this section and continue with 'Household Well-Being')

    Yes: ☐ (1)   Number of people: ☐ people

    No: ☐ (2)

8. Ask for all the people that belong to the household but do NOT sleep and eat in this house, or only sometimes sleep and eat here the following questions (work through from 8a to 8n person by person – enter the information in Table A):

    a. What is his/her relation to the head of household? (use coding)

    b. Is he/she a boy/girl or man/woman (use coding)

    c. Is he/she a baby, child, youth, adult or elderly (read out list) (use coding)

    d. What is his/her exact age in October 2007? (enter age in years)

    e. What is his/her marital status? (use coding)

    f. What is his/her highest educational level? (use coding for highest level of education and enter the completed number of years)

    g. Write down his/her main occupation at the place where he/she currently is? (use coding)

In addition: (enter in separate table: table 1B). Note: Ensure that data is entered correctly. Information on person (B1) in Table B, must be entered under (C1) in table C.

    h. When did he/she leave for this current trip? (use coding)

    i. With whom did he/she travel? (use coding)

    j. Where does he/she currently stay? (use coding)

    k. When did you last hear from him/her? (use coding)

    l. How did you last hear from him/her? (use coding)

    m. Does he/she send home remittances? (use coding)

    n. How does he/she experience staying away? (use coding)

9. *The next question is an open question, tick and/or write down the answers given:*

List what he/she brings home when returning to the village, either for him/herself, or to others (as a gift or contribution) in the household (<u>more than one answer can be ticked</u>) (*Probe into material and non-material things*)

	Self	Gift
☐ (1) Money …………………………………………………	☐	☐

☐ (2) Jewellery ……………………………………….☐ ☐

☐ (3) Clothes ………………………………………☐ ☐

☐ (4) Mobile phone …………………………………☐ ☐

☐ (5) Motorbike …………………………………☐ ☐

☐ (6) electric household equipment ………………………☐ ☐

☐ (7) farming skills …………………………………☐ ☐

☐ (8) knowledge about business ………………………☐ ☐

☐ (9) other: _____..................☐ ☐

_____..................☐ ☐

_____................☐ ☐

_____................☐ ☐

☐ (10) nothing

☐ (98) no response

☐ (99) don't know

Household Well-being

Read: *Now I would like to ask you some questions about the current economic situation of this household.*

10. Do you own this house, or do you rent:

☐   1=own, 2=rent, 3=other

11. How many rooms does this house have?

☐ rooms

12. Describe the type of house (roof/floor/wall)- use coding

Main material used for:	1= brick/ tiles	2=cement/ concrete	3=iron	4=grass	5=wood	6=bamboo	7=other
a. Roof		■			■	■	
b. Floor			■	■		■	
c. Wall			■	■			

[some of these you may be completed without asking…if the interview is in or close to the house]

13. Does your household have the following? (tick corresponding column)

	yes	no	Quant.
CONSUMER GOODS			
a.Radio	1	2	
b.cd/vcd player	1	2	
c. TV black/white	1	2	

d. TV colour	1	2	
e. Mobile phone	1	2	
f. computer	1	2	
g. electric fan	1	2	
h. air conditioner	1	2	
i. refrigerator	1	2	
j. bicycle	1	2	
k. motorbike	1	2	
l. car	1	2	
m. tractor	1	2	
n. cart	1	2	
o. boat	1	2	
p. electric rice cooker	1	2	
q. sewing machine	1	2	
r. rice thrashing machine	1	2	
s. antenna (TV)			
t. satellite dish	1	2	
SERVICES			Pvt/shared
u. electricity	1	2	
v. private toilet	1	2	
w.water			
wi.pipe (nampapaa)	1	2	
wii.well	1	2	

14. Does your household produce enough rice for the whole year? (use coding)

[ ]

12=yes, enough for all 12 months; 1=one month short; 2=two months short; 3=months short; 4=months short; etc; 98=no response, 99=don't know

Question 15-18 (enter data in the table below)

15. Do you or your household own any land, cattle or poultry? (see table below-use coding)

16. Have you bought any land, cattle or poultry over the last five years? (see table below – use coding)

17. Have you sold any land, cattle or poultry in the last five years? (see table below-use coding)

18. Do you rent or sharecrop land? (see table below-use coding)

Questions 15-18								
	Q15 OWNS		Q16 BOUGHT		Q17 SOLD		Q18 RENT	
	1=own 2=don't own	Quantity (hectare / numbers)	1=yes 2=no	Quantity (hect / numbers)	1=yes 2=no	Quantity (hect / numbers)	1=yes 2=no	Quantity (hect / numbers)
Land								
Cattle								
poultry								

19. What is the households' average monthly income (including remittances)?

	Tick	code
Less than 100,000 kip	☐	1
100,000 – 200,000 kip	☐	2
200,000 – 300,000 kip	☐	3
300,000 – 400,000 kip	☐	4
400,000 – 500,000 kip	☐	5
500,000 – 1,000,000 kip	☐	6
1,000,000 – 1,500,000 kip	☐	7

	Tick	
1,500,000 – 2,000,000 kip	☐	8
More than 2,000,000 kip	☐	9
No response	☐	98
Don't know	☐	99

20. What is the households' average monthly expenditure (including education, health, etc)?

	Tick	code
Less than 100,000 kip	☐	1
100,000 – 200,000 kip	☐	2
200,000 – 300,000 kip	☐	3
300,000 – 400,000 kip	☐	4
400,000 – 500,000 kip	☐	5
500,000 – 1,000,000 kip	☐	6
1,000,000 – 1,500,000 kip	☐	7
1,500,000 – 2,000,000 kip	☐	8
More than 2,000,000 kip	☐	9
No response	☐	98
Don't know	☐	99

21. Does the household currently have any loans/credits that need to, or are currently being paid back (e.g. borrowing money, or pay off a motorbike)? (IF NOT, GO TO Q24)

Yes=1, No=2

22. What is the source of credit?

SOURCE	tick
Relatives	(1)
Friends	(2)

Money lender	(3)
Saving/credit group	(4)
Bank	(5)
other	(6)

23. What is the total amount that needs to be paid back (loans and consumption credits)?

…………………………..kip/baht/dollar (cross-out what is not appropriate)

24. How would you rank you and your household compared with the rest of the village?

status	Very poor	poor	average	Better off	Well off	rich	No response	Don't know
Tick								
code	1	2	3	4	5	6	98	99

25. Compared to five years ago, how would you assess the current situation of the household?

Status	better	worse	The same	No response	Don't know
Tick					
code	1	2	3	98	99

Explain:

Young people.

Read: *I would now like to ask some specific questions about the young people (anyone under 20 years) that belong to this household. The questions apply to both the young people who eat and stay here at the moment and those that at the moment don't eat and stay here (or only sometimes).*

Note: the answers to question 26-32 should be entered in Table D. Enter in the first column of Table D the corresponding code from Table A or C (e.g. A1, or B4).

26. Is he/she currently studying? (use coding)

27. Does he/she perform (or used to perform) well in school, getting good grades? (use coding)

28. Does he/she help in the household and/or with childcare? (use coding)

29. Does he/she help with other forms of work (e.g. trade, agricultural work)? (use coding)

30. Does he/she earn money through work? (use coding)

31. Do you give him/her any money, or do you receive any money from him/her? Enter the average amount in Kip per week

32. Which characteristics do best fit the young person? **(read out the options)** (use coding)

TABLE A: Household members that currently eat & sleep here (Q 6a-6h)										
COD E	Relation to household head 1=household head 2=spouse 3=own child (add a. for 1st born; b. for 2nd born; etc) 4=adopted child 5=grandchild 6=parent/parent in law 7=brother or sister 8=brother/sister in law 9=niece/nephew/ cousins 10=other family 11=other	Sex: 1=fema le 2=male	He/She is: 1= èè noi 2= dek noi 3= phuu bao-sao/wai nhum 4=adult 5=elderly 6=other 99= don't know	Age in years in Oct 2007	Marital status: 1=married 2=divorced /separated 3=single 4=engaged 5=widowed 99=don't know	Highest education level: 1=no education 2=primary prep. 3=primary education 4=lower secondary 5=higher secondary 6=college/vocational training 7=university 8=other 98=no response 99=don't know		Main occupation: 1=government 2=household & childcare 3=work in field on own land 4=agricultural worker for wage 5=market & trading 6=handicraft production 7=non-agricult worker 8=unemployed 9=student 10=leisure 98=no response 99=don't know	Did he/she stay at another place for work and/or study over the last year: 1=No 2=yes, for work 3=yes, for study 4=yes, for work&study 99=don't know	
						cod e	Completed number of years		cod e	Total # of months away
A1										

A2									
A3									
A4									
A5									
A6									
A7									
A8									
A9									
A10									

	TABLE B: Member of the household that currently DON'T eat & sleep here Q 8a-8g						
	8a Relation to household head 1=household head 2=spouse 3=own child (add a. for 1st born; b. for 2nd born; etc) 4=adopted child 5=grandchild 6=parent/parent in law 7=brother or sister 8=brother/sister in law 9=niece/nephew/ cousins 10=other family 11=other	8b sex 1=fe male 2=ma le	8c He/She is: 1= èè noi 2= dek noi 3= phuu bao-sao/wai nhum 4=adult 5=elderly 6=other 99= don't know	8d age in years in Oct 2007	8e Marital status: 1=married 2=divorced/separ ated 3=single 4=engaged 5=widowed 99=don't know	8f Highest education level: 1=no education 2=preschool 3=primary education 4=lower secondary 5=higher secondary 6=college/vocational training 7=university 8=other 98=no response 99=don't know	8g Write down main occupation engaged in when out of the village
						Co de / **Completed number of years**	
B1							
B2							
B3							
B4							
B5							

	8h When did he/she leave for current trip? 1=last week 2=one month ago 3=3 months ago 4=6 months ago 5=1 year ago 6=2 years ago 7=longer	8i With whom did he/she travel? 1= alone 2= with friends/peers 3= with family 4=with employers 5= other 98= no response 99= don't know	8j Where does he/she now stay? 1=Vientiane capital 2=other province in Laos 3=Isan (Thailand) 4=Thailand 5=elsewhere 98= no response 99= don't know	8k When did you last hear from him/her? 1=last week 2=one month ago 3=3 months ago 4=6 months ago 5=1 year ago 6=2 years ago 7=never 98= no response 99= no answer	8l How did you last hear from him/her? 1=he/she came back for visit 2=I have visited him/her 3=friends/relatives have visited him and told me 4=by telephone 5=by letter 6=other	8m Does he/she send home remittances? 1= yes, every week 2=yes, every month 3=yes, sometimes 4=no, never 98=no response 99=don't know	8n How does he/she experience staying away? 1=positively 2=so so 3=negatively 98=no response 99=don't know
TABLE C: Additional questions for members of the household that currently DON'T eat & sleep here (Q 8h-8n)							
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							

TABLE D: Specific questions about young people. Q26-Q32								
Corresponding code from TABLE A or B: e.g.: A1, or B3	Q26 Currently studying? 1=yes 2=no 3=work as main occupation but also studies	Q 27 Performs well/used to perform well in school? 1=yes 2=no 3=so, so 98=no response 99=don't know	Q 28 Does he/she help in the household & childcare? 1=yes, a lot everyday (more than 3 hours) 2=yes, everyday (1-3 hours) 3=yes, a little everyday (0-1 hours) 4=sometimes (3-4 times a week) 5=hardly (1-2 times a week) 6=never 98=no response 99=don't know	Q 29 Does he/she help with other work (trade, agriculture) 1=yes, a lot everyday (more than 3 hours) 2=yes, everyday (1-3 hours) 3=yes, a little everyday (0-1 hours) 4=sometimes (3-4 times a week) 5=hardly (1-2 times a week) 6=never 98=no response 99=don't know	Q 30 Does he/she earn money with work? 1=yes, everyday 2=yes, sometimes (3-4 times a week) 3=occasionally (1 time a week) 4=hardly ever (1-2 times per month) 5=never 98= no response 99= don't know	Q 31 Do you give the him/her any money, or do you receive any money from him/her? (indicate average amount – Kip/per week)	Q32 Which characteristic best fits the young person? *(choose one)* 1=active 2=strong 3=playful 4=responsible 5=helpful 6=clever 7=lazy 8=other: **Write down!** 98=no response 99=don't know
						Give	Receive	

310

Appendix 4: Questionnaire household survey (Lao)

ຮູບແບບຄຳຖາມທີ່ສາມາດນຳມາຂາມກ່ຽວກັບສະມາຊິກໃນຄອບຄົວ

(ເດືອນຕຸລາ 2007)

<u>ພາກສະເໜີ</u>

ອ່ານ: (ອ່ານໃຫ້ຜູ້ຕອບສະໝອງຟັງ)

ພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຍາກຈະຖາມບາງໆຢ່າງທີ່ຮອນຢູ່ໃນພາກສ່ວນຂອງໂຄງການຄົ້ນ
ຄວ້າຂອງນັກສຶກສາປະລິຍາເອກທີ່ດຳເນີນການໂດຍ. ທ່ານ ຣອຍ ຣູຣີຈິມນັສ ເຊິ່ງແມ່ນ
ນັກສຶກສາຢູ່ທີ່ມະຫາວິທະຍາໄລ ເດີແຮມ ແຫ່ງປະເທດອັງກິດ (ລາດສະອານາຈັກ)ນັກ
ຮຽນປະລິຍາເອກແມ່ນຄົ້ນຄວ້າກ່ຽວກັບໄວໜຸ່ມ (ທີ່ມີ ອາຍຸ 12-18 ປີ) ແລະ ເຕີບໃຫຍ່
ຢູ່ໃນປະເທດ ສາທາລະນະລັດ ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ ປະຊາຊົນລາວ. ໂດຍສະເພາະແລ້ວການ
ຄົ້ນຄວ້າແມ່ນສົນໃຈໃນເລື່ອງທີ່ອ່ຽໆໄປຂອງໄວໜຸ່ມເຮັດຫຍັງແທນການຮຽນໜັງສື. ຂໍ້ມູນ
ທີ່ພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າລວບລວມຈະໄດ້ນຳມາໃຊ້ຈຸດປະສິງຂອງສະຖາບັນການສຶກສາເທົ່າ
ນັ້ນ ແລະ ບໍ່ໄດ້ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງກັບໂຄງການພັດທະນາ ຫຼື ໂລເລີ່ມຂອງການຈັດຕັ້ງໃດໆທັງນັ້ນ.

ໃນການສຳພາດຄັ້ງນີ້ພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຍາກຮຽນຮູ້ເພີ່ມເຕີມກ່ຽວກັບສະພາບຂອງໄວ
ໜຸ່ມຢູ່ໃນທີ່ນີ້ພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຈະໄດ້ເລືອກຄອບຄົວຢູ່ໃນໝູ່ບ້ານນີ້ລວມທັງຄອບຄົວຂອງ
ທ່ານພ້ອມ,ໃນການສຳພາດເທື່ອນີ້ພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຍາກຈະຖາມບາງໆຄຳຖາມທີ່ກ່ຽວກັບ
ຜູ້ຄົນທີ່ດຳລົງຊີວິດໃນເຮືອນຫຼັງນີ້, ສະພາບການເສດຖະດິກຂອງຄົນໃນຄອບຄົວຂອງ
ທ່ານ ແລະ ຄຳຖາມບາງໆຢ່າງໆທີ່ກ່ຽວກັບເດັກນ້ອຍ ແລະ ໄວໜຸ່ມທີ່ຢູ່ໃນຄອບຄົວນີ້. ການ
ຮ່ວມມືຂອງພວກທ່ານຈະມີຜົນປະໂຫຍດຢ່າງໆຫຼວງຫຼາຍ ແລະ ພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຈາກຈະຊຳ
ຊີ້ນຊີມ, ຊີມເຊີຍການຮ່ວມມືຂອງພວກທ່ານຢ່າງໆເຕັມທີ່.ເຖິງຢ່າງໆໃດກໍ່ຕາມ, ທ່ານບໍ່ຈຳ
ເປັນຕ້ອງໃຫ້ການຮ່ວມມື, ຖ້າທາງພວກທ່ານບໍ່ຕ້ອງການ. ອີກຢ່າງໆໜຶ່ງຖ້າທາງພວກທ່ານ

ບໍ່ຕ້ອງການຍາກຕອບຄຳຖາມກໍ່ບໍ່ເປັນຫຍັງ ແລະ ການສຳພາດກໍ່ສາມາດຢຸດໄດ້ທຸກໆ
ເວລາທີ່ພວກທ່ານຕ້ອງການ.

    ໃນຕອນທ້າຍພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຈະບໍ່ຊ້ວຍຊີ້ພວກທ່ານລົງໃສ່ຄັ້ງນັ້ນຂໍ້ມູນຂອງພວກ
ທ່ານຈະຖືກຮັກສາໂດຍບໍ່ລະບຸຊື່ໃສ່. ໃນການສຳພາດຈະໃຊ້ເວລາປະມານ 30 ນາທີ
ຈິນກວ່າຈະສຳເລັດພວກທ່ານຈະຊ່ອຍໃຫ້ການຮ່ວມມືນຳພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ບໍ່ ?

ລາຍລະອຽດຂອງການສຳຫຼວດ

ແບບສອບຖາມ (ທິຂໍ້ໃນການສຳຫຼວດ)	ບ້ານ	ໝ່ວຍ	ເຮືອນເລກທີ
	———	——	———

ອາຍຸຂອງຜູ້ໃຫ້ສຳຫຼວດ

ເພດ: ຊາຍ   ຍິງ

ທີ່ຕັ້ງຂອງຄອບຄົວ:

ບ່ອນເກີດຂອງຜູ້ໃຫ້ສຳຫຼວດ:

ເຊື້ອຊາດ ແລະ ສະມາຊິກພາຍໃນບ້ານ:

ສາດສະໜາ ແລະ ເຮືອນເລກທີຂອງຜູ້ໃຫ້ສຳຫຼວດ:

ສະຖານທີ່ສຳຫຼວດ, ຖ້າບໍ່ໄດ້ຕອບຢູ່ໃນເຮືອນ :

ບັນທຶກລາຍລະອຍດລະຫວ່າງສິນທະນາ :

ວັນທີ, ເດືອນ,ປີ ຂອງການສຳຫຼວດ ....

ເວລາເລີ້ມຕັ້ງຂອງການສຳຫຼວດ....................................

ເວລາສຳຫຼວດສິ້ນສຸດ...

ການສຳຫຼວດທີ່ສິນບູນດ້ວຍ(ຊື່ ແລະ ລາຍເຊັນ)

ການສັງເກດກາຫານ ແລະ ເພິ້ມເຕີມຂໍ້ມູນ :

ເຫດຜົນທີ່ປະຕິເສດຄຳຖາມ :

<u>ລາຍລະອຽດເພີ້ມເຕີມ:</u>

ຜູ້ກວດກາງການສຳພາດ ແລະ ທີ່ (ວັນທີ / ເດືອນ / ປີ)

- ທວນຄືນຄຳຖາມທີ່ຕ້ອງການ

- ມັດໝາຍອິກ (ວັນທີ / ເດືອນ / ປີ)

- ຂໍ້ມູນການເຂົ້າ / ລະຫັດຜ່ານ ແລະ ວັນທີ / ເດືອນ / ປີ

- ຂໍ້ມູນການເຂົ້າ / ກວດລະຫັດຜ່ານດ້ວຍ ແລະ ວັນທີ / ເດືອນ / ປີ

ກ່ຽວກັບພື້ນຖານລັກສະນະສະເພາະແລະການສຶກສາຂອງຄົນໃນຄອບຄົວ.

<u>ອ່ານ:</u> *ພວກຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຍາກຈະເລີ່ມການສຳພາດກັບບາງຄຳຖາມທີ່ກ່ຽວກັບຄົນທີ່ເປັນຄົນ*

ຢູ່ໃນຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານ.

1. ເປັນເວລາດົນປານໃດແລ້ວທີ່ທ່ານໄດ້ດຳລົງຊີວິດຢູ່ໃນບ້ານນີ້ ?

(ຂີດວົງມົນ ແລະ ຂຽນປີໃສ່)

ຕັ້ງແຕ່ເກີດ / ຕັ້ງແຕ່ແຕ່ງງານ /... .. [   ] ປີ

2. ເປັນເວລາດົນປານໃດແລ້ວທີ່ຄູ່ສົມລົດຂອງທ່ານໄດ້ດຳລົງຊີວິດຢູ່ໃນບ້ານນີ້ ?

(ຂີດວົງມົນ ແລະ ຂຽນປີໃສ່)

ຕັ້ງແຕ່ເກີດ / ຕັ້ງແຕ່ແຕ່ງງານ /[   ] ປີ

3. ຢູ່ໃນຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານມີທັງໝົດຈັກຄົນລວມທັງເຈົ້າເອງ?

[   ] ຄົນ

4. ຢູ່ໃນຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານມີຈັກຄົນທີ່ກິນ ແລະ ນອນຢູ່ໃນເຮືອນທຸກາງນີ້, ຫຼືເກືອບທຸກາງນີ້ (ລວມທັງ ຕົວທ່ານພ້ອມ)?

[   ] ຄົນ

5. ຄົນໃດຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານເປັນສະມາຊິກຂອງອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງໃດບໍ່ ? (ເຊັ່ນອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງແມ່ຍິງ, ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງຊາວໜຸ່ມ, ແລະ ອື່ນໆ)
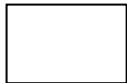
ກ. ▢ (1) ຖ້າເປັນ (ຂຽນໃສແຕ່ຊື່ ແລະ ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງ)
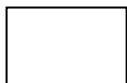
ຂ. ▢ (2) ຖ້າບໍ່ເປັນ

ອ່ານ: *ບັດນີ້ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຢາກຈະຖາມບາງຄຳຖາມກ່ຽວກັບຄົນທີ່ຢູ່ໃນຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານທີ່ນອນ ແລະ ກິນຢູ່ໃນເຮືອນທຸກໆມື້, ຫລືເຮືອນທຸກໆມື້ ?*

6. ແມ່ນຄົນໃດແດ່ທີ່ນອນ ແລະ ກິນຢູ່ໃນເຮືອນທຸກໆມື້, ຫຼືເຮືອນທຸກໆມື້ ?
(ລົງຂໍ້ມູນໃສ່ໃນເຄົ່າທຳອິດຂອງຕາຕະລາງ A) ແລະ ຖາມເທື່ອລະຄົນຈາກຂໍ້ A – H.

ກ. ຄວາມສຳພັນຂອງລາວຕໍ່ທ່ານຫົວໜ້າຄອບຄົວແມ່ນຫຍັງ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຂ. ລາວເດັກຊາຍ / ເດັກຍິງ ຫຼື ຜູ້ຊາຍ / ຜູ້ຍິງ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຄ. ລາວແອນ້ອຍ / ເດັກນ້ອຍ / ຊາວໜຸ່ມ, ຜູ້ບ່າວ, ຜູ້ສາວ / ຜູ້ໃຫຍ່ / ຜູ້ເຖົ້າ (ອ່ານລາຍຊື່)
(ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ງ. ອາຍຸຂອງລາວແມ່ນເທົ່າໃດແທ້ຢູ່ໃນເດືອນສິບ 2007 ?

ຈ. ສະຖານະການແຕ່ງງານຂອງລາວແມ່ນຫຍັງ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ສ. ລະດັບການສຶກສາສູງສຸດຂອງລາວແມ່ນຫຍັງ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຊ. ອາຍຸບຫຼ້າຂອງລາວແມ່ນຫຍັງ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຍ. ລາວໄດ້ເຮັດວຽກ ຫຼື ຮຽນຢູ່ແທ່ງອັນຕະຫລອດປີຜ່ານມາ (12 ເດືອນ)

 (ໃຊ້ລະຫັດລົງຂອງເດືອນ)

ອ່ານ: *ບັດນີ້ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຢາກຈະຖາມບາງຄຳຖາມກ່ຽວກັບຄົນທີ່ຢູ່ໃນຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານທີ່ແຕ່ປະຈຸ ບັນນີ້ບໍ່ໄດ້ນອນ ແລະ ກິນຢູ່ທີ່ນີ້ ຫຼື ພຽງແຕ່ມານອນຫຼື ກິນຢູ່ທີ່ນີ້ເປັນບາງຄັ້ງຄາວເທົ່ານັ້ນບໍ່ ?*

7. ມີຄົນທີ່ເປັນຄົນໃດຄອບຄົວແຕ່ງງານນີ້ບຸກຄົນເຫຼົ່ານີ້ບໍ່ໄດ້ກິນ, ນອນຢູ່ທີ່ນີ້, ພຽງແຕ່ກິນນອນຢູ່ທີ່ນີ້ ເປັນບາງຄັ້ງຄາວເທົ່ານັ້ນ ?

ມີຈັກຄົນ?

(ຖ້າບໍ່ມີເຮັດໃຫ້ຂາດໄປ ຜ່ານຂ້າມຂໍ້ນີ້ໄປ ແລະ ສືບຕໍ່ກັບສະມາຊິກໃນຄອບຄົວທີ່ມີຢູ່)

ມີຈຳນວນຄົນ 　　　　 ຄົນ
ບໍ່ມີ

8. ແມ່ນໃຜທີ່ເປັນສະມາຊິກໃນຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານທີ່ປະຈຸບັນນີ້ ບໍ່ໄດ້ນອນ ແລະ ກິນຢູ່ໃນເຮືອນນີ້, ຫຼືນອນ ແລະ ກິນຢູ່ທີ່ນີ້ເປັນບາງຄັ້ງຄັ້ງເທົ່ານັ້ນ ? (ແລະ ຖາມແຕ່ລະບຸກຄົນ)

ກ. ຄວາມສຳພັນຂອງລາວຕໍ່ທົວຫ້າຄອບຄົວແມ່ນຫຍັງ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຂ. ລາວເດັກຊາຍ / ເດັກຍິງ ຫລື ຜູ້ຊາຍ / ຜູ້ຍິງ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຄ. ລາວແອນ້ອຍ / ເດັກນ້ອຍ / ຂາວໜຸ່ມ, ຜູ້ບ່າວ, ຜູ້ສາວ / ຜູ້ໃຫຍ່ / ຜູ້ເຖົ້າ (ອ່ານລາຍຊື່)

318

(ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ງ. ອາຍຸຂອງລາວແມ່ນເທົ່າໃດແທ້ຢູ່ໃນເດືອນສິບ 2007 ?

ຈ. ສະຖານະການແຕ່ງງານຂອງລາວແມ່ນຫຍັງ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ສ. ລະດັບການສຶກສາສູງສຸດຂອງລາວແມ່ນຫຍັງ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຊ. ອາຊີບຫຼັກຂອງລາວແມ່ນຫຍັງ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຍ. ລາວໄດ້ເຮັດວຽກ ຫຼື ຮຽນຢູ່ແຫ່ງອື່ນຕະຫຼອດປີຜ່ານມາ (12 ເດືອນ)
(ໃຊ້ລະຫັດລົງຂອງເດືອນ)

ສິ່ງເພີ່ມເຕີມ: ເຂົ້າໄປໃນຕາຕະລາງທີ່ແບ່ງອອກຈາກກັບຕາຕະລາງ C ໝາຍເຫດ: ຕ້ອງແນ່ໃຈວ່າຂໍ້ມູນຕົວເລກທີ່ (B1) ຕາຕະລາງ B ຕ້ອງຕື່ມໃສ່ຢູ່ຫ້ອງ (C1) ໃນຕາຕະລາງ C.

ຄ. ເມື່ອໃດທີ່ລາວໄດ້ເດີນທາງໄປໃນເທື່ອນີ້ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຕ. ເດີນທາງໄປກັບໃຜ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ຖ. ປະຈຸບັນນີ້ລາວພັກຢູ່ໃສ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ທ. ຄັ້ງສຸດທ້າຍທີ່ທ່ານໄດ້ຮັບຂ່າວຈາກລາວແມ່ນເມື່ອໃດ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ນ. ເຈົ້າໄດ້ຮັບຂ່າວຄັ້ງສຸດທ້າຍຈາກລາວແນວໃດ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ບ. ລາວໄດ້ສິ່ງເງິນມາບ້ານບໍ່ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

ປ. ປະສົບການທີ່ຢູ່ທ່າງໄກບ້ານຂອງລາວເປັນແນວໃດ ? (ໃສ່ລະຫັດ)

9. *ຄຳຖາມຕໍ່ໄປແມ່ນຄຳຖາມທີ່ສາມາດຕອບໄດ້ຫຼາກຫຼາຍແບບ, ໃຊ້ເຄື່ອງໝາຍຂີດ ແລະ ວ່າ ຂຽນຄຳຕອບທີ່ໄດ້ມາລົງໃສ່ໄວ້:*

ເມື່ອລາວກັບມາບ້ານລາວໄດ້ນຳເອົາຫຍັງມາສູ່ໝູ່ບ້ານແດ່ທັງສອງຢ່າງຄືສຳລັບຕົວລາວ, ຫຼືສຳລັບຄົນ

ໃນຄອບຄົວ (ໃຫ້ເປັນຂອງຂ້ອນຫຼືການຊ່ວຍເຫລືອ) ໃຫ້ແກ່ຄອບຄົວ (ໝາຍວ່າ

ໜຶ່ງຄຳຕອບກໍ່ສາມາດທິກໄດ້ ?) ໃຫ້ກວດສອບວັດຖຸ ແລະ ສິ່ງຂອງທີ່ບໍ່ແມ່ນວັດຖຸ!

	ຕົນເອງ	ຂອງຂວັນ
-- (1) –ເງິນ	-----	-----
-- (2) –ເຄື່ອງປະດັບ	-----	-----
-- (3) –ເຄື່ອງນຸ່ງ	-----	-----
-- (4) –ໂທລະສັບມືຖື	-----	-----
-- (5) -ລົດຈັກ	-----	-----
-- (6) –ເຄື່ອງໃຊ້ໄຟຟ້າ	-----	-----
-- (7) -ຄວາມສາມາດໃນການເຮັດໄຮ່ນາ	-----	-----
-- (8) -ຄວາມຮູ້ກ່ຽວກັບທຸລະກິດ	-----	-----
-- (9) -ສິ່ງອື່ນໆ:		
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-- (10) ບໍ່ມີຫຍັງ

-- (11) ບໍ່ມີຄຳຕອບ

-- (12) ບໍ່ຮູ້

ສະພາບການເປັນຢູ່ຂອງຄົນໃນຄອບຄົວ

ອ່ານ:

ບັດນີ້ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຍາກຈະຖາມບາງຄຳຖາມກ່ຽວກັບສະພາບເສດຖະກິດປະຈຸບັນຂອງເຮືອນຫລັງນີ້

10. ເຈົ້າເປັນເຈົ້າຂອງເຮືອນຫຼັງນີ້ບໍ່ ? ຫຼື ທ່ານເຊົ່າຢູ່ ?

1= ເປັນເຈົ້າຂອງ   2= ເຊົ່າຢູ່   3= ອື່ນໆ

11. ເຮືອນຫຼັງນີ້ມີຈັກຫ້ອງ ?

ຫ້ອງ

12. ຈົ່ງເວົ້າເຖິງຊະນິດຂອງເຮືອນ (ຫລັງຄາ / ພື້ນ / ຝາ) –ໃຫ້ລະອັດ

ວັດຖຸທີ່ໃຊ້ເປັນສ່ວນໃຫຍ່	ດິນ/ໂຄນ	ໄມ້ປ່ອງ	ໄມ້	ໂລຫະ	ກະ	ກະເບື້ອງ	ອື່ນໆ
ຫຼັງຄາ							
ພື້ນ							
ຝາ							

13. ຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານມີສິ່ງຂອງດັ່ງຕໍ່ໄປນີ້ບໍ່ ? (ເພີ່ມທິວຂໍ້ທີ່ກົງກັນ)

	ມີ	ບໍ່ມີ	ຈຳນວນ
<u>ສິນຄ້າຂອງຜູ້ຊົມໃຊ້</u>			
ກ. ວິທະຍຸ			
ຂ. ເຄື່ອງສາຍຊີດີ			
ຄ. ໂທລະທັດຂາວດຳ			
ງ. ໂທລະທັດສີ			
ຈ. ໂທລະສັບມືຖື			
ສ. ຄອມພິວເຕີ້			
ຊ. ພັດລົມ			
ຍ. ແອເຢັນ			
ດ. ຕູ້ເຢັນ			
ຕ. ລົດຖີບ			
ຖ. ລົດຈັກ			
ທ. ລົດໃຫຍ່			
ນ. ລົດໄຖນາ			
ບ. ລໍ້, ກວຽນ			
ປ. ເຮືອ			
ຜ. ໝໍ້ຫຸງເຂົ້າໄຟຟ້າ			
ຝ. ຈັກຫຍິບເຄື່ອງ			
ພ. ຈັກປັ່ນເຂົ້າ			
ຟ. ຫຼ້າວັງແຕ່ນ			

	ມີ	ບໍ່ມີ	ຈຳນວນ

322

ม. จาມດາວກຸ່ມ			
<u>ການບໍລິການ</u>			*ສ່ວນຕົວ/ຮ່ວມກັນ*
ຍ. ໄຟຟ້າ			
ລ. ທ້ອງນ້ຳສ່ວນຕົວ			
ວ. ນ້ຳ: ປະປາ:			
ວ1. ນ້ຳປະປາ:			
ວ2. ນ້ຳສ້າງ			

14. ຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານຜະລິດເຂົ້າພຽງພໍກິນຕະຫຼອດປີບໍ? (ໃຫ້ລະຫັດ)

┌────────┐
│   │
└────────┘

12= ພໍ   1= ບໍ່ພໍໃນໜຶ່ງເດືອນ   2= ສອງເດືອນບໍ່ພໍ   3= ສາມເດືອນບໍ່ພໍ

4= ບໍ່ພໍແລະອື່ນໆ   98= ບໍ່ຕອບ   99= ບໍ່ຮູ້

ຄຳถาມ 15 – 18 (ຕື່ມຂໍ້ມູນຕົວເລກໃສ່ໃນຕາຕະລາງຂ້າງລຸ່ມ)

15. ທ່ານ ແລະ ຄອບຄົວຂອງທ່ານເປັນເຈົ້າທີ່ດິນ, ຫຼືຄອາຍ ຫຼື ເປັດໄກ່ບໍ່ ?

16 ທ່ານໄດ້ຊື້ທີ່ດິນ, ຫຼືຄອາຍເປັດໄກ່ຕະຫຼອດທ້າຍປີຜ່ານມາບໍ່ ?

17. ທ່ານໄດ້ຂາຍທີ່ດິນ, ຫຼືຄອາຍເປັດໄກ່ຕະຫຼອດທ້າຍປີຜ່ານມາບໍ່ ?

18. ທ່ານໄດ້ເຊົ່ານາ ຫຼືວ່າເຮັດນາແລ້ວເອົາເຂົ້າໃຫ້ເຈົ້າຂອງນາບໍ່ ?

ຄຳຖາມຂໍ້ 15 - 18							
	ຄຳຖາມ 15		ຄຳຖາມ 16		ຄຳຖາມ 17		ຄຳຖາມ 18	
	1= ເປັນເຈົ້າຂອງ 2= ບໍ່ເປັນເຈົ້າຂອງ	ປະລິມານ (ໃນຕົວເລກ)	1= ໄດ້ຊື້ 2= ບໍ່ໄດ້ຊື້	ປະລິມານ (ໃນຕົວເລກ)	1= ໄດ້ຂາຍ 2= ບໍ່ໄດ້ຂາຍ	ປະລິມານ (ໃນຕົວເລກ)	1= ໄດ້ເຂົ້າ 2= ບໍ່ໄດ້ເຂົ້າ	ປະລິມານ (ໃນຕົວເລກ)
ທີ່ດິນ								
ງົວຄວາຍ								
ເປັດໄກ່								

19. ລາຍໄດ້ຂອງຄອບຄົວຕາມປົກກະຕິຂອງເດືອນແມ່ນເທົ່າໃດ

(ລວມທັງທີ່ຫັກສິ່ງມາໃຫ້) ?

ຕ່ຳກວ່າ 100,000 ກີບ   ---(1)

100,000 - 200,000 ກີບ   ---(2)

200,000 - 300,000 ກີບ   ---(3)

300,000 - 400,000 ກີບ   ---(4)

400,000 - 500,000 ກີບ   ---(5)

500,000 - 1,000,000 ກີບ   ---(6)

1,000,000 - 1,500,000 ກີບ   ---(7)

1,500,000 - 2,000,000 ກີບ   ---(8)

2,000,000 ຫຼາຍກ່ວາ   ---(9)

ບໍ່ມີຄຳຕອບ   ---(98)

ບໍ່ຮູ້   ---(99)

20. ການໃຊ້ຈ່າຍປະຈຳເດືອນຂອງຄອບຄົວປົກກະຕິແລ້ວເທົ່າໃດ ?

(ລວມທັງຈ່າຍໃນການຮໍ່າຮຽນ, ຄ່າປິ່ນປົວສຸຂະພາບ, ອື່ນໆ)

ຕໍ່າກ່ວາ 100,000 ກີບ   ---(1)

100,000 - 200,000 ກີບ   ---(2)

200,000 - 300,000 ກີບ   ---(3)

300,000 - 400,000 ກີບ   ---(4)

400,000 - 500,000 ກີບ   ---(5)

500,000 - 1,000,000 ກີບ   ---(6)

1,000,000 - 1,500,000 ກີບ   ---(7)

1,500,000 - 2,000,000 ກີບ   ---(8)

2,000,000 ຫຼາຍກ່ວາ   ---(9)

ບໍ່ມີຄຳຕອບ   ---(98)

ບໍ່ຮູ້   ---(99)

21. ປະຈຸບັນຄອບຄົວມີເງິນຕ້ອງການທີ່ຈະຕ້ອງຈ່າຍຄືນບໍ່ ?

(ຕົວຢ່າງ: ຢືມເງິນເພື່ອຈ່າຍຄ່າລົດຈັກ) ຖ້າບໍ່ມີໄປຫາຄຳຖາມ 24

![checkbox]   1= ມີ   2= ບໍ່ມີ

22. ແຫ່ງທີ່ມາຂອງເງິນມາກຈາກໃສ, ຢູ່ໃສ?

ທີ່ມາ	ຂີດເຂົາ
ຍາດພີ່ນ້ອງ	(1)
ໝູ່ເພື່ອນ	(2)
ຄົນໃຫ້ຢືມ	(3)
ທ້ອນມ້ຽນ / ກຸ່ມທ້ອນເງິນ	(4)
ທະນາຄານ	(5)
ອື່ນໆ	(6)

23. ຈຳນວນເງິນທີ່ຈະຕ້ອງຈ່າຍຄືນເທົ່າໃດ?

----------------------------- ກີບ / ບາດ / ໂດລາ (ຂ້າອອກ ຖ້າບໍ່ເໝາະສົມ)

24. ທ່ານຢາກສົມທຽບຖານະຂອງຄອບຄົວທ່ານກັບຄອບຄົວໃນໝູ່ບ້ານແນວໃດ?

ສະຖານຯ	ທຸກຫຼາຍ	ທຸກ	ປານກາງ	ດີກວ່າ	ດີຫຼາຍ	ລຳລອຍ	ບໍ່ມີຄຳ ຕອບ	ບໍ່ຮູ້
ຂີດເອົາ								
ລະຫັດ	1	2	3	4	5	6	98	99

25 ສົມທຽບ 5 ປີຜ່ານມາ, ທ່ານຢາກປະເມີນສະພາບປະຈຸບັນຂອງຄອບຄົວແນວໃດ?

ສະຖານຯ	ດີຂຶ້ນ	ທຸດລົງ	ຄືເກົ່າ	ບໍ່ຕອບ	ບໍ່ຮູ້
ຂີດເອົາ					
ລະຫັດ	1	2	3	98	99

ໄວໜຸ່ມ

ໝາຍເຫດ: ຄຳຕອບຂອງໆຄຳຖາມ 26 - 32 ຕ້ອງຕື່ມໃສ່ໃນຕາຕະລາງ D (ສິ່ງທີ່ວຂື້ທຳອິດສາມາດ ກ່າຍຈາກຕາຕະລາງໆ ທຳອິດເຂົ້າໄປໃນຕາຕະລາງໆ D ເຊິ່ງມີລະຫັດທີ່ຄືກັນຈາກຕາຕະລາງໆ A ຫຼື C: A1 ຫຼື C2)

26. ປະຈຸບັນລາວກຳລັງໆຮຽນ ? ໃຊ້ລະຫັດ

27. ລາວປະຕິບັດ (ຫຼື ເຄີຍປະຕິບັດ) ຕົນໃນໂຮງຮຽນດີບໍ່ ? ໃຊ້ລະຫັດ

28. ລາວໄດ້ຊ່ອຍຄອບຄົວໃນການເບິ່ງແຍ່ງໆເດັກນ້ອຍບໍ່ ? ໃຊ້ລະຫັດ

29. ລາວໄດ້ຊ່ອຍວຽກບໍ່ ? (ຕົວຢ່າງໆ: ວຽກການຄ້າ, ການກະເສດ) ໃຊ້ລະຫັດ

30. ລາວໄດ້ເງິນຈາກການເຮັດວຽກບໍ່ ? ໃຊ້ລະຫັດ

31. ທ່ານໄດ້ໃຫ້ເງິນກັບລາວ ຫຼື ໄດ້ຮັບຈາກພວກເຂົາບໍ່ ? ໃຊ້ລະຫັດ

32. ອັນໃດການກະທຳທີ່ດີທີ່ສຸດປະຈຳຂອງໆຄົນໄວໜຸ່ມ ? ອ່ານການເລືອກ ແລະ

(ໃຊ້ລະຫັດ)

(1= ຄ່ອນ�")ແລ້ວ, 2= ແຂງແຮ"), 3= ມັນຍອກ, 4= ມີຄວາມຮັບຜິດຊອບ, 5= ມີປະໂຫຍດ, 6=
ສະຫງາດ, 7= ຂີ້ຄ້ານ, 8= ອື່ນໆ (ສ"າງລາຍຂໍ້)

Appendix 5: Procedure for analysis of household survey data

The following steps were performed in identifying young migrants from the survey data.

1. All individual records (n=363) were selected and exported to MS Excel.

2. In MS Excel all records recorded as 'present' and 'not mobile' were removed.

3. A total of 114 records (52 male, 62 female) remained, 98 (40 male, 58 female) records of household members recorded as 'absent' at the time of the survey, 16 (12 male, 4 female) recorded as 'mobile over the past 12 months' but currently 'present', which includes two records of villagers who were recorded as currently 'absent' *and* 'mobile over the past 12 months'.[75] These two records belong to an adult couple who run a private business and for this reason regularly spent some weeks away from the research village. For this reason, these two records are included amongst the 'mobile' ones, making this a total of 16.

4. The 98 household members recorded as absent comprise 59 records of individuals who are in terms of social age regarded as adults (23 male, 36 female), and 37 (17 male, 20 female) who are in terms of social age regarded as youth. In addition, in two cases (both female) social age was given as 'unknown'. In terms of chronological age the absent male household members ranged from 13 to 50 years, and the absent female household members from 15 to 40 years of age.

5. As observed in footnote 75, some of the 'absent' records belong, in fact, to children who have moved out of the natal household due to marriage. Since this research is primarily interested in work related migration, the 'absent' records that are recorded to be living somewhere else following marriage are deleted.[76] Out of the 40 'absent' records of male household members, 17 are deleted since the main motivation for leaving the natal household seems to have been marriage.[77] The same is the case with 30 out of the 58 'absent' records of female household

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[75] Note that the term 'household member' here also includes children who have moved out of the natal household for purposes of marriage.

[76] The methodological problem is that migration may have started for purposes of work, and followed by marriage. For relatively recent migrants (those who have migrated within the past few years) it could be established whether it was marriage or work that constituted the original motivation to leave the natal household, yet, in cases with a longer history this was difficult.

[77] Note that one case (20/110) subsequently divorced; hence current marital status is divorced.

members. In total 51 records remained belonging to individuals who had left their natal household in the first place for non-marriage related motivations. Amongst these records, 12 (five male, seven female) have a marital status of 'married', of them, most found a marriage partner at migration destination.

6. Of the remaining 51 absent records, 28 belong to female household members who range in terms of chronological age from 15 to 40 years of age (in terms of social age: eight adults, 18 youth, and two unknown). 23 Records belong to male household members, with a chronological age range running from 13 to 50 years of age (in terms of social age: seven adults, 16 youth).

7. The 16 household members recorded as mobile comprise nine records of individuals who are in terms of social age regarded as adults (six male, three female), five (all male) who are in terms of social age regarded as youth, and two (one male, one female) who are in terms of social age regarded children. In terms of chronological age the absent male household members ranged from seven to 45 years, and the absent female household members from 12 to 40 years of age.

8. The 51 remaining 'absent' records stem from 31 different households, and the 16 mobile records from 11 different households. The 'absent' and mobile records combined (67 records in total) stem from 39 different households (three households have mobile and absent members).

Appendix 6: Notes on methodology

Obtaining access to a Lao research site: Formal and informal approaches

At the time of initiating the research in 2007, no formal application process existed for foreign researchers wishing to obtain research permission for conducting research in the Lao PDR. Lachapelle (2008) even claims that prior to 2008 Lao authorities did not issue research visas at all, and that, therefore, foreign researchers resorted to either doing research illegally on the basis of a tourist visa or got a work visa first and then tried to obtain official researcher status. Therefore, in an attempt to obtain formal research permission I relied on informal connections within the National University of Laos (NUoL), without knowing precisely, and becoming clear about, whether obtaining official research permission was actually possible and if so how this may be achieved.

The informal path of gaining access to a research site ran through International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) whose work overlapped with my research interests.[78] The motivation of walking this informal path followed from the idea that working under the wings of an INGO or IGO with an established presence in the field provides access to a research site without going through the formal process of research authorisation. This is indeed a strategy followed by many academics conducting research in the Lao PDR. Moreover, this strategy gained in attractiveness when I obtained a long-term multiple entry visa for the Lao PDR on the basis of my wife's employment in the country. Although this visa did not allow for any work, including research, it resolved a main bureaucratic obstacle and an important prerequisite for the research; prolonged stay in the Lao PDR.

When I arrived in the Lao PDR in mid 2007 neither the formal path nor the informal had led to any meaningful results and I was still without a research site despite months of trying. On the other hand, various INGOs and one IGO had shown interest in my research proposal and were willing to explore possibilities of collaboration. This interest was facilitated by a publication in a local research journal (Huijsmans 2007) and a presentation about my research interests in an INGO and IGO network meeting.

At first sight, both foreign research students, and INGOs and IGOs stand to benefit from research collaboration. As Table 1 illustrates, however, the specific benefits for research

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[78] At the time of conducting the research, Lao citizens were not allowed to establish NGOs. Hence, the only NGOs operating in the Lao PDR were international ones. These INGOs were however all required to work in partnership with a Lao governmental body, often a ministry or a mass-organisation.

collaboration may be quite different on the part of the INGO or IGO, and the foreign research student. Furthermore, despite the potential for mutual benefits there are also various areas of potential risks concerning research collaboration between INGOs and IGOs and foreign research students. Such areas of risks explain why initial enthusiasm on part of both INGOs and IGOs and foreign research students may not necessarily lead to actual research collaboration, and may, in fact, even quickly dampen as I experienced on several occasions.

Table 1: Working with INGOs & IGOs

	Areas of possible benefit	Areas of risk
INGO	*Quality research at little or no cost. *PhD researcher may be asked to address outstanding research needs of the INGO. *Involvement of PhD researcher gives academic credibility to INGO activities, which is beneficial for advocacy, fundraising, and negotiation with partners. *Possibility of skill transfer from PhD researcher to INGO staff regarding research methods and practice. *PhD researcher may be willing to contribute to other activities as well, e.g. writing/editing funding proposals.	*Bringing in additional foreigners may conflict with conditions set out in MoU with Lao government partners, or complicate future MoU negotiations. *Researcher gains close insight in working of INGO and may write about this critically (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 65, 75).[79] *Researcher's presence or work may affect project activities, and/or relations with local authorities and other subjects negatively.

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[79] It is probably for this reason that UNICEF representatives objected to my participation in an informal INGO network on child protection to which I was introduced by representatives of another INGO (Research Diary 29/10/2007 and 13/2/2008).

PhD researcher	*INGO provides and facilitates access to field sites *It may ease establishing rapport with research subjects if the INGO has a long and positive relation with the research sites and research subjects *Possible access to locally relevant secondary material such as baseline studies conducted by the INGO, unpublished reports, and experiences and reflections on INGO staff may enrich the research. *It may be a way around gaining official research permission. *It may lead to job opportunities such as consultancies with the host-INGO or other INGOs.	*Research locality dictated by INGO, which may be impractical or costly for the PhD researcher. *Visiting or staying in research site independent of INGO is usually not possible. Hence, INGO logistics press heavily on research agenda. *INGOs may have poor relations with local communities and being associated with the organisation would in such cases affect the research negatively. *INGOs agenda and perception of local realities may be pressed on the research agenda. *Questions over ownership of data.

Official research permission from the Lao government poses, however, its very own sets of dilemmas. Most importantly, once research is formally authorised the foreign researcher has to work with a Lao counterpart. This counterpart has to accompany the foreign researcher in the field and the researcher bears responsibility for all his/her expenses in addition to a per diem. Furthermore, working with a counterpart also complicates the logistics of research. All this may be well worth it in case the appointed counterpart has a genuine interest in the research project; however, an uninterested or obstructive counterpart may cause real problems for the research.

Discussions about research collaboration reached advanced stages with two INGOs and one IGO. With one INGO this included a ten-day field visit to explore the possibility of research collaboration in practice. However, for a combination of reasons summarised in Table 1, actual research collaboration never materialised. Progress of obtaining research permission through formal channels looked equally bleak till I suddenly received a letter from the Lao Ministry of Education (MoE), stating that the MoE had formally accepted my research proposal and that NUoL was pleased to accept me as a foreign researcher. However, this letter did not constitute formal research permission but merely a recommendation of MoE and NUoL to the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) which ultimately decides on research permission concerning foreign researchers. Officials at

NUoL confided, however, that formal approval from MoFA was likely to take some time and I was, therefore, informally advised to simply start with the research without waiting for MoFA authorisation.

Choice of research village: Pragmatics and intuitions

The letter from NUoL/MoE never received a response from MoFA. This was in part probably because I have never followed up with MoFA in person and kindly declined help from Lao colleagues with influential connections with MoFA personnel. I decided not to push this official path of obtaining research permission further as I had meanwhile obtained informal access to a Lao research site. Further, in order to protect the frail basis on my informal access to a research village I continued to maintain good relations with NUoL.

Access to a research site was organised through a Lao organisation that I had come to know because they were working in a Lao district bordering with Thailand which was known to have a high incidence of migration by young people.[80] The district's proximity to Vientiane and the reported prevalence of migration by young Lao made this district an attractive location for my research. Rather unexpectedly, this organisation was more than happy to introduce me to this district and facilitate research access. In contrast with the INGOs and IGO with whom I was in touch earlier, this organisation did not work on issues directly relating to my research proposal. Hence, the areas of risks and areas of possible conflict identified in Table 1 were in this particular collaboration considerably reduced. In addition, as a local organisation led by Lao nationals, this organisation was much more flexible and adapt to dealing with local Lao authorities than the top-heavy INGOs and IGOs with whom I had earlier discussed possibilities of research collaboration.

Within a matter of days I joined staff from this organisation on a trip to the district and was confronted, rather unprepared, with the daunting question of which village(s) I would like to select for my research. Since things had moved with great speed, a choice for research village had to be made on the basis of intuition, pragmatics and easily observable criteria rather than on grounds of background documentation.

Conducting research in the village that functioned as the district centre I dismissed out of fear that working in too close a range to authorities would sooner or later complicate matters. I also decided against working in any of the villages in which the Lao organisation

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[80] This was not an INGO, but a Lao organisation working under the umbrella of several INGOs. Moreover, with this organisation I had not had any earlier discussions on possible research collaboration.

that had introduced me to the district ran projects in order to reduce the risk of any subsequent conflict of interests. Further, research in very small or hard-to-reach villages was rejected on practical and sample grounds. Hence, what remained were a number of larger villages located on the Mekong River. As only one of these villages had a full secondary school, which I figured would add a useful additional dimension to the research; I decided to select this village as a research site. In practice this meant that over a cup of Lao coffee I had selected a village about which I knew hardly anything as the site for intensive qualitative research for the coming year.

With the name of the research village in mind and a translated version of the MoE/NUoL letter in hand we entered the district Women's Union office, which was the official partner of the Lao organisation which had so far facilitated access to the district. The district Women's Union proved very helpful and they quickly drafted an official introductory letter to Women's Union representative of the proposed research village with the request to further facilitate my research. In the political structure of the Lao PDR, any request coming from higher level offices is as good as a command. Hence, the local Women's Union representative and the village headman of the proposed research site had little other choice than to welcome us and to facilitate the research.

Conducting an unauthorised research: Consequences, concerns and advantages
When I travelled for the second time to the district two weeks later, and again in the company of the Lao organisation referred to above we went directly to the proposed research village where the letter from the district Women's Union had meanwhile made its round. In the house of the village headman I introduced the research to a handful of village authorities over some local brew. This exercise was repeated formally a few hours later in the local monastery, this time without the brew but with all village delegates present including unit heads, party representatives, representatives of mass-organisations, and representatives of local military and village security units. At this meeting the village formally granted permission for conducting research without much questions being asked and the unit-heads were given the responsibility to facilitate access to households within each unit. The actual research commenced the very next day, largely because I feared that the village authorities might change their mind concerning their permission for my research. After all, the research still lacked formal authorisation.

Conducting fieldwork without formal authorisation threw up a range of issues. First, it created a pressure to complete the fieldwork relatively quickly in order to minimise the

chances of running into problems with authorities. This meant that research was conducted without interspersing it with some wise breaks for analysis and reflection. In addition, lack of official research status meant that I took extreme care when talking about illegal practices, sensitive issues, or opinions on political issues in order to avoid possible problems, particularly in the early stages of the research process. Since much of the research focussed precisely on these sorts of topics this constituted a considerable obstacle. This problem was to some extent resolved by time and by building rapport. However, some respondents remained very quiet about certain issues that seemed to be of interest, yet I didn't want to jeopardise the overall research by probing to explicitly into such matters.

There are also ethical concerns related to working without formal research permission. Most importantly, involving villagers and village authorities in an unauthorised research means that they become complicit in an illegal activity. Moreover, whereas I stand to gain from the research and I am aware of the lack of authorisation of the research, this did not necessarily hold for the villagers participating in the research. This ethical problem has remained and since I did not wish to give up the hard-won access to the research village I opted for a second best solution; mitigation of possible risks for villagers.

A main strategy for risk mitigation was to keep NUoL staff informed about the research and to conform to official regulations to the extent possible. For this purpose I decided to pay the US$200 membership fee to the Faculty of Social Sciences and invited NUoL officials to come to the research village when the research was formally introduced to the villagers.[81] Fortunately or unfortunately NUoL officials were not able to make it to the research village, but at least they were clearly aware of where I was working and I kept them up-to-date on further developments through a range of informal visits to NUoL, particularly in the early stages of the research.

A similar strategy was followed with regard to district Women's Union officials, village authorities, and the Lao organisation that had facilitated the research. In the research village, for example, I always stayed the night at the house of the village head and kept him and other local authorities updated on the events of the day and always made it a point to ask for permission for each subsequent research activity. By spending the night in the house of the village head I voluntarily placed myself and the research team under some

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[81] As I understood, foreign researchers are required to pay a US$200 membership fee and a US$500 deposit fee to NUoL as part of the formal process for obtaining research permission. The US$500 deposit is returned upon submission of a completed thesis. Yet, since I never obtained formal research permission I was told that I did not have to pay this deposit.

level of surveillance and local authorities thus had a relatively clear idea of what the research was about.

The district women's union and the Lao organisation that had facilitated access to the research village were also kept in the information loop through several brief visits. In addition, I assisted the Lao organisation in proposal writing and participated in some of their workshops both as an expression of appreciation for their efforts as well as to maintain the relations that were vital for the continuation of the research project.

By keeping several parties informed about the research and my activities in the village they, in effect, became implicated in the research project. Some may have simply interpreted this as a confirmation that I was indeed working with official research permission. Others, however, may have chosen not to raise the issue of research authorisation, even if they had doubts, since they were too fully implicated in it themselves. Implicating actors of authority in the research project contributed to the protection of the research subjects as it reduced the chances that the research would be uncovered as an illegal undertaking.

Another way to mitigate possible negative consequences for the research subjects was by maintaining a low profile about the research in Vientiane. For example, I didn't give any presentations about my research whilst in Vientiane, or made any specific comments about my research in other than face-to-face meetings. For similar reasons, the exact location and name of the village and villagers are kept anonymous in this dissertation and other writings based on the research.

Positionality

Jackson (2006: 544) has argued that 'positionality of the person' is 'always plural, never singular' because positionality is 'multiply located and socially engaged'. Positionality is thus not limited to unequal relations of power based on nationality and age difference or to my researchers' urban background, although the former two were certainly the most pressing factors in this research. As a foreign researcher it was also difficult to disassociate the research and my presence in the research village from development projects or the Lao government, despite the fact that we regularly repeated the reasons for carrying out the research and when doing so stressed that the research project was unlikely to translate into any direct tangible benefits for the participants. Since the two research assistants were employed by a foreign researcher also their positionality was affected by this association

with the Lao government and development organisations. This lingering perception resulted in data being littered with appropriate responses, evasions, and miss-presentations in order to suggest a particular material need (e.g. new school building) which they hoped the research would eventually meet, or disguise ownership or certain unlawful activities (see also Scott *et al.* 2006).

Appropriate responses are worth reflecting on in more detail as they are symptomatic for Lao research contexts involving foreign and urban Lao researchers investigating rural lives. Both INGOs and the Lao government put much effort into social advertisement in the name of propaganda and/or awareness raising. The human trafficking narrative, the illegality of working in Thailand, and also other things like the illegality of marrying before the age of 18 were, therefore, well-known by most villagers. When the research touched upon any of the numerous aspects that are covered by social advertisement the research team was thus confronted with the problem of trying to establish whether the responses were merely appropriate answers or actual opinions. A failure to do so leads to ambiguous situations as illustrated by Vatthana Pholsena and Banomyong (Vatthana Pholsena and Banomyong 2006: 170-171) who refer to a research commissioned by the UNDP on young people in Lao PDR. This UNDP report contained the seemingly paradoxical finding that on the one hand young people were found to regard the *siin* as one of the least liked items of clothing, whilst at the same time 98.5 percent of the very same respondents in the very same research exercise also claimed that the *siin* was the most liked item of clothing. The *siin* is an ankle-length skirt traditionally worn by ethnic Lao women predominantly. However, it is important to note that the *siin* is part of official dress of Lao women (including school uniforms) and that wearing the *siin* is by the Lao government promoted as a key means of preserving Lao culture (Phonesavanh Sangsomboun 2008). Given the fact that UNDP research is usually carried out by highly educated urban Lao, and possibly even government officials or party members, it is quite likely that these young respondents were here caught giving appropriate responses to one question, and genuine responses to the other question. Here, the impact of positionality thus seems to be increased or mitigated by the particular way questions are framed.

Appropriate responses constituted an interesting additional layer of analysis of research data, that is, in case such responses could be identified as such by, for example, probing or triangulation between methods and sources. Appropriate responses illustrate how villagers use INGO and government rhetoric and how they relate social advertisements to their

everyday lives. More problematic than appropriate responses were evasions; cases in which respondents talked around the question or consciously gave false answers. Also evasions can largely be explained by positionality and also here, a constant process of reflection and constant cross-checking of responses have reduced the impact this has on the data collected and the knowledge generated. In addition, as the research project developed, rapport with respondents improved, no signs of tangible benefits emerged, and neither any government repercussions took place the impact of positionality on the data that was collected gradually reduced although it never disappeared.

The relational position of a foreign outsider does not just raise problems in the research process; it also comes with a series of advantages. Particularly in the early stages of the research I was, for example, often better positioned to obtain information from villagers than my research assistants. This was illustrated by Aai's frustrations when he did his first round of interviews independently and discovered that villagers were far less accommodating to a fellow Lao citizen as they had earlier been when I had accompanied Aai. In addition, as a western foreigner it is also relatively easy to gate-crash meetings of INGOs and IGOs as well as Lao government offices as it is usually taken for granted that one is an invited guest or has a legitimate reason for being there.

Household survey

The sampling procedure used for selecting households for the household survey was based on the administrative structure of the research village. *Baan Naam*, like all Lao villages, is for administrative and organisational purposes subdivided in to units of around 10-15 houses each. Each cluster of houses that comprises a unit is numbered and is headed by a unit-head. The survey focussed on the 12 even number units only, and aimed to interview around five households in each even-numbered unit, thus aiming for an *n* of 5*12=60 households.[82] This sampling procedure ensured that internal variation within the research village was captured. For example, new units on the outskirt of the village were typically populated by recent settlers, using this sampling procedure ensured that such important dimensions were captured in a representative way.

The selection of households within each unit followed a simple procedure. If one household was interviewed, the neighbouring household was skipped and the next was again interviewed till a total of four to six households were interviewed in each unit. As the research took a special interest in children and young people, only households with

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[82] This target was not met, as eventually only 11 out of the 12 even numbered units were covered.

children and young people amongst its members were selected for the survey, and household with very young children only were skipped.

The survey interviews were conducted in an ethnographic fashion (Cook and Crang 1995: 29), using what Van Donge (2003: 170) calls the 'ethnographic eye'. Questions and observations were thus not limited to the survey questionnaire but included reflections on the interview atmosphere, visual observations, suggestions for follow-up activities, reflections, etc. Household interviews were not tape-recorded. As the household interviews constituted the first research encounter with the households and the basis for further research activities, emphasis was placed on creating a conversational atmosphere and building up rapport. Introducing a tape-recorder was thought to be counter-productive in this regard.

For similar reasons the survey did not ask villagers for their household census books (HCBs). HCBs (*puem saamanoo khua*) are issued by the Lao Ministry of Security (*kaxuang pongkan khwaamsanghob*), the former Ministry of Interior. Each Lao family is required to have a HCB which contains basic demographic data, such as names, relation to head of household, date of birth, sex, occupation, race, family mobility, etc. Families are by law obliged to update their HCB in case of any mutation. Surveyors conducting household surveys for the Lao government often ask for HCBs and household interviews are often limited to copying the information presented by the HCBs on to questionnaire forms which may or may not reflect the actual reality. Not asking for HCBs was thus a deliberate move to disassociate the research from the Lao government. In addition, in case villagers handed us their HCB as an automatic response to the request for an interview we stressed that we were not interested in the information in the HCB, but in villagers' own account of matters. Additional reasons for not drawing on HCBs during survey interviews are that these books exclude illiterate and partially literate interviewees since they are unable to read or explain the booklet's content. However, not drawing on HCBs in the household surveys may also have affected the data collection process negatively. Although data recorded in HCBs is not necessarily reliable, when it comes to data like chronological age the HCBs are despite their faults in all likelihood a more reliable source than villagers' own memory of dates of birth. Where serious doubts about some demographic data remained we asked to see the HCBs at later stages in the research process.

Essay writing

Many, but not all, essays written by the students are appropriate responses and probably do not reflect students' own opinions. A related problem for analysis of the essay material is that a good number of students have copied their essays word-by-word from their peers. This suggests that at least some students have treated this exercise as an exam. This confirms the suspicion that appropriate responses are given in some case rather than actual reflections. These problems can be explained by the fact that this exercise was carried out in the early stages of the research, positionality, lack of rapport, and the influence of the school setting in which the exercise was conducted. However, data are also affected by a main problem underlying the method. Rural students were asked to freely reflect on a range of future possibilities such as location and job choices. Clearly, the very notion of choice when it comes to these matters is highly problematic in cases in which most lives develop from a very limited range of 'options'. Some students cleverly evaded this problem by writing about 'dreams', whilst at the same time acknowledging that in reality things are likely to be quite different.

Appendix 7: Time spent in Baan Naam & Baan Fangthai (2007-2009)

2007

September:

26-28 September (3 days) first orientation visit to the district

October:

8-12 October (5 days) household survey (with Aai) in *Baan Naam*

15-18 October (4 days) household survey (with Aai) in *Baan Naam*

October (2 days): first trip to *Baan Naam* with Paai

31/10: daytrip (1 day) to *Baan Naam*

November:

13-15 November: 3 days with Paai in *Baan Naam* (auto-photography/essay-writing)

27-29 November: 3 days with Paai and Aai in *Baan Naam*

December:

1-3 December: 3 days in *Baan Fangthai*

12-13: 2 days in *Baan Fangthai* with Paai

2008

January:

8-10 January: 3 days with Paai in *Baan Naam*

22-23 January: 2 days with Aai in *Baan Naam*

February:

7-8 February: 2 days with Paai in *Baan Naam* (picture based interviews)

27-28 February: 2 days with Aai in *Baan Naam* (pictures based interviews)

March:

29Feb-2 March: 3 days in *Baan Naam* (FGDs with parents)

12-13 March: 2 days; visit to research district

20 March: daytrip to *Baan Naam* with Paai (attending village festival)

26-28 march: 3 days in *Baan Naam* (FGDs with children and youth)

April

9 April: day trip with Paai to *Baan Naam*

16 April: day trip with Paai to *Baan Naam* (celebrate Lao New Year)

May:

15 May: one day (cut short due to illness - school competence interviews with Paai in *Baan Naam*)

21-23 May: 3 days in *Baan Naam* with Paai; (life) history interviews and other follow-up issues

July:

9-11 July: 3 days with Paai in *Baan Naam*; follow-up interviews

September:

3-5 September: 3 days in *Baan Naam* with Paai; follow up interviews

November:

30th November: day visit to *Baan Naam*

2009

14-15 March: 2 days in *Baan Naam* with Paai: follow-up interviews

Appendix 8: State induced resettlement in the Lao PDR

The actual scale of state orchestrated resettlement in the Lao PDR is hard to assess, but one particular programme involving internal resettlement, the so-called Focal Sites strategy, sheds some light on the magnitude of resettlement in the Lao PDR. Baird and Shoemaker (2007: 874-875) explain that the idea of Focal Sites emerged in the 1990s and that the term refers to geographical areas identified by district or provincial authorities in which developmental investments (often infrastructural such as schools, clinics, irrigation) are to be concentrated. Rural dwellers from mostly upland areas are relocated to these Focal Sites as a means to provide development assistance in a cost-effective and efficient way. Evrard and Goudineau (Evrard and Goudineau 2004: 945) state that the Lao government aimed to establish 87 such Focal Sites in the period 1998-2002 alone, involving a total of 450,000 people (12% of the entire rural population) of whom half would need to be relocated.

Baan Naam itself is not a Focal Site, yet as many other villages in the Mekong valley it is nonetheless affected by state-orchestrated resettlement programmes as household number 37, 52, 53, 54, and 55 in Table 4.2 illustrate. In the case of *Baan Naam*, a nearby area was by district authorities identified as a suitable location for settling households who were initially resettled in another province (Bolikhamsay), but refused to stay there.[83] According to the village head of *Baan Naam* families started moving in to this newly established village in the late 1990s. The new village quickly reached its capacities of 48 households, but families continued to arrive. Therefore, neighbouring villages like *Baan Naam* were by district authorities urged to take up a number of such households (17 in case of *Baan Naam*), which is reflected in Table 4.2 (interview village head *Baan Naam*, 21/5/2008).

Interviews with a number of families who had come to settle in *Baan Naam* in this way provided further information. All these families belonged to ethnic minority groups, originated from different localities in the Lao PDR (but all from Northern provinces), and were initially resettled in the central Lao province of Bolikhamsay. The location the Lao government had identified for resettlement in Bolikhamsay was far from the convenient location that was promised. In addition, agricultural land had yet to be cleared and there was no electricity. In fact, one of the concerned head of household (household nr 54, Phayvan's father) complained that the conditions in Bolikhamsay were worse than the

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[83] The village head of *Baan Naam* referred to this as *khoongkaan baan chadsan*, which can be translated as a 'project providing housing'.

conditions he had left behind in the mountains of Luang Prabang province. As a result, a number of families returned to where they had come from. Some moved further on their own initiative whilst others, including Phayvanh's father, negotiated for improvements with government officials. While still others tried making the best of it and stayed in their new place, or were forced to do so since they did not have the relations, resources, or stamina to return, move on, or negotiate better deals (see also: Evrard and Goudineau 2004).

Unlike the claim of the village head in *Baan Naam* that the intake of these new households was still under direction of the (local) government, Phayvanh's father (household nr 54) countered this by arguing that he himself had decided to settle in *Baan Naam*, and that this choice was not forced upon him in any way. In fact, some of his relatives settled in the new site and received a small plot of land and a house from the state and urged him to do the same, which the authorities also suggested to him. However, he was by now fed up with state promises and state involvement and chose to stay in the proximity of his relatives but under circumstances of his own choosing and decided, therefore, to settle in *Baan Naam*, and not in the newly established village allocated for this by the government (interview with Phayvanh's father, 22/5/2008).

Appendix 9: Pictures used for picture based interview

Picture 1 (*Baan Fangthai*, Thailand):

Picture 2 (Railway station Nongkhai, Thailand):
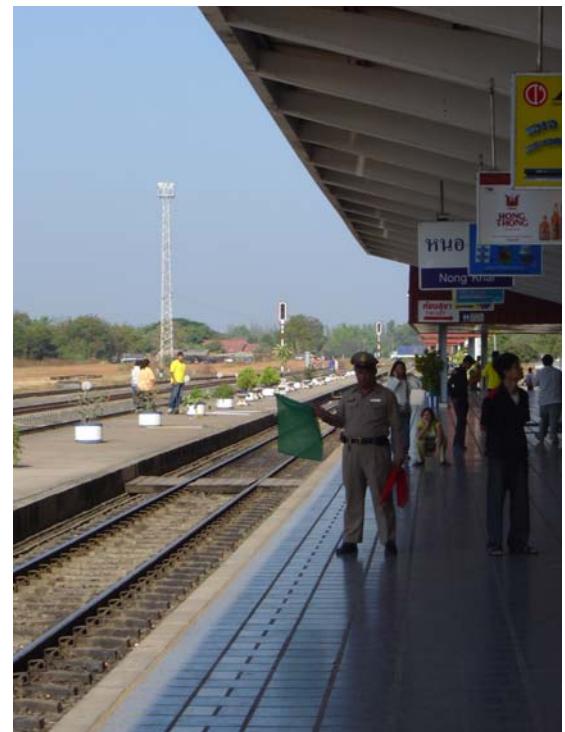
Picture 3 (Chau Faa Ngum Park, Vientiane):

Picture 4 (Lao ITECC, Vientiane):

Appendix 10: Activities checklist

Name:_____

Date:_____

Interviewers: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the items carefully (e.g. note that for the 'beauty questions' you have to indicate whether this is for the person him/herself, or also for other people).

Further, in the 'note' section, write any additional statements such as 'I have done this but a long time ago', 'I can only do this if my older brother helps', 'I can do it but I don't like it', 'I cannot do it, it's work for girls', etc.

In the end, ask if there are any other things you have not asked but which they can do well (really try to make them think!) and write these down.

		Can do/have done this: Yes/No	Note
Cooking			
Steam sticky rice	ນຶ່ງເຂົ້າໜຽວ		
Make chilli paste	ຕຳແຈ່ວ		
Make papaya salad	ຕຳໝາກຮຸ່ງ		
Make laap pa	ເຮັດລາບປາ		
Rice (paddy) farming			
1. clear fields	ຖາງຫຍ້າ		
2. plough	ໄຖນາ		

3. plough fine / harrow	ຄາດ		
4. sow rice	ຕົກກ້າ,ຫວ້ານກ້າ		
5. take out seedlings	ລົກກ້າ		
6.transplant	ດຳນາ		
7. harvest	ກ່ງວເຂົ້າ		
8. thrash	ປັ່ນເຂົ້າ		
Construction			
Build katuub/tiang naa	ປຸກກະຕູບ, ທ່ງງນາ		
Carry stones/cement/sand	ຂົນຫົນ,ປູນ,ຊາຍ		
Mix concrete	ປະສົມປູນ		
Saw wooden planks	ສອຍໄມ້		
'Shave/smooth' wood	ເລືອຍໄມ້		
bricklaying	ກໍ່		
Put in electric wiring	ແລ່ນສາຍໄຟ		
Fishing			
With rod	ຕົກປາ		
Net on rod	ຕົກກະດຸງ		
Handheld net	ສະຫວີງ		
Throwing net	ຫວ່ານແຫ		

Woven basket	ໃສ່ມອງ		
Natural env.			Describe method (for frog and bird catching)
Catch frogs	ຈັບກົບ		
Catch birds	ຈັບນົກ(ຍິ່ງນົກ)		
Collect vegetables from nature	ເກັບຜັກຢູ່ທຳມະຊາດ		
Collect honey	ທານ້ຳເຜິ້ງ		
Collect firewood	ຂອກຫາຟືນ		
Cut bamboo	ຕັດໄມ້ໄພ		
Chop down a tree	ຕັດຕົ້ນໄມ້		
Care			
Help with delivery of baby	ຊ່ວຍເວລາທີ່ເຮັດຄອດ		
Look after new-born baby by yourself (e.g. for half a day)	ລ້ຽງເດັກນ້ອຍທີ່ທາກໍ່ເກີດ		
Look after someone with fever	ເບິ່ງແຍງຄົນໄຂ້		
Sports			for cards/petangue, ask if played for money
Rattan ball	ເຕາະກະຕໍ້		

Football	ເຕະບານ		
boat racing	ຊ່ວງເຮືອ		
Volleyball	ຕີບານ		
Swimming	ລອຍນ້ຳ		
Petangue	ເປຕັງ		For money?
Play cards (which games?)	ຫຼິ້ນໄພ		For money?
General			
Prepare food for ducks/chicken	ກະກຽມອາຫານໃຫ້ ເປັດ,ໄກ່		
Dress a duck/chicken	ຄົວເປັດ,ໄກ່		
Make fire for cooking	ດັງໄຟ		
Ride a motorbike	ຂັບລົດຈັກ		
Repair motorbike (give example)	ສ້ອມແປງລົດຈັກ		
Repair electronics (e.g. radio, charger, etc)	ສ້ອມແປງວິທະຍຸ, (ເຄື່ອງໄຟຟ້າ)		
Sail a motorboat on Mekong	ຂັບເຮືອຢູ່ນ້ຳຂອງ		
Peddle a boat on Mekong	ພາຍເຮືອຢູ່ນ້ຳຂອງ		
Beauty			**Note: for yourself or someone else**
Wash hair	ສະຜົມ		

Dye hair	ເຮັດສີຜົມ		
Cut hair	ຕັດຜົມ		
Apply face make-up	ແຕ່ງໜ້າ		
Paint nails	ທາສີເລັບ		
Massage (give example)	ນວດແຜນບູຮານ		
Textile			
Embroidery (needle)	ງານຫຍິບປັກ,ຖັກແສວ		
Weaving (w. frame)	ຕຳຫູກ		
Sewing (w. machine)	ຕັດຫຍິບ(ໃຊ້ຈັກ)		
Livestock (cow & buffalo)			
Recognise and act when danger/trouble (give example)	ວິທີການສັງງເກດ ຄວາຍ(ການເບິ່ງແຍງ ບໍ່ໃຫ້ໄປກິນເຄື່ອງປູກ ຂອງຄົນອື່ນຫຼືຊົນກັບ ເອົາຫຼືສິ່ງທີ່ບໍ່ດີ)		
Know what to do when delivering calf (explain)	ເວລາທີ່ວົວຄວາຍຈະ ເກີດລູກຮູ້ບໍ່ວ່າເຮັດ		

352

	ແນວໃດ		
Recognise disease, and what to do (give example)	ເວລາທີ່ງົວຄວາຍບໍ່ສະບາຍຮູ້ໄດ້ແນວໃດ		
Handicraft			
Prepare material for sticky rice basket weaving	ຈັກຕອກ		
Make sticky rice basket	ສານຕິບເຂົ້າ		
Make chicken basket	ສານຂຸມໄກ່		
Make grass roof-mats	ໄພຫຍ້າ		
Make brooms (sweeping)	ເຮັດຟອຍ		
Split bamboo for fences	ເຮັດຄ້າໆ		
Make bamboo fence	ສານກະເຕະ		
Anything else (LIST!)	ແລະອື່ນທີ່ເຈົ້າຮູ້ຈັກແຕ່ບໍ່ໄດ້ຖາມ		

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