Fighting poverty is an urgent task for many low-income countries, including Laos, a country in economic transition from central planning to market-orientation. This thesis examines how international tourism impacts on poverty reduction in Laos, in particular after the New Economic Mechanism was launched in the late 1980s. The thesis analyses tourism impacts and poverty reduction through national and provincial tourism policies, practices of tourism at the village level, gender divisions of labor in tourism, and a micro-economic perspective at the household level. A policy study draws on national and provincial tourism strategies in Luangnamtha and Champasak and three empirical studies explore data from fieldwork in these two provinces. The thesis found that tourism strategies assume benefits to be equally distributed among homogenous groups of villagers. The policies do not consider the poorest of the poor nor dimensions of gender or ethnicity. Tourism follows similar ways of implementation as other rural development programs, and there are sometimes conflicts of interest and competition for local natural resources. Local government interventions coupled with bottom-up initiatives based on traditional knowledge provided promising solutions to poverty reduction. The study shows that certain ethnic beliefs and practices strengthened women's exclusion in ethnic tourism. Inequality in terms of income distribution emerged in both publicly and privately owned tourism projects, thus tourism benefits were not realized for all. The thesis argues that tourism for poverty reduction is not a specific process as stated in particular theories or policies, but linked to various social, economic and political processes at different spatial scales.
International Tourism Development and Poverty Reduction in Lao PDR

Saithong Phommavong

Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i Triple Helix, Samverkanshuset fredagen den 16 december 2011, kl 10.15.

Avhandlingen kommer att föras på engelska.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Timothy S. Oakes, Department of Geography, University of Colorado, USA.
Tourism for poverty reduction or pro-poor tourism (PPT) is defined as tourism that generates net benefits for the poorest groups in society. This thesis examines how international tourism development impacts on poverty reduction in Lao PDR. The thesis argues that in order for tourism to benefit low-income groups, it should be people-centered, promote local participation, women’s empowerment and bottom-up initiatives. In this context, tourism for poverty reduction is constructed through national and provincial tourism policy formulations and through practices of tourism and poverty reduction at the village level in two provinces. The thesis examines gendered divisions of labor in local tourism initiatives and examines how incomes from tourism are distributed at the household level. The thesis is based on four empirical studies derived from two data sets. The first paper is an analysis of national and provincial policy documents on tourism strategies. The other three papers are based on qualitative and quantitative data collected during fieldwork in Luangnamtha and Champasak provinces. The empirical data consists of 82 questionnaires with focus on the economic impact of tourism at the household level; 24 semi-structured interviews regarding practices of tourism at the village level; and 9 in-depth interviews with focus on gendered divisions of work in ethnic tourism.

National and provincial tourism strategies highlight that tourism for poverty reduction should generate employment effects and linkage opportunities as well as strengthen the knowledge-base and cultural assets. The policy documents do not specifically formulate tourism strategies with focus on the poorest of the poor; thus the poor are assumed to benefit equally from tourism development. The tourism strategy is rather an ad hoc policy aiming primarily at social and economic development and aid attraction rather than at poverty reduction. In practice, tourism for poverty reduction at the village level follows similar processes of implementation as other rural development projects, rather than setting its own platform. Village consolidation programs and rubber plantations, which also aim at poverty eradication, operate in competition and sometimes in conflict with tourism projects. Resettlement programs provide new infrastructure for people to resettle and move away from original sites for tourism activities. The role of local government intervention, particularly from village authorities with political party membership, was important for how compromises were made between tourism projects and other development programs. Local people’s initiatives coupled with traditional knowledge also provided promising solutions to sustain tourism together with rubber plantations. The thesis examines how low-income groups, women and men, benefit unequally from tourism employment. Traditional beliefs and practices play a role in determining divisions of work and access to benefits from ethnic tourism. Inequality in terms of income distribution emerged in both publicly and privately owned tourism projects, thus tourism benefits were not realized for all. The thesis argues that tourism for poverty reduction is not a specific process as stated in particular theories or policies, but linked to various social, economic and political processes at different spatial scales. Tourism policies and practices for poverty reduction are related to institutions, gender relations and ethnic practices.

Keywords
Pro-poor tourism, tourism development, poverty reduction, ethnic tourism, gender, Laos.
International Tourism Development and Poverty Reduction in Lao PDR

Saithong Phommavong
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*Umeå in November 2011*

*Saithong Phommavong*
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1 Introduction

This research has its origin in my MA-thesis, entitled “Global competitiveness of agro-processing industries in Lao PDR, a case study of animal feeding, cotton, silk, and sugar cane products” for Kobe University, Japan from 2002-2004. A lasting impression from that study was when I interviewed owners of cotton and silk galleries in Vientiane Capital about the marketing channels of their products. All of them mentioned the tourists who visited Laos and bought their finished cotton and silk products directly at the galleries. Was tourism a matter for the competitiveness of the industry? I thought that tourism did matter, but only to the owners of the galleries, not for the local villagers who were living in the countryside and remote areas of the country. That question remained unanswered in my MA thesis, but I found that the owners of the galleries were partly from local villages in different parts of the country, now living in Vientiane Capital. The refinement of cotton and silk products was mainly done in Vientiane Capital and had only some linkages to local villagers, often in terms of patterns that imitated unique traditional styles. In this case, the owners of the galleries acted as entrepreneurs investing in this business and paying proportionally back to different groups of people who were involved in the product development cycle. However, almost all gallery owners I interviewed were Lao and not members of ethnic minorities from the villages. Some of them were originally from the provinces, but presently urban based. Their networks with people in the villages were limited and little investment in raw material, product design and labor supply ended up there. Instead, the galleries imported raw material from abroad, and designed the products themselves inspired by traditional styles. Workers were recruited among urban dwellers. The profit margins on the finished products remained with the owners of the galleries; little money was transferred back to the local people.

With respect to the people in the villages I wondered whether there was any possibility that tourists could interact directly with them without using middlemen. Given the present situation when Laos is opening the country to international tourists more broadly, for example by visa exemption and visa upon arrival as well as by granting access to the countryside and remote area, tourism could function as a direct link between an international market and people in the villages who often are counted as poor and seldom have opportunity to sell their agro-products directly to outside customers. Hence, the opportunity to improve their economic benefit by direct sales as a way to help them escape out of poverty in a quicker way is limited.
After I finished my MA and had the opportunity from National University of Laos and Sida/SAREC to pursue this research project, the idea of studying international tourism as a linkage opportunity and mobile market for people in remote areas caught my interest. Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) or Laos is a country in transition from central planning to a market-based economy. However, it is still considered as one of the least developed countries (LDCs). Laos thus merits as a case study for this research, particularly in terms of how the role of liberalized markets has been practised after the introduction of the so-called new economic mechanism (NEM) in the 1980s, under the strict control of a single political party, the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party (LPRP).

In this context, the Lao government has identified tourism as an important industry not least with regards to disseminating the expected benefits of a market economy to rural areas of the country and by that fighting local poverty (NGPES 2004). Nature experiences and cultural diversity have been considered major attractions for these regions and they are usually marketed under the label of “ecotourism” indicating at least an ambition to follow international trends of proclaiming awareness and protection of ecological and socio-cultural distinctiveness of the destinations.

The Nam Ha ecotourism project, in the Luangnamtha Province, is a prestigious enterprise exemplifying these attempts. Here government agencies as well as donor organizations joined forces to develop a viable international tourism destination that could meet the expectations suggested within the ecotourism discourse. Thus, at Nam Ha, tourism was intended to contribute to poverty eradication according to the Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) strategies promoted by development agencies and academics. Nam Ha is promoted as a protected heritage of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the project is intended to serve as “green business” aiming at preserving the local ecology and contributing to poverty reduction (Schipani 2008). The project was assigned the ‘best practice’ award of ecotourism projects for poverty reduction by the United Nations in 2001 and gained also other awards from British Airways in 2002 and the Equator Prize in 2007.

The model developed for the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project (NHEP) has been transferred to other provinces in Laos, including Champasak. This has been my point of departure for selecting Laos and two specific provinces, Luangnamtha and Champasak as research sites.

1.1 Tourism and poverty reduction strategies in Laos
In a context of increased international competition and globalizing markets, many countries are struggling to reform their economies. In a globalizing economy, social, cultural and political conditions are transformed and places become linked together into relations of increasing and mutual interdependence. Globalization thinkers argue that nation states are being bypassed by transnational business networks and are unable to regulate and control market forces (Mackinnon & Cumbers 2007). The role of markets and free trade is seen as a more efficient allocation of resources for economic reform and development. Government intervention should be minimized to the role of investing in skills and knowledge-intensive activities such as research and development, product design and high-tech activities. Sklair (2001) points out the example of how capitalist globalization is processed through the influence of international interventions within national territories. This process is part of political processes of political globalization that focuses its attention on the erosion of the sovereignty of national states under the pressures of the supranational organizations (Mowforth and Munt 2003). The argument continues that this process supports global economic change which is needed for growth and for the sustained profitability of capitalism including new opportunities, new markets and, for tourism, new destinations (Mowforth and Munt 2003, 20). Geographical borders cannot deter these global processes. Globalization is facilitated by neoliberal ideas, which criticize the state as a barrier to development and promote free markets and private forces.

However, for countries in transition from postcolonial and post communist to late global capitalist development, state intervention appears increasingly necessary in order to control the excesses of financial markets, regulate multinationals and benefit more from the process. There is in fact no consensus among development practitioners and scholars about the benefits of liberalized markets and the free flows of capital. Countries in transition are facing situations of adaptations to free market mechanisms and a declining role of the state. This has promoted the argument that economic integration without state intervention leads to a widening divide between rich and poor (Sklair 2001). Critics argue that economic globalization will accentuate uneven development and increase the gap between the global North and South, and hamper developing countries’ paths to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Kiely’s (2005) advocacy is that globalizing forces have to comply with state intervention. A further argument is that ‘every experience of capitalist development has had a strong state, and the later the capitalist development, the greater the need for strong state ‘intervention’, in both socialist and capitalist contexts’ (Kiely 1998, 81). In that sense, a role of the state is not limited to playing a role in regulating competition, but also in regulating the exploitation of labor (i.e. legislation
on minimum wage rate and maximum hours of employment) (Harvey 2001, 274-275). Another role of the capitalist state is to provide 'public goods' and social and physical infrastructures which are necessary prerequisites for capitalist production and exchange. The idea of reinventing the role of the state in economic development is actually increasing and termed as the Post Washington Consensus (PWC). This idea is based on the failure of the free market under pro-global market approaches. A number of East Asian countries have state-centered development strategies and routinely regulated markets (Preston 1997, 256). Contemporary high economic growth countries such as China and Vietnam are examples of strong state-centrist countries. Lin (2009, 51) comments on the experience of China and Vietnam as 'a dual-track gradual approach', with adaptation of both the Washington Consensus (WC) and strong government intervention. These two countries have maintained a high record of growth and price stability.

Tourism is often linked to economic globalization. Some scholars argue that the shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism has a parallel in tourism from 'old tourism', which is known as mass tourism, to 'new tourism', which targets specific groups of tourists and experienced travelers such as ecotourism, community-based tourism, or pro-poor tourism (Telfer & Sharpley 2008, Mowforth and Munt 2003). This may represent an example of how globalization is functioning in the realms of policies, politics and trade in the tourism sector. Tourism becomes part of national trade liberalization policies, which countries implement to open up national economies to the global market (McMichael 2004, Telfer & Sharpley 2008). An argument is that a series of supporting policies have to be adopted for tourism, including tariff reduction, export promotion, financial deregulation and relaxation of foreign investment. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) have functioned as driving forces for market liberalization and economic globalization. A shift towards greater market liberalization has been one of the conditions for loans to developing countries in the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) issued by those institutions. These conditions are linked to state effectiveness, good governance and focus on poverty reduction (McMichael 2004, Telfer & Sharpley 2008). Tourism has in many cases formed part of these programmes, in particular after the WB's revised versions of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in 1999.

argue for the need of state intervention in tourism planning (Harrison 1994, Brohman 1996). Scheyvens (2007) mentions that the promotion of the role of the state in the Post Washington Consensus means that market rules must not be left unimpeded; strong institutions and support for democratic governance should be promoted, and policy makers must move to more effectively target poor and vulnerable groups. Schilcher (2007) argues that governments actually have the choice between state intervention and free market neoliberalism. Scheyvens (2011) sees the state as an agent in poverty reduction together with the tourism industry (i.e. private sector) and different development agencies (i.e. nongovernmental organizations).

The tourism sector is thus following mainstream development trends and has been captured as a tool for social and economic development during the last several decades. Various development approaches have influenced tourism policies and practices. Inspired by both modernization and neoliberal approaches, trickledown effects in the form of increased employment have often been seen as a tourism benefit. Critics have argued that if there is new employment, it is often low wage, unskilled work and only seasonal employment (Kabeer 1994, Brohman 1996, Vanhove 1997, Bennett et al 1999, Chok et al. 2007). Free markets and private forces have been promoted along with state-led development practices as a way of allocating tourism resources and distributing income (Desforges 2000). The idea of market-led development has been criticized for leading to economic leakage and limited linkage, social disruption, and environmental hazards (Brohman 1996, Timothy 2001, Brown & Hall 2008, Williams 2009, Hall and Lew 2009). An urge for more people-centered development and local participation with women’s empowerment and bottom-up approaches has increased the interest in alternative tourism approaches (Sharpley and Telfer 2002, Scheyvens 2007). Mainstream tourism development policies have not benefited all, but there are possible benefits that can be accrued to the poor.

In order to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), governments in the South have in many cases had to adopt tourism as a tool for poverty reduction. This is still applicable, in particular after the failures of implementation of SAPs and PRSPs and under the conditions for loans promulgated by the World Bank and the IMF. It is crucial to consider the positive and negative impacts of tourism for destinations in the South. Governments of the recipient countries, which are low-income and have poor status, make efforts to benefit from tourism. International tourism can be a last resort for countries in the South during economic transitions and under pressures for economic reforms.
Highlighting these development practices, some scholars and development institutions have increasingly been interested in developing tourism as a tool for poverty reduction and to direct more net benefit for the poor. Scheyvens (2007: 231) inserts that the tourism industry offers an ideal avenue through which poorer countries can open up to benefits from economic globalization. Thus ‘tourism’ and ‘poverty-alleviation’ are being increasingly linked. This idea about positive impacts of tourism and its contribution to the improvement of the quality of life have been recognized by governments and international aid agencies. The challenge is to make this happen, specifically for the lowest-income countries. Based on the seminal work of de Kadt (1979), Goodwin (1998) was appointed to provide a background paper of pro-poor tourism (PPT) to the Department for International Development (DFID) and Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). During the 2000s, a series of working papers was developed and proposed as an initiative for PPT. Various PPT strategies and principles have been developed to serve as a platform for tourism practice for poverty reduction.

Although there is a growing interest in implementing PPT approaches in various settings across the globe, in particular in low-income countries, there is still little evidence demonstrating successes in how tourism generates net benefit for the poor (PPT Partnership 2006, 2007). In this respect, this thesis argues that tourism impacts can be more fully understood analytically through a comprehensive view on both tourism policy for poverty reduction and practices of tourism ‘on the ground’. In any process, the participation of the poor should be a significant initiative. Viewing it this way, I argue that an alternative tourism approach is still a valid axiom, which urges for more people-centered development and local participation, including women’s empowerment and bottom-up initiatives. This thesis thus aims to examine tourism impacts for the poor in Laos, a small transitional economy of South-East Asia.

1.2 Objectives and research questions

The overall objective of this thesis is to analyze international tourism impacts on poverty reduction in Laos, a South-East Asian country in transition from central planning and a socialist regime towards a liberalized market economy under capitalist globalization. Tourism has been adopted as part of the market economy strategy in which a single political party still plays the most important role for steering socio-economic development and for poverty reduction. The thesis examines international tourism impacts on poverty reduction, including practical implementations and outcomes of Pro-Poor-Tourism strategies. The example chosen is Lao PDR after the
opening of the country to international tourists and the implementation of a market economy from the late 1980s and onward.

In order to achieve this research objective, specific research questions are being addressed in the four papers of this thesis:

- What strategies of poverty reduction are mirrored in tourism policies in Laos? (Paper I)
- In what ways does the Lao PDR state promote tourism development as poverty reduction? (Paper II)
- How do constructions of gender and ethnicity impact on women’s possibilities to benefit from community-based tourism initiatives? (Paper III)
- What are the economic impacts at the household level of two community-based ecotourism projects in Northern Laos? (Paper IV)

1.3 Outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters and an appendix with four papers. After the introductory chapter including the outline, Chapter 2 of the thesis provides a background to set the scene for the thesis. Chapter 3 then presents the theoretical perspectives and previous studies this thesis draws on. The methods and data sources for the thesis are presented in Chapter 4. Thereafter, the findings of the four papers are summarized in Chapter 5, and the main points of these papers are discussed (Chapter 6). A summary in Lao language is inserted afterward. Finally, all four papers are appended.

2 Setting the scene

2.1 Placing Laos in the regional context

Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), or Laos hereafter, has been formed in a complex regional context during the last two centuries. After a monarchy period under the Kingdom of Lane Xang since 1353, Laos became part of the regional context of Indochina, a term coined from the names of India and China to mark a French colonial territory in the South East Asian peninsula in the 19th century. Laos was annexed as a smaller batch of the French Indochina colonial project together with Vietnam and Cambodia
during 1893-1945 and thus became caught between the competing interests of Siam and France.

Laos was subsequently drawn into the Vietnam War, or ‘Secret War’ of the United States. In 1975 the victory of Pathet Lao and the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party (LPRP) led to the foundation of the Lao PDR. Under the first period of the new regime, the country mainly followed a socialist ideology and socialism is still presented as a central idea for societal development, though its practical application has changed dramatically since the foundation of the Lao PDR. The country started to integrate into a new regional context after the so-called open door policy was introduced in the mid-1980s. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), originally formed in 1967, became a new platform for Laos when the country obtained membership in 1997. Another increasingly important arena for cooperation is the association of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), which was formed in 1992. Acting as a midpoint for GMS, Laos has recently reconsidered its geographical location; instead of perceiving its land-locked location (being surrounded by five countries; Vietnam, Myanmar, China, Thailand and Cambodia) as a disadvantage, it promotes itself as a ‘land-linking’ country, highlighting its important transit opportunities. Various regional development projects are currently implemented within the GMS framework, including strategic development of North-East and South-West corridors for trade, investment, and tourism, supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Rigg, 2009). A new railway project is scheduled to link South China via Northern Laos to Vientiane and across the border to Thailand. Laos has important strategic natural resources; the Northern mountainous area, known as ‘the backbone of Indochina peninsula’, covers about two thirds of the country and is traversed by many of the Mekong’s tributary rivers. These rivers make Laos a major provider of hydroelectric power to its neighboring countries, and the country has been called the ‘battery’ of ASEAN. This increased regional integration is also evident within the tourism sector, not least in terms of funding and technical assistance. Laos is for instance part of the Mekong tourism development project (MTDP), which has been supported by the ADB since 2005. ADB support was extended for the 2009-2014 period in order to improve tourism infrastructure development along the North-East corridor and to promote other projects in support of economic integration within the GMS.
2.2 The people of Laos

According the latest Population Census, Laos has six million inhabitants, who belong to 49 identified ethnic groups, which in turn form part of four main ethno linguistic groups: Lao-Tai, Mon-Khmer, Hmong Iu-Mien, and Chine-Tibet (Lao PDR 2010, LSCCPPH 2006, Chazée 1999). The diversity in terms of ethnicity in Laos originates from complex historical migration patterns in the region during different time periods (Ireson & Ireson 1991). Prior to the contemporary ethno-linguistic classification, the population was classified according to geographical location: people living in the mountainous areas were called Lao Sung or highland Lao; people living in the midlands were called Lao Theung or midland Lao; and those living in the
lowlands along the Mekong River were called Lao Loum. This terminology was officially abandoned recently, with the recognition that the variety of ethnic characteristics cannot be captured with such a broad classification of geographical locations.

The majority of the population in Laos lives in rural areas with agriculture such as paddy rice farming and upland cultivation as the main occupations. The population growth rate is about 2.2% and the population density 25 persons per square kilometer (Lao PDR 2010). Laos is classified as one of the least developed countries (LDCs) in the world, ranking number 24 out of 48 countries in the LDC category. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita increased from 540 to 916 USD per person during 2005-2009 (BoL 2007, 2009). In the ranking of Human Development Index (HDI) by the UN Laos is number four (0.497) in the Southeast Asian region after China (0.663), Thailand (0.654), Vietnam (0.572), and before Cambodia (0.494), and Myanmar (0.451) (UNDP 2010a). In the world’s HDI ranking, Laos is listed as number 122 of 169 countries (UNDP 2010b).

The Government of Laos (GoL) has pursued a policy of relocation of people from upland to lowland areas in order to reduce the practices of shifting cultivation; however some ethnic groups still rely on these traditional livelihoods. Unique ethnic characteristics pose opportunities and challenges for development in Laos. Some groups, for instance Lao-Tai and Hmong-Iu Mien, have had high labor mobility during the last few decades (Phouxay, 2010, Petit, 2008). Carol et al. (1991) point out that while the GoL has intended to create a nation-state with harmonized development for all ethnic minorities, ‘the development in Laos is significantly affected by ethnic issues, which in some ways are sharpened by the same policy changes that facilitate growth’ (Carol et al. 1991: 920). Activities related to the population in three areas, including education, forest use and resettlement programs; illustrate the general government approach to socio-economic development and ethnic minorities. An example is how the GoL has promulgated ‘area based development’ policies and targeted ethnic groups in order to resettle them from remote and upland areas to lower lands; this has been called a policy to ‘bring people to development’ (Rigg 2009, 712). The idea is to promote village development clusters with permanent agricultural and forestry occupations for former shifting cultivators (Ireson & Ireson 1991, 933), an approach that is still in practice (Lao PDR No 09/PM May 2007, No 36/PM August 2009a).

2.3 Economic restructuring and state institutions
After a period of applying a central planning system as a mode of economic development (1975-1985), the government of Laos gradually shifted towards a strategy of market-orientation and regional economic integration. The party congress launched the so-called new economic mechanism (NEM) in 1986, which represented a ‘new thinking’ (Chintanakan Mai) in terms of economic integration and liberalization of markets. As we have seen above, one implication of this shift was that Laos turned towards other countries in the region rather than to its former socialist allies. The NEM is considered as an attempt to follow the structural adjustment program (SAP) imposed by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the Washington Consensus (WC). Several economic and financial changes have been carried out since 1987, including policies on fiscal discipline and austerity, tax reforms, financial and trade liberalization, exchange rate reform, acceptance of foreign direct investment, privatization of state-owned companies, deregulation of key economic sectors, new laws on property rights, and redefinition of the role of the state (Bourdet 1996, Rigg 2005). Some of the changes under NEM were directly favorable for tourism development, for instance the acceptance of foreign direct investment and relaxation of visa regulations. The private sector was permitted to be involved with state enterprises in hotel and tourism resorts from 1988. Subsequently there was a series of easing of visa requirements with first priority given to ASEAN member countries, in particularly Vietnam.

After the economic reform, political institutions in Laos have not changed dramatically and the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party (LPRP) remains as the strong pillar for all political affairs in the country. It has been stated that economic reform should not necessarily be accompanied by political liberalization, since the maintenance of a one-party state is necessary to avoid political and economic instability (Bourdet 1996). The country should remain a ‘people’s democracy’ as is stated in the first Constitution of Laos, enacted in 1991 (Stuart-Fox 1997, Lao PDR 2003, Article 1). Members of the party are closely related to state and government institutions on central, provincial and local levels. In addition to the party structure, the National Assembly of Laos has an administrative structure, which consists of judicial and executive administrators. The National Assembly is the legislative branch responsible for considering, adopting and amending laws (Lao PDR 2003, Article 52-53). The executive administrator is the President of the state with a primary mandate specified in Article 65-68 of the Constitution to promulgate the Constitution and laws adopted by the National Assembly. Government administrators on different administrative levels are mandated to run state affairs in all fields, including implementation of the Constitution, laws and resolutions.
The uniqueness of the administrative system of Laos is related to the mass organizations. The major mass organizations are the Lao Front for National Construction; the Lao Federation of Trade Unions, the Lao People’s Revolutionary Youth Union and the Lao Women’s Union. The primary mandate of these mass organizations is to unite and mobilize all strata of the multi-ethnic population to take part in the tasks of protecting and constructing the country (Lao PDR 2003, Article 7). Mass organizations are typical features of the state in former socialist countries and are organized on national, provincial, district, and village levels. Mass organizations were given an important role in the reconstruction of the country in the post-conflict period of transition towards socialism (Ireson & Moreno 2004, 26). For instance, the Lao Women’s Organization was established in Laos in 1955 and the gender ideology was formed in line with the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party’s (LPRP). The Lao Women Union (LWU) has promoted the gender ideology of the ‘Three Goods and Two Duties’ for women; to be a good citizen, a good mother, a good wife, and to fulfill the duties of national defense/socialist construction and women’s emancipation (LWU 1988, Ireson & Moreno 2004, Khouangvichit 2010). In the current economic transition from plan to market, where tourism is promoted as a strategy for poverty reduction, mass organizations still play an important role for how policies are put into practice.

2.4 Economic growth and poverty reduction strategies

The first poverty reduction definition (Lao PDR No 010/PM June 2001a) enacted by the Prime Minister of Lao PDR stated that ‘poverty is the lack of ability to fulfill basic human needs such as not having enough food, lacking adequate clothing, not having permanent housing and lacking access to health, education and transportation services’ (NPEP, 2003:4). This concept of poverty focuses mainly on basic human needs. In quantitative assessments of poverty on the national level, experts prefer to use calorie intake, 2100 per person, as the basic measurement unit (Kawani et al 2001, Richter et al, 2005, Engvall, et al., 2010). Along with this definition of poverty, the cost of 16 kilograms of husk rice per person per month (identified by Prime Minister’s Notification No 10/PM/2001 as necessary for survival) is referred to as a cost of basic needs (Engvall, et al., 2010). In monetary terms a cash income equivalent to US$1.50 per person per day is needed to remain above the national poverty line (Engvall, et al., 2010). The recent Prime Minister’s Decree No. 285, dated 13 October 2009 identified the national poverty line at three levels: 240 000 LAK per person per month for urban dwellers and 180 000 LAK per person per month for rural areas, and 192 000 LAK per person per month as the average poverty line. The
non-economic dimension, the third dimension of poverty, power, has not yet been acknowledged or addressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region/Province</th>
<th>1992-93</th>
<th>1997-98</th>
<th>2002-03</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane Capital</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Incidence of poverty in Lao PDR by regions, 1992-2008 (Percentages). Source: Kakwani et al. (2002), Engvall et al. (2010).

As seen in Table 1, poverty in Laos prevails despite high economic growth during the last decade. The poverty situation in Lao PDR has been assessed in the four Lao Economic Consumption Surveys (LECS 1, 2, 3, and 4) and two qualitative studies (Lao PDR 2001b, Chamberlain 2007). Kakwani et al. (2002) highlight that during the 1990s the country achieved some economic growth and decline of poverty measured at the national level, but with signs of growing inequality. National economic growth alone did not reduce severe poverty and the poorest of the poor did not benefit at all from the high economic growth. It was suggested that along with rapid economic growth, the government needed to implement pro-poor policies that would benefit the poor rather than the rich. Based on the same aggregated data from LECS 3 (2002-03) Anderson et al. (2007: 8) assert that poverty in Laos varies between the north, central and southern regions; as can be seen in Table 1, there is also a significant difference between Vientane Capital and the rest of the country.

The first participatory poverty assessment (PPA) in Laos, based on qualitative methods, found that poverty was highest among ethnic minority populations, among which the Mon-Khmer group had the highest percentage of people living under the poverty line (54%) (Lao PDR 2001b: 29). Based on this PPA the term new poverty was introduced. This type of poverty was primarily related to lack of access to land for cultivation, particularly for rice production, and to livestock diseases. “Livestock remains the primary indicator of wealth as reported by villagers” (Lao PDR 2001b: 29). Apart from the ethnic aspect, gender also matters for poverty (Richter et al. 2005). As highlighted by various studies (Lao PDR 2001b, Chamberlain 2007, World Bank 2003) women are poorer than men, particularly women who are heads of household. Poverty reduction strategies thus need to acknowledge both ethnic and gender aspects and find appropriate mechanisms to deal with these problems.
2.5 Tourism development in Laos

International tourism to Laos started with the open-door policy of the mid-1980s. When Lao PDR was established in 1975, international tourism was discouraged and only tourists and meetings and conference delegates from former socialist countries were welcomed. The GoL gradually opened the country to international tourists who started arriving in the late 1980s. International tourism in Laos has evolved together with changes in institutional and legal frameworks. Various means were adopted in forms of master plans, laws, policies and strategies to develop tourism in the country. Table 2 shows major events related to international tourism development in Laos from 1975.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975-1985</td>
<td>Establishment of Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), tourists from former socialist countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Open door to international economic integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Start of international tourist arrivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>First National Tourism Master Plan enacted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Establishment of Laos National Tourism Authority (LNTA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>Starts Nam Ha Ecotourism Project; Visit Laos Year promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Tourism for poverty reduction in National Growth for Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Lao Tourism Law, National ecotourism strategy enacted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Upgrade Laos National Tourism Administration (LNTA), and provincial tourism department (PTD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Gender equity and ethnic diversity action plan drafted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Laos National Tourism Administration (LNTA) was created as an institutional response to early tourism development and organized offices at provincial and district levels. Figure 2 shows an organizational chart of the LNTA. Harrison & Schipani (2007, 2009) discuss how the main role of these government agencies is training, marketing and promotion, for instance through the recently established district tourism offices (DTO) at the sites of major attractions. There is however no permanent tourism division at the village level, in contrast with for instance divisions for agriculture or forestry. A village tourism manager is appointed in cases where there are tourism activities occurring in the village.

The formal roles and duties of the LNTA are related to planning and cooperation, facilitating, monitoring, training, and licensing and managing legal affairs related to tourism at the national level (LNTA, 2005, Tourism Law, Article 69). The provincial and district offices have similar functions at lower administrative levels and are responsible for implementation of plans and reporting to the LNTA.
As shown in the chart, LNTA is recently appointed to the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism. There is an increasing role of government in the context of promoting free market and private sector involvement in tourism development in Laos. A major idea is that the government should create a macroeconomic environment for tourism development. At the same time, the government functions as a tourism operator and runs trekking services at the provincial level. These activities are first offered by public stakeholders and function today as role models for the private sector. This reveals the continued important impact of state intervention into the tourism market.

2.6 International donors and regional tourism development

As already noted, the development of the tourism sector in Laos has been closely related to ASEAN and GMS cooperation, but it has also been strongly conditioned by the involvement of various non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions and country-based donor agencies. Laos is in the position of receiving shares of recent successful tourism developments in its neighboring countries, while at the same time struggling over how to grasp benefits from tourism for national social and economic development and poverty reduction. A main objective for the Laos component of a recent ADB support for the GMS sustainable tourism development project (2009-2014) is thus ‘improving tourism along the North-South economic corridor in Lao PDR encouraging tourists to stay longer and spend more money in the area’ (LNTA, 2008). During the early period external powers such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNESCO, International Finance Corporation (IFC), and other Western countries’ donor agencies were engaged in tourism development,
and specifically ecotourism development for sustaining culture and nature, as well as for poverty reduction. The first phase of the Nam Ha Ecotourism project (NHEP) 1999-2002 was for instance funded by various international stakeholders and foreign experts, who influenced the design of this international aid-led project (Schipani, 2008). Figure 3 illustrates the complex organizational structure of the NHEP.

The NHEP was the first ecotourism project in Laos promoted as a pro-poor tourism project. It was recognized by UNDP in 2001 as a project that could contribute to poverty reduction and was subsequently transferred as a model and 'best practice' for PPT to other provinces in Laos during its second phase. Examples of projects that followed the NHEP model are the Xe Pian Ecotourism project in the Champasak province and the ecotourism projects in Savannakhet and Khammouane provinces.

The degree of intervention of supranational organizations in tourism development in Laos varies according to their roles. Various agencies are engaged in funding, technical assistance, or the implementation of tourism projects. Table 3 provides a summary of funding from major agencies for tourism development granted to the government of Laos from 1999 until 2014. Technical assistance for tourism can take various forms such as preparation of master plans or tourism strategies, or provision of tourism trainers and project staff. A major trend seems to be that international cooperation for tourism development in Laos is shifting towards the regional scale, which can be seen as an example of developmental regionalism (Dent 2008). Two regionally based organizations; ADB and SNV, are now actively involved in tourism development in Laos, particularly promoting tourism as...

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**Figure 3.** The organizational structure of the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project (NHEP) 1999-2002. *Source: Reproduced from Harrison and Schipani 2007.*
a tool for poverty reduction. ADB emphasized its interest in regional development for tourism by supporting the Mekong Tourism Development Project since 2005 and by providing new low interest loans to tourism projects during 2009-2014 (ADB, 2005, 2009). SNV also provides financial and technical support for the formulation and dissemination of pro-poor tourism initiatives in Laos.

Table 3. The amount of grants and loans by donor for tourism projects in Laos 1999-2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NZODA (NZAIDS)*</th>
<th>Japan IFC, JICA</th>
<th>Other agencies**</th>
<th>WWF, France</th>
<th>ADB*** ('000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>158400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>93150</td>
<td>2670</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>96884</td>
<td>106698</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>354957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>128481</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>152686</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>127826</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2014</td>
<td>2500000</td>
<td>1500000</td>
<td>5500000</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This idea of tourism development is in line with recent economic development ideas of how the country needs to follow ASEAN and GMS policies in order to gain a better position and competitiveness, and without simply accepting Western-centric development approaches (Dent 2008). This regionalism is regarded as an Asian-centric development approach for tourism development and a mainstream economic development for Laos. Nevertheless, some external reviewers observe that regionalism is repeating approaches for tourism development in the region in line with how global financial institutions have acted in other parts of the world, i.e., investment aiming primarily at capital accumulation rather than at distributing benefits for the poor (Harrison & Schipani 2009).

2.7 Tourism policy and decision-making

Tourism policies have not yet primarily departed from the explicit interests of the poor; they have rather been initiated as top-down approaches. Since 1990 a number of National Tourism Strategies (NTS) have been issued, involving different stakeholders over time (see Table 4). The first tourism policy for Laos was formulated in 1990 with technical assistance from the UNDP. Much of the content mirrors a Western idea of development known
from elsewhere; the idea of ‘growth pole development’, for instance, never existed in Laos’s context before this policy document. Another early feature was that stakeholder participation is mentioned but not exemplified on the local level. It seems that SNV, another form of Western aid, had success in influencing Lao Tourism Law. As a consequence the GoL opened the tourism sector for foreign private investors during SNV’s technical assistance.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Private sector</th>
<th>Aid donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NTS 1990</td>
<td>Tourism Organization of Lao PDR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-UNDP, WTO, UNESCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS 1998</td>
<td>-Lao National Tourism Authority -Line Ministries -State Enterprises -Provincial Officers</td>
<td>Tour operators, Hotels, Resorts</td>
<td>-UNDP, WTO, UNESCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS 2005, 2006-2020</td>
<td>-Lao National Tourism Authority -Line Ministries -Lao Youth and Women’s Union -Provincial Officers -District Officers</td>
<td>Tour operators, Hotels, Guesthouses, Restaurants, Handicrafts</td>
<td>-UNDP, UNESCO, JICA, WWF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows that, from the NTS of 2005, tourism policies started to involve more actors at different levels in Laos. Many international organizations like UNDP, SNV, ADB, UNESCO, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) continued to be involved, but also various stakeholders within the country took part in the tourism policy-making process. A number of consultations on tourism policy were carried out in many provinces during 2005. The latest tourism strategy (2006-2020) favors a more Lao-centric policy-making process, which is illustrated in Figure 4. The policy is based on the Party Congress’s documents and the government’s socio-economic development plans. The Laos National Tourism Administration (see above), the government institution in charge, encourages the provincial tourism authorities to process their plan as a bottom-up tourism policy-making process. However, for the provincial level, limited attention is given to including the poor in the policy-making process. The consultation is done after the first draft is produced from the provincial tourism staff, and the poor are hindered from accessing the process directly because of their lack of opportunities and access to education. Consultations are done at the village level. Only an annual village survey and a visitor feedback survey are included in the agenda.

This thesis examines the impacts of international tourism on low-income groups in Laos and argues that in order to enable the poor to benefit from
tourism, it is necessary to start from a policy that allows for active participation of the poor and aims at providing equal benefits for both women and men and different groups of the poor.


2.8 Indicators of tourism development

The number of international tourist arrivals and revenues from tourism are indicators for how the tourism sector is evolving in Laos. Figure 5 shows how international tourist arrivals have increased from 1990 to 2009. The number of visits stagnated and slightly declined between 2000 and 2003, but increased rapidly again from 2004 to 2009 (LNTA 2010). The largest share of international tourists to Laos comes from Asia and the Pacific, while international tourists from Europe, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East represent a relatively small share of the total number of tourists.
Figure 5. International tourist visits to Laos 1992-2009.

Figure 6 shows that most tourists come from Thailand and Vietnam, which both are part of the Greater Mekong Sub-region. Thailand shares a long border with Laos and recently many Mekong bridges and international checkpoints have opened, which facilitates tourism as well as other social and economic activities.

Figure 6. GMS tourist visits to Laos 2001-2009.

Incomes from international tourism have in recent years contributed significantly to the national economy in terms of foreign exchange earnings. Tourism is one of the top three revenue earners together with mining and hydropower electricity export (Table 5). According to macroeconomic reports, these revenues contribute to GDP growth in Laos and have increased the average GDP per capita over time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Revenue and rank per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>146.7(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerals</td>
<td>128.3(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>94.6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood products</td>
<td>74(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>9.5(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Products</td>
<td>26.6(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garments</td>
<td>107.5(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicrafts</td>
<td>2.7(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11.9(7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Ranking of revenues from tourism and other major export products (Million USD).

Figure 7 shows the trend of tourist arrivals to provinces in Laos. The distribution of tourists between provinces is uneven and Vientiane Capital and the world heritage site Luang Prabang received most of the tourists. There has been a change in the proportions between destinations during the last few years as some provinces receive an increasing number of tourists – Champasak and Vientiane Province – while the share of Vientiane Capital is declining. A characteristic of the provinces with high shares of arrivals is that the tourism infrastructure is well developed and new tourist sites are promoted, including the world heritage sites.

The high number of visits to the capital city is largely due to the international airport and the major bridge over the Mekong River. The high concentration of tourists to Luang Prabang is explained by the opening and promotion of the city as the first world heritage site in Laos as well as by its location as the center of the northern region. In the south, Champasak is a main attraction as the location of Laos’s second world heritage site, Vat Phou, and other natural sights including the Mekong waterfalls. The improvement of the
airport and the opening of the Mekong Bridge have eased tourist visits. On the other hand, the number of visits to Luangnamtha was almost the same in 2003 as in 2009. In 2007, the numbers had doubled for Champasak but were still stagnant for Luangnamtha, despite that the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project had been introduced a few years earlier. In the case of Luangnamtha there was a slight increase after 2007, partly due to the opening of the R3 road that links Thailand, Laos and China; and the upgrading of the new airport in the city of Luangnamtha. These developments provide some of the reasons to select Luangnamtha and Champasak as study sites.

Luangnamtha, which is the poorest province in Laos, started ecotourism projects in 1999 and the number of visits has shown a slight increase; Champasak, in contrast, initiated ecotourism projects later than Luangnamtha but has had higher increases in the number of arrivals.

These macro-measurements of tourism serve as a point of departure for this study. I ask questions about what these figures might mean in terms of impacts for low-income groups, especially in local villages in remote areas. Thus a research interest of this thesis is how tourism impacts on the poor in the local context, at village and household level. If the government’s goal of poverty reduction is to be achieved, insights are needed on how benefits from tourism are distributed. Poverty levels vary also between women and men, and between ethnic groups (Lao PDR 2001b, Chamberlain 2007, WB 2003); these are aspects that also merit study.

3 Theoretical perspectives and previous studies

Various theoretical understandings of globalization, development and poverty have influenced policies on tourism development for poverty reduction and also pro-poor tourism (PPT). In this regard, I find that the way tourism is promoted for poverty reduction in Laos has mainly followed the trend of neoliberal theories of free market promotion, deregulation and privatization under capitalist globalization and more recently the Post-Washington Consensus (PWC). Tourism for poverty reduction has largely been framed within initiatives of tourism development in Laos influenced by international donor agencies such as UNDP, UNESCO, ICUN, SNV, JICA, ADB. These organizations have also influenced practices of tourism policies for poverty reduction as in the case of the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project (NHEP), which is known as the first pro-poor tourism project in Laos. At the same time, to increase distributional effects of tourism development for the poor, the government of Laos (GoL) foresees that participatory approaches will be useful in order to distribute benefits from tourism for poverty reduction. The GoL encourages participation of central and local government in policy making and implementation of these projects. The case is clear that
in the national tourism policy (2006-2020), it is stated that the state (at national, provincial and local levels), the private sector, the poor, and the tourists should take part in the policy process as well as in the practice of tourism at the village level. This reveals how the GoL sees it as important to maintain a role of government in tourism development. This idea is not new. The Washington Consensus that previously narrowly-promoted free markets and private forces has been widely criticized; in the Post Washington Consensus government intervention is promoted and seen as important; the government furthermore sees itself as an agent for tourism development.

This thesis finds that within the particular context of Laos and of Lao government institutions and organizations, tourism development largely follows mainstream economic development thinking. The thesis highlights a relational understanding of the concepts of place and space and analyzes how power relations in particular places form part of tourism development for poverty reduction. In terms of the formulation of tourism policy, the question is raised whether a space for the poor can be created as a platform for gaining benefits. In the practice of tourism agendas, low-income groups participate on different levels of implementation. Furthermore, gender divisions of labor in tourism work are based on place-specific conditions which affect the ways tourism may be beneficial, for instance, for poor women of different ethnic backgrounds. The impacts of tourism on two ecotourism villages are examined; these villages operate under different ownership, different management and marketing strategies, which represent private and public tourism initiatives respectively. In this chapter I will outline the theoretical perspectives and debates that have been influential for my work. I start by problematizing the concept of poverty in relation to current tourism policies, poverty reduction strategies and PPT practices. I will furthermore discuss how specific understandings of space and place underlie dominant policies and present my own understanding of these concepts. Furthermore, I critically assess tourism for poverty reduction practices in terms of their lack of integrated theoretical perspectives on gender and ethnicity. I also discuss different perspectives on globalization and the role of the state in tourism and poverty reduction. Finally, I put tourism for poverty reduction in relation to current debates on sustainable tourism and community-based tourism. I conclude with a recapitulation of my theoretical influences.

3.1 Problematizing poverty

An analysis of tourism’s impact on poverty reduction requires a clarification of how poverty is defined in dominant policy contexts. Poverty is commonly defined either in relative or absolute terms. Absolute poverty is defined in
terms of “survival; it most commonly refers to subsistence, lack of a basic standard of physical capacity necessary for production (paid work) and reproduction (the bearing and nurturing of children)” (Lister, 2004: 21). The same author identifies nutrition as an important component in this measurement in terms of a minimum caloric requirement. This standard minimum requirement is defined by reference to the actual needs of the poor and not by reference to the expenditure of those who are not poor. On the other hand, the relative term is the “lack of the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living condition and amenities which are customary or widely approved in the societies to which they belong” (Townsend, 1979). The relative poverty is measured in relation to some ratio of the absolute poverty line. The poverty line is measured in terms of minimum caloric requirement or in current monetary terms. Financial resources are used to measure how to obtain such necessities of relative poverty. The most widely accepted money term of poverty is using individuals living on less than US$1 per day or the “extreme poor” identified by the the World Bank (2001).

However, it is widely recognized that poverty is multifaceted and not only an income and consumption-based definition. As such, common characteristics of the poor in addition to the income/consumption level include: low human capital development and limited employment opportunities, social exclusion and marginalization (Jamieson and Nadkarni 2009, 115). Income/consumption based poverty cannot reveal non-monetary poverty. A group of people might have income above the poverty line but still lack opportunities to participate in political decision-making.

International organizations and financial institutions have also created definitions of poverty, both in monetary and non-monetary terms. Classifications of poverty on national levels emerged after the end of World War II, with the focus on deficiency of money and material possessions. The World Bank defined countries with an annual per capita income below US$100 as poor (Storey et al., 2005). The solution to poverty was formulated in terms of raising national income through economic growth. This dimension of poverty was central for modernization thinking during the early post-war period and provided a dominant theoretical perspective on poverty.

However, economic growth during the post-war period until the early 1970s did not easily or widely translate into poverty reduction in low-income countries. International development agencies, including the World Bank, were compelled to focus more directly on poverty reduction as part of development agendas. In the wake of the debt crisis of the early 1980s hegemonic development thinking turned towards the doctrine of
neoliberalism (Glinavos, 2008, Kiely, 1998). The implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) under influence from neoliberalism, (i.e. the Washington Consensus), did not deliver satisfactory development results. People defined as poor still suffered disproportionately and growth did not trickle down. The number of people living on less than one dollar a day remained constant during the 1987-99 period (Onis, & Sense, 2005).

Some international development agencies, including the World Bank, subsequently revised their thinking on poverty reduction. Taking into account development ideas of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, the first revision of dominant poverty definitions appeared in the report *Adjustment with a human face* from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in the late 1980s (Cornia et al., 1987). A non-economic measurement of poverty was established in response to the ‘failure of the neoliberal agenda’ and influenced overseas development programs of international financial institutions (Storey et al., 2005). This critique did not mean a turn away from neoliberalism, but incorporated *alternative development* approaches into an orthodox agenda (Storey et al., 2005).

The alternative development idea of local participation and empowerment further appeared in various poverty agendas. The first *Human Development Report* (HDR) in 1990 highlighted issues of ‘capacity building, empowerment, and participation by civil society, good governance and environmental sustainability.’ The Asian Development Bank (ADB 1999) took the initiative to fight poverty in Asia and the Pacific and defined poverty as ‘the deprivation of essential assets and opportunities to which every human is entitled.’ The 1990 HDR stated that everyone should have access to basic education and primary health services. Poor households have the right to sustain themselves by their labor and be reasonably rewarded, and have protection from external shocks. Beyond income and basic services, individuals and societies are also poor, and tend to remain so, if they are not empowered to participate in making decisions that shape their lives.

The World Bank published the report *Attacking Poverty* in 2001 which provided a remarkable new attempt to define and combat poverty based on three pillars: promoting opportunity, facilitating empowerment, and enhancing security, taking into account voices of the poor. By taking these dimensions into account, poverty was described in a holistic manner that considered levels of income and consumption, social factors, vulnerability to risks and access to sound socio-political conditions. New issues of ‘human rights, dignity, security and participation in political processes’, were promoted as contemporary concerns in discourses on the concept of poverty. However, the economic measurement of poverty of using 1 US$ per day still
applies in the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) strategies. In pursuit of poverty reduction in the global policy context, the economic measurement of poverty sees an income of US$ 2 per day defined as absolute poverty and $1 per day is a measure of extreme poverty (Sharpley & Naidoo 2010).

In the case of Laos there has been an intention to measure poverty in both quantitative and qualitative terms by international donors, but little has been done in relation to the tourism sector. Quantitative measures of poverty mainly use income and expenditure at aggregated levels of analysis. Thus ‘income and consumption data for Laos are neither long run nor particularly robust’ (Rigg 2005: 73). Poverty is measured at the national and provincial levels, while specific communities, in particular different ethnic villages in the provinces, experience different levels of poverty. Translation of national poverty measurements into languages of ethnic minorities is also challenging (Rigg 2005). The latest assessment of poverty in Laos (Lao PDR, 2006) states that poverty reduction is about augmenting the well-being of disadvantaged families and sharing the benefits of growth across communities in valleys and hilltops and connecting remote regions within the country with the rest of the world. In this thesis I have found it particularly interesting to analyze impacts of tourism on poverty on different levels, from the national level down to the village level, household and individual levels. Some scholars have pointed out how poverty is related to inequality of income/consumption in terms of health and educational profiles of different ethnic groups (Rigg, 2005: 80). Thus to look at inequality is important in order to assess how tourism relates to poverty reduction. Inequality in income earnings from tourism varies within and between different ethnic groups in Laos. Measuring monetary income in this regard is related to inequality. Inequality would reveal whether marginalized groups receive economic benefits from tourism or not. A non-monetary poverty assessment would reveal if some groups are excluded from tourism activities or other benefits.

I find the arguments about the ‘new face of poverty’ provided by the Critical Global Poverty Studies Group (CGPSG) as a relevant concept in researching poverty. A main argument is that understanding poverty needs to be pictured and addressed in different places as key to understanding poverty (Lera and Lawson, 2009). The extension of market relations and the implication of neo-liberalism in all spheres have proven inadequate for poverty reduction at various scales, with different profiles in different places. There is, according to this perspective, a need to roll back institutional involvement. An emphasis is that poverty is ‘a problem of redistribution within existing regimes of rules and institutions’ (Lera and Lawson, 2009). CGPSG argues that poverty is produced through political, economic and
cultural mechanisms that are connected across space and also (co)produced through human actions and places. In addition to political-economic processes, cultural productions come to frame people and places as ‘poor.’ Cultural productions work to reproduce poverty through processes of exclusion and exception. Mixed methods of qualitative field work to extend the traditional quantitative indicators are thus needed to contextualize and make it clear that poverty is not just a state of deprivation; it is a ‘complex play of symbolic, labeled attributes and practical arguments established by real social subjects’ (Alonso and Ruiz 2011). Based on CGPSG, a social constructionist political economy approach is used for understanding poverty.

In this thesis, both monetary and non-monetary measurements of poverty are taken into account. Non-monetary poverty or the state of the poor is however the main focus of this thesis. The participation of local villagers in tourism policy-making processes is one primary condition that can show whether they are excluded from exercising their power in existing political institutions. As can be seen in Paper 1, the tourism policy rarely focuses on the poorest of the poor as they are left out in the tourism policy-making process. Some groups of ethnic villagers and women in general are also excluded from the tourism activities and tourism positions with highest incomes, which are highlighted in Papers 2 and 3. This also reveals how poverty is produced differently in specific places. The practices of different agents in tourism and alternative development agents shape and produce poverty and in some cases hinder poor people from accessing tourism benefits. The symbolic action of traditional belief and practices may also hinder women from equal working opportunities in ethnic tourism, which is discussed in Paper 3. Monetary poverty is used to measure the level of tourism income and inequality in Paper 4.

3.2 Pro-Poor Tourism – tourism as a tool for poverty reduction?

In line with the broader policy shifts outlined above, the interest of appointing PPT as a development tool for poverty reduction grew during the last decade along with other tourism development approaches. The initiative of PPT was proposed as part of different initiatives for sustainable tourism. The first paper prepared by Goodwin (1998) was actually presented to the Department for International Development (DFID) for the 1999 Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The PPT was gradually further developed through contributions from various consultants who work for DFID, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Centre for Responsible Tourism (RTC), and other international organizations such as World Tourism
Organization (WTO), World Bank (WB), United Nations for Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and Asian Development Bank (ADB). The contributions to PPT development appeared in various strategies (Goodwin 1998, Ashley et al. 2000, 2001, 2002, Shah et al. 2000, Narayan 2002, Jamieson 2003, Sofield et al. 2004, PPT Partnership 2005, Goodwin 2008, 2010). Basically, PPT has become established and accepted as a tool for poverty reduction. PPT is primarily defined as ‘tourism that generates net benefits to the poor.’ Benefits are here not seen only in economic terms but include social, environmental and cultural benefits (Bennet et al. 1999: 6). This means that PPT benefits are understood as comprehensive and thus not specific to only the poor. Ashley et al. (2001, 2002) thus add that tourism can be classified as ‘pro-poor’ as long as poor people obtain net benefits (even if richer people benefit more than poorer people). PPT is thus not a specific tourism product, it can be any type of tourism that benefits the poor (Ashley 2002). This definition is further updated by Ashley (2002: 18) as a methodology for case studies: PPT is ‘tourism that results in increased net benefits for the poor. PPT is not a specific product or niche sector but an approach to tourism development and management.’ PPT benefits thus need not only to be generated but also to increase in order to speed up poverty reduction. These two definitions are used interchangeably in the practice of PPT analysis. In application of the term, the first definition appears in a poverty alleviation study by Harrison and Schipany (2007), whereas the second term is preferred by Suntikul (2009). Some scholars have also modified these PPT definitions, for instance Schilcher (2007) and Nardkani (2008).

PPT can be distinguished from other tourism development approaches through its strategies, principles and impacts. The basic strategies of PPT focus specifically on ‘unlocking opportunities for the poor within tourism, rather than expanding the overall size of the sector (‘tilting’ not expanding the tourism cake’) (Bennett et al. 1999: 6). The thematic PPT strategies are further developed by Ashley et al. (2000: 5-6) through six components: putting poverty issues on the tourism agenda; enhancing economic opportunities and a wide range of impacts; employing a multi-level approach; working through partnerships including businesses; incorporating PPT approaches into mainstream tourism and reforming decision-making systems. In implementation of PPT strategies, the focus is on three core areas: increased economic benefits, positive non-economic impacts, and policy/process reform (Ashley et al. 2001, Ashley 2002). PPT impacts are correspondingly related to three types of poverty criterion: poverty of money, poverty of access, and poverty of power (UNESCAP 2003). In terms of poverty of money, Ashley (2002) suggests using 1US$ per person as the
criterion in measuring PPT. In practice, however, using local poverty measurement criteria is still recommended.

The primary principles of PPT are placed between neoliberalism and alternative tourism development approaches (Harrison 2008, Scheyvens 2007, Jamison and Nardkani 2009). Earlier principles of PPT were formulated as ‘participation, holistic livelihoods, distribution, flexibility, commercial realism, and learning’ (Asheley et al. 2000). These development ideas of local participation, a holistic livelihood for local people, equal tourism benefit distribution and traditional knowledge learning are the main arguments for an alternative development approach. However, one missing link of PPT is gender participation and empowerment (see further below). The main focus of PPT remains on changing the distribution of benefits from tourism in favor of poor people, involving the private sector in reducing poverty through business activity, improving access to infrastructure and services, enabling empowerment and control, focusing on the government master planning process, increasing market access of the poor, and integrating them into the value chain. In this context, commercial realism, private sector, and market access are arguments promoted by neoliberal thinkers who advocate free market capitalism as opposed to state intervention in development. Neoliberalism and alternative tourism development approaches are the main theoretical foundations of PPT.

Despite formulations of PPT definitions, strategies and principles, there is limited empirical support showing that PPT works effectively for the poor. Ashley et al (2001:37) followed six case studies and concluded that most of the cases had an environmental focus, while at the same time defining themselves as ‘pro-poor.’ Other reports of tourism development practices (see PPT Partnership 2005, 2006, 2007), conclude that:

it is often hard to find evidence of activities that attempted to put the rhetoric into practice, evidence requires ‘good data on poverty impacts at the individual and household level’...we need to find ways of mainstreaming pro-poor approaches and engaging with the tourism private sector in order to have a larger impact,..., most impacts that are evident are still at the very micro local level, based on a single product or locality. And still there is too often an unwritten assumption that if tourism is community-based, it must also be pro-poor. Or equally falsely, that if tourism is to be pro-poor it must be community-based (PPT Partnership 2007:1).

This quote shows the problem of PPT gaining large-scale impacts, something that ambitious consultants have wanted to prove. Only a few cases give
evidence that PPT is widely working best for the poor, and three examples are often cited: Gambia is Good in The Gambia, the Nabji-Korpu Trail in Bhutan, and Nam Ha Ecotourism Project in Laos. A humble statement is that PPT initiatives now look for results from STEP (Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty) projects that have received support from various development agencies and countries (PPT Partnership 2007).

The emergence of the term STEP is thus a result of PPT. STEP was coined by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) at the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002, with financial support from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Although STEP is a new term, it resembles PPT: ‘STEP is defined as tourism that generates net benefits for the poor. STEP strategies aim to unlock opportunities for the poor, rather than expand the overall size of the tourism sector. STEP interventions attempt to involve the poorest sections of a nation in the industry in ways which will alleviate their poverty’ (Sofield et al. 2004: 4). PPT and STEP are in that sense similar initiatives (PPT/STEP) (PPT Partnership 2005). However, STEP is also a response by the global tourism industry, under the leadership of the WTO, to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to halve extreme poverty by 2015 (Sofield et al. 2004: v). STEP has received more financial support than PPT; the STEP Foundation was established in 2005 with financial support from the Government of Korea and 44 projects had been launched by 2006 (PPT Partnership 2006).

Although PPT/STEP has received increasing support, there has also been critique. PPT has been criticized for being too donor-based. As Mowforth and Munt (2003, 273) have argued, “in the long run…the cumulative effect of supporting (through multilateral and bilateral aid programs) the expansion of capitalist relations…may undercut ‘sustainable livelihood’ and exacerbate, rather than alleviate, poverty.” PPT is not anti-capitalist; strategies derived from a PPT perspective are formulated to incorporate the poor into capitalist markets by increasing the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and garner more collective benefit (Harrison 2008). Pragmatically, tourism is a private sector capitalist activity that needs to be profitable in a competitive world market, and one of the core areas is to maximize linkages and minimize leakages (Goodwin 2008). However, if PPT supports market access, the ability of the poor to compete depends on a number of fundamental factors: destination and accessibility, level and knowledge within the tourism sector, and access to decision making (Mowforth and Munt 2009, 345). Pro-poor tourism is confirmed to have good potential but

1 In this particular context, instead of using PPT/STEP, only PPT is preferable as the original definition.
it is called ‘not quite so poor’ and not for the poorest of the poor, as the focus in practice often translates to local residents of the ‘community’ (Mowforth and Munt 2009, 348). PPT is better viewed as a form of ‘fair trade’-type-market intervention; it is not a theory or model but an orientation (like the welfare approach) which may be applied to any form of tourism that aims to direct net benefits to poor people (Brown and Hall 2008, 844).

Various scholars have contributed to the PPT literature through academic and scientific debates. A number of special issues in tourism journals have contributed to this discussion, including Current Issues in Tourism (Hall 2007; Saarinen et al. 2011) and Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research (Jamison and Nardkani 2009). A main concluding remark has been that PPT initiatives can be valuable to some communities for the transfer of economic and intellectual capital, however, PPT does not change the location of these places in the domestic and international tourism commodity chain (Hall 2007: 116). PPT is not a sufficient tool for poverty elimination; PPT has to be integrated with other components, such as ‘Anti-poverty Tourism’ (APT), and should include destination competitiveness, local participation, and destination sustainability (Zhao and Ritchie, 2007). Jamieson and Nadkarni (2009) call for tourism as a tool for development (TT4D) as a substitute to PPT and suggest a combination of tourism and other necessary interventions to optimize economic and social returns on investments, for instance start-up capital for grassroots tourism enterprises (GTE).

Despite critiques, several international organizations show interest in putting specific PPT principles into practice. For instance, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Netherlands Development Agency (SNV), two of the main donor agencies in tourism, have recently put focus on market accessibility and the value chain approach. Instead of following the whole process of PPT, these international agencies focus on these specific terms. In the Greater Mekong Region (GMS), ADB stresses strategies to improve tourism-related infrastructure, support pro-poor community-based tourism projects in rural areas, facilitate private sector participation in tourism marketing and promotion, and ease the movement of tourists across borders (ADB 2010). Improvements of airport and road access to tourism destinations in Laos illustrate the case (Harrison and Schipani 2007) as well as tourism projects along the GMS economic corridor that links Thailand to Laos and China (LNTA 2008). SNV, on the other hand, argues that a pro-poor initiative is to address how to market products of the poor and how to integrate them into the value chain. The value chain approach is defined as ‘the sequence of processes from inputs for a specific product to final production, processing, marketing to final consumption’ (SNV 2008, 8). The purpose is to identify market-based solutions, which can be used to assist the

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poor (SNV 2008, 3-9). The pro-poor tourism approaches of these two organizations thus focus on the private sector, the access to markets, and employment opportunities for the poor. These pro-poor tourism approaches thus aim to reduce poverty of money and poverty of access, which still leaves poverty of power aside.

3.3 Place and space in Pro Poor Tourism

PPT strategies usually don’t integrate understandings of the importance of place and space (Mowforth and Munt 2003, 15). Harrison (2008) even argues that PPT strategies reveal a form of capitalist globalization, where economic benefit is homogeneously assumed. An integrated focus on place and space could reveal how PPT may or may not work more for some groups of people (often the elite) than for others (the poor), when and where. The specific character of place and space would reveal failures or successes in terms of how PPT might work for the poor. A place-sensitive approach would reveal the ways people benefit or not from tourism development in different places through various social relations such as gender, ethnicity, and class. The interaction between the capitalist mode of production and other sets of social relations reveals how PPT plays out in specific spatial scales. Place and space are central in my analytical framework as I seek to examine how tourism is working for the poor at different spatial scales.

The Critical Global Poverty Studies Group (CGPSG, 2009) puts emphasis on new thinking of poverty in relation to the concepts of place and space. The CGPSG views poverty as the ‘political, economic and cultural mechanism that is connected and recurrent across space and also (co)produced through human actions and places’ (CGPSG, 2009). The argument continues that poverty simultaneously operates through material processes and social constructions. A specific thematic is thus provided for ‘new poverty’, that it is a relational concept produced through social relations and understood in particular places in relation to global processes, global institutional and regulatory systems (Lera and Lawson, 2009). These ideas reflect a relational understanding of space and place and are seen as important for critical analyses of poverty, and consequently of poverty reduction strategies.

This understanding of place and space draws largely on the work of Doreen Massey (1994, 1995, 2007) and other geographers who see space and place as constituted by social relations. For Massey (1994), space can be understood as social relations ‘stretched out’. Social relations between different groups of people intersect in terms of class, age and gender and produce differences or conflicts related to the power of different groups of people. Massey contends that place is ‘the location of particular sets of
intersecting social relations, intersecting activities spaces, at similar spatial locality and stretching more widely’ (Massey, 1995: 61). The relational concept of place is central for the critique of existing political strategies and the possibility to combat poverty and inequality (Massey, 2007). McDowell (1999) discusses the interrelations of different social relations at the global, the national and the local scales. Concrete procedures of change can be examined at these different scales. For instance, tourism may be examined in terms of how it impacts to poverty reduction at different levels and in specific socio-spatial contexts. Mowforth and Munt (2003, 15) have pointed out how procedures of change often fail to acknowledge which places and people are included in the processes and which places and people are excluded.

In this study, I use the concepts of place and space as a platform to understand procedures of change under globalizing forces. In particular, I intend to examine how tourism for poverty reduction is constructed within a context of increasing global influences. The thesis argues that tourism for poverty reduction can be understood as a set of social relations, which are interacting at different spatial scales. In different places change is created through particular sets of social relations. National policy sets the overall framework for PPT; these policies often assume change as taking place homogeneously. However, if the concept of specific spatial-social relations is taken into account, the focus will be on different outcomes of PPT, related to social categories such as gender, ethnicity and class and to actors at different levels such as government institutions, private enterprises, and village authorities. Tourism for poverty reduction not only relies on globalizing forces but is also determined by local social relations in specific places.

3.4 Gender and ethnicity in tourism for poverty reduction

Women in tourism development have mainly been discussed in different case studies and gender as a theoretical concept has not been integrated in PPT strategies or principles. A critique of PPT has been that there is ‘weak commitment to gender equity in the practice of PPT initiatives’ (Scheyvens 2011: 38). Empirical studies by Shah et al. (2000) and Ashley et al. (2000) show how PPT impacts on women and men differently; women are for instance more often employed in low-skilled domestic-type tourism jobs. Women are also the first to suffer from loss of natural resources and cultural exploitation. These authors propose that education and training should target poor women at the community level to reduce barriers for women to benefit from tourism (Ashley et al. 2000:5). The role of women in tourism development for poverty reduction is more widely acknowledged in STEP documents (Sofield et al. 2004). Women’s employment and participation in
tourism are sample issues. A rationale for PPT interventions is that they can make significant contributions to employment opportunities for women. Sofield et al. (2004) identify two types of gender segregation in the tourism labor market. Horizontally, men and women are placed in different occupations in the tourism workforce; women are employed as waitresses, chambermaids, cleaners and flight attendants. Vertically, women have lower level occupations with few career development opportunities. This typical ‘gender pyramid’ is prevalent in the tourism industry: women in stereotypically-female lower level positions and men in managerial positions (UNED-UK report, 1999).

Theoretical perspectives developed within feminist geography are important for understanding relationships of unequal opportunities between women and men in tourism. Feminist geographers focus on gender relations and spatial variation, which has largely been ignored by other strands of feminist research that for instance have focused more on studying women from anti-sexist perspectives (Massey 1994). Feminist geographers investigate the relationship between gender divisions and spatial division to examine the extent to which women and men experience spaces and places differently and to show how these differences themselves are part of the social constitution of gender as well as that of places (McDowell 1999: 12). The focus of feminist geography has also been on spatializing the constitution of identities, contextualizing meanings of places in relation to gender, and demonstrating how gender as a social construction intersects with other social constructed categories within particular spatialities (Moss 2002). Walby (1997: 66) argues that women often are secondary workers and flexible workers. Women are increasingly exploited as wage workers to accumulate surplus value and profit within the capitalist economy. The flexibility is sometimes interpreted as a move from Fordist to post-Fordist production regimes, which may enrich skills and provide a variety of forms of employment (Piore and Sabel 1984 in Walby, 1997).

Feminist perspectives have been employed as a framework to understand gender relations in tourism (Wilkinson & Prawiti 1994, Swain 1995, Leung 2003, Sörensen 2008). Feminists examine the differences between the power, social position, attitudes and behaviors of men and women and explore ways in which current practices in societies might be changed in order to release women from their subordination (WGSG 1997). However, studies on gender do not focus only on women, as in many earlier tourism studies (Kinnaird & Hall 1994, Swain 1995, Sinclair 1997, Apostolopoulos et al. 2001), but also on the relationships between women and men (Wilkinson & Prawiti 1994, Sörensen 2008).
The gender perspective in PPT and STEP is furthermore limited as there is no problematizing of how gender intersects with other social categories such as class, ethnicities, sexuality, and age. In this thesis I have sought to examine how gender and ethnicity are interrelated in tourism and poverty reduction. I see gender as a relational concept and social construction. Pritchard (2007) acknowledges the norms of horizontal and vertical gender segregation and admits that to date the study of gender in tourism research has exclusively focused on women rather than on women and men; and largely focused on employment patterns and sex tourism while little work has focused on gender in ethnic tourism and poverty reduction. Examples of tourism research on gender and ethnicity are Flacke-Neudorfer (2006, 2007, 2008) and Morais et al. (2005) and on tourism and ethnicity (Liu 2010, Yang and Wall 2009a, 2009b, Doorne et al. 2003). In this thesis, instead of following gender stereotyping horizontally and vertically as the main focus of gender issues in PPT, the research has been more inductive and started from the empirical work when examining ethnic and gender divisions of work. Thus gendered division of work in tourism for poverty reduction in this study moves beyond PPT principles where none of these feminist perspectives are explicit.

There have been arguments that in applying Western gender/feminist concepts to the Asia Pacific region, with its, for instance, specific host/industry/state relations, particular attention should be given to the impact traditional ethnic minority gender hierarchies have on gender relations in tourism (Cohen, 2001, Pearce, 2004, Walsh, 2001, Wood, 1997). Traditional ethnic minority gender hierarchies affect women and men’s work in tourism so that unequal roles between women and men can be observed. Despite the potential improvements in economic status that women may attain as a consequence of involvement in tourism-related employment, socio-cultural barriers may constrain them from aspiring to political and communal leadership roles and hinder their non-economic dimension of poverty reduction (Kinnaird and Hall, 1996). In general, historical and socio-cultural factors are influencing local gender relations (Swain, 1995, Morais et al., 2005), who in turn determine gendered division of labour in tourism (Timothy, 2001). The point is that these factors influence poverty reduction strategies, and have not been sufficiently addressed in PPT. In the case of Laos, there is a gender ideology and legal framework that are addressing all citizens of Laos. A previous study about gender and tourism in Laos was based on the Lao-Tai group which represents the majority ethnic group in Laos (Khouangvichit 2010). The specific gender ideology for other ethnic groups still merits attention in terms of how they experience gender practices, in particular in tourism.
3.5 Globalization, PPT and the role of the state under transition

As discussed in the introductory chapter, tourism is often linked to economic globalization. Globalization, however, is a fluid and contested concept. Various scholars have interpreted different meanings and versions of the term (Herath 2008). The most well known definition of globalization refers to economic, cultural and political processes through which places across the globe are tied together into relations of increasing and mutual interdependence. Globalization thinkers labeled as hyperglobalisers argue that globalization emerged from neoliberalism since the 1970s and has now been adopted by governments on the global scale. An example is expressed by Mackinnon & Cumbers (2007) who contend that nation states are being bypassed by transnational business networks and are unable to regulate and control market forces. The so called transformalists, such as Giddens (1990), argue that the role of the nation-state is declining due to the strong force of political globalization through new forms of policy and scales of international intervention. Fyfe & Kenny (2005) assert that the decline of the nation-state will lead to significant consequences of ‘events, decisions’ and specific social, economic or political activities in one part of the world for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe; so called ‘trans-state’ processes. Skeptics and critics of capitalist globalization argue that the state has not lost its relevance and that economic integration without state intervention will lead to a widening divide between rich and poor and accentuate uneven development. Sklair (2001) points out that the major transnational corporations (TNCs) are the new arbiters and beneficiaries of globalization by relying on funds of the international financial institutions such as the World Bank. He further highlights the myth of globalization as class polarization that requires an alternative approach to capitalist globalization. Sklair proposes that the absolute minimum condition is that private ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange is restricted to small scale enterprises, in order to prevent the emergence of a transnational capitalist class and its local affiliates.

That neoliberal globalization provides the primary conditions for capitalism across the globe is also argued by David Harvey, who presents the concept of \textit{time-space compression} as a relationship of globalization and capitalism. In \textit{The Condition of Postmodernity} (1989) Harvey argues that globalization processes increase the pace of economic life and cause a phenomenal acceleration in the movement of capital and information. Thus \textit{time-space compression} reveals this intensification as capitalists aim to overcome the barriers of distance and stretch their economic relationships to all parts of the world. An ongoing expansion of capitalist relations of production quickens the velocity of capital, and sustains profits around the globe. There
has been a critique among some scholars that most accounts of globalization are by Westerners and are essentially about Western globalization as a result of the expansion of Western capitalism (Mowforth and Munt 2003, 16). The supranational organizations are agencies based in western countries and arguably mainly inspired by neoliberal thinking, in particular after the debt crisis of the developing countries. Dhammika Herath (2008), however, discusses different globalization theorists and argues that some of them in fact rephrase and reword the central concepts of the dependency school. The role of international aid in the framework of globalization is outlined by Herath (2008, 828) who concludes that some globalization theories carry dependency arguments today but within somewhat different ideological frameworks.

The expansion of western views on globalization theories can also be seen in pro poor tourism (PPT) (Harrison 2008). It is not a surprise for instance that PPT has been initiated by supranational organizations from countries in the West such as the Overseas Development Institution (ODI), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and Center for Responsible Tourism (CRT). When the concept was adopted by the Banks and other donor agencies like UNESCAP, ADB, SNV, NZAID and GTZ, it implicitly worked with the purpose of expanding tourism as integral in the spread of capitalism. Thus some critics argue that rather than seeing PPT as policies in tourism that benefit the poor, it could be interpreted as allowing for capital accumulation and sustained profits within the tourism sector in general. Harrison and Schipani (2009) continue to question if PPT is really a promise for the poor or rather mainly a new form of capitalist expansion that comes under the label of ecotourism.

Global political dimensions of tourism development as a tool for poverty reduction in developing countries have also been obvious in the case of Laos. There was a direct involvement of international donor agencies such as UNDP, UNESCO, ICUN, SNV, JICA and ADB in the formulation of the first tourism policies and master plans in 1990 and 1998, and SNV provided technical assistance to formulate the Law on Tourism in 2005. These examples illustrate the intervention of global political institutions in national policy contexts and show a declining role of national governments as opposed to supranational organizations. The supranational organizations also play important roles in the practice of tourism for poverty reduction in Laos. UNESCO, NZAID, SNV, and IFC provided funding and technical assistance for Nam Ha Ecotourism Project in northern Laos, as one example. Other donor aid-led ecotourism projects in other parts of the country are the GTZ initiated Akha Experience which later was transferred to Exotissimo, a
private tourism company. Xe Pian Ecotourism Project in the Champasak province south of Laos has also operated in a similar process.

As has been evident, not all globalization scholars agree with the ideas of promoting free markets, deregulation and privatization. Skeptics argue that state intervention is necessary, but the appropriate scope and character of state intervention is highly debated. Kiely (1998), for instance, criticizes the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank as misplaced policies and suggests that policies should focus on strengthening social structures within localities as well as the relationship between national economies and the global economy. Kiely argues that state economic intervention has relevance for sustained capitalist development, for instance in terms of providing public goods and infrastructures which are necessary prerequisites for capitalist production and exchange. Onis and Senses (2005) write that the emergence of the Post Washington Consensus (PWC) will provide an improvement over the Washington Consensus but does not go far enough in overcoming the limitations of the neoliberal policy agenda. The argument continues that a closer investigation reveals how effective state interventionism and an appropriate mix of state and market were the key ingredients of South East Asian Countries’ superior economic performance. It also suggests that under certain specific conditions state interventionism can act in the public interest and can play a constructive role in the development process. Instead, the experience of various post-communist transition economies would appear to emphasize the importance of institutions and the need to improve the performance of the state as a necessary ingredient of market-oriented reforms, thus promoting both state and market as needed for economic development.

Glinavos (2008, 1094) continues to criticize the World Bank and IMF as they point out that the state envisaged by these institutions in the era of the PWC is not the protecting or regulatory state of the pre-neoliberal era, but an ‘enabling state’ that exists to protect a limited set of private rights and to create framework conditions for the flourishing of markets. Glinavos comments that after the reform of the PWC, a similar package of neoliberalism as under the WC is still promoted across the globe. To Glinavos the emergence of the PWC is characterized by an enlarged reform agenda, where institutions and the rule of law do not depart from the trajectory of the WC and do not constitute a solution to the original Consensus created. Clarke and Gaile (2005) understand this process as local politics in a global era which are focused on so called place-based politics. To them, local politics are heavily weighted towards entrepreneurial economic development issues. This idea is criticized by some scholars (i.e. Massey, 1991 in Clarke and Gaile 2005) for being too reductionist because it assumes
to ‘read off’ and grasp local interests and institutional change from macroeconomic imperatives. Massey argues that globalization has created conditions for a diverse and progressive local politics of places, shaped by complex interrelationships between a range of different socio-cultural, political and economic interests. This idea is based on place-sensitive approaches as a platform to reveal the interplay between different social relations of global and local politics; for instance how the power of supranational organizations interplays with local government in specific arenas. As discussed above, Massey’s argument is based on a relational understanding of place and space and may be used to examine issues of, for instance, gender relations and poverty reduction policies in different local contexts.

Theoretical perspectives on state intervention are important for this study in that the state has a crucial and maybe increasing role in tourism development in Laos in general and in particular for poverty reduction (Rigg 2005: 26). In tourism, not only the central government, but also provincial governments in charge of tourism take part in tourism development. Government organizations in other related sectors also indirectly influence tourism practices at the provincial and village levels. Village consolidation is important component of government intervention, which may indirectly be in conflict with ecotourism development. Local political institutions and local headmen who hold political party membership at the village level, or women who are members of village women unions (VWU), may play central roles in practices of tourism for poverty reduction in the villages. In a situation where local people lack primary conditions to participate in and benefit from tourism development, the role of local government is crucial. As we have seen, core areas of PPT strategies and principles focus on the tourism industry as a first approach and rely more on development agencies or donor-based projects. This may lead to aid-dependency and repetition of market capitalism. Thus government approaches merit exploration, in particular how the role of government on all levels may contribute to tourism development for poverty reduction. The role of local government is potentially increasing in terms of facilitating and directly controlling tourism projects for poverty reduction and for women’s empowerment; these issues are further examined in the articles of this thesis.

3.6 PPT, sustainable tourism and community-based tourism

PPT is often related to environmental projects and the concept of sustainable tourism. Many PPT initiatives have been created by international organizations based in Western countries whose interests are often oriented towards ecological preservation. PPT initiatives are thus sometimes
overlapping with sustainable tourism. Ashley et al. (2001) discuss in what ways PPT may be different from sustainable tourism. Firstly, PPT falls generally within the definition of sustainable tourism. If PPT is defined as tourism that generates net benefits for the poor in economic, social and environmental terms, it resonates with the definition of sustainable tourism. General definitions of sustainable development stress the triple bottom line of environmental, economic and social sustainability; however, the emphasis of sustainable tourism has been on environmental sustainability. PPT, in contrast, has a strategy to put the poor at the center of the analysis. The environment in which the poor live is just one part of the picture. Sustainable tourism initiatives focus on the mainstream destination and industry and not specifically on the poverty constraints of the countries in the South. PPT in contrast, focuses on tourism destinations in the South, and on tourism practices that are particularly relevant to conditions of poverty. However, sustainable tourism initiatives may contain pro-poor elements that are important for PPT (Ashley et al. 2001).

However, in general the linkage between PPT and sustainable tourism is rather weak (Harrison 2008). Sustainable tourism focuses on environmental issues, for instance, labeled as ecotourism and in that sense not primarily concerned with reducing poverty (Mowforth and Munt 2009). This is synonymous with alternative tourism that stresses the importance of ‘green’, ‘responsible’, ‘low impact’, or ‘ecotourism’ (Telfer and Sharpley 2008, 39-40). An argument is that PPT does not necessarily reflect the broader developmental aims of sustainable development. There are attempts to apply the principles of sustainable development not just as PPT, but also more widely in different sectors of tourism systems. Sustainable development in relation to PPT is left unanswered and challenged (Choke et al 2007). Tourism itself is a commercial sector, if tourism development has to generate net benefit for the poor and protect the environment, there may be strong moral imperatives but weak profit margins (Choke et al 2007). This demonstrates weak positions of both PPT and sustainable development. This has lead some authors to search for new approaches that are more applicable to PPT. Tao and Wall (2009) for instance provide sustainable livelihood framework as an option for PPT. One of the case studies for this thesis was initiated with environmental preservation in a national protected area as an end goal, rather than poverty reduction. Inclusions of local people into tourism activities were thus seen as a means to achieve that goal. This is clearly confirmed by Ashley et al. (2000) who distinguished ecotourism as tourism initiatives that may provide benefits to people, but are mostly concerned with the environment. In contrast, PPT aims to deliver net benefits to the poor as an end goal in itself. Environmental concerns are just a component to achieve the poverty reduction.
PPT initiatives may also be discussed in relation to Community-Based Tourism (CBT), in a similar vein as in relation to other forms of ‘alternative tourism’ such as sustainable tourism and ecotourism (Ashley et al. 2000, 2001, Ashley and Roe 2002, PPT Partnership 2005, Goodwin 2010). Ashley et al. (2000) admit that the interest in ‘green tourism’, ecotourism, and community-based tourism grew prior to the PPT literature. However, a claim is that the focus of these initiatives is on the need to ensure that tourism does not erode the environmental and cultural base on which it depends. It is limited in terms of considering the full range of impacts on the livelihoods of the poor. The focus of PPT is seen as not only an issue of niche markets as it is in CBT (Ashley et al. 2000, 2001, Ashley and Roe 2002). PPT is just as important in mass tourism to reduce barriers to activities of the poor and take a full range of livelihood concerns into account in the planning process. In another initiative of PPT, Ashley et al. (2000) admit that PPT overlaps with both ecotourism and CBT, but it is not synonymous with either. CBT aims at increasing local people’s involvement in tourism. Participation is a useful component of PPT, but PPT needs more than a community focus. PPT requires mechanisms to unlock opportunities for the poor at all levels and scales of operation. Harrison (2008, 856) also points out that benefits accruing from CBT to the poor may be secondary to conservation or other priorities, which is unlikely in PPT which takes net benefit as a primary interest. In a review of PPT after 10 years of practice, Goodwin (2010: 91) confirms that there is ‘no reference in the paper to ecotourism or to CBT to connect the objective of eliminating poverty to the mainstream industry.’ PPT is not a specific product, thus mainstream tourism or mass tourism can be PPT (PPT Partnership 2005, Scheyvens 2007).

In a wider context, CBT stirs a lot of debate and criticism. Reed (1997) comments that the theoretical underpinnings of CBT are weakly developed. Reed proposes theories of CBT planning and collaboration by considering the sources and effects of power relations within a CBT planning process. Power relations that favor tourism of the community itself are required rather than higher tiers of government. Bahaire and Elliott-White (1999) also highlight that community participation in tourism planning and development needs to be more firmly rooted in the context of local politics. The authors view community tourism planning as a process of empowering the community. By empowering a community, it would have real influence, control over local resources, accountable and representative local leadership and decentralized and democratized services (Bahaire and Elliott-White 1999, 247). Community participation is a way in which the community defines its needs and determines the response when they have been identified. Based on this CBT model, it is expected that the community is empowered and can benefit from tourism in a way that they can design.
Blackstock (2005) is also critical of CBT. To the author, CBT is a language of a neoliberal agenda rather than values of empowerment and social justice (Blackstock 2005, 40). The language used by CBT advocates suggests a focus on economic profitability not local empowerment. The rationale is that local control does not automatically lead to participatory decision-making because the tourism industry perceives that community participation in decision-making will increase costs and decrease profits (Chenowneth 1994, in Blackstock 2005, 44). A conclusion is that CBT focuses on maximizing economic stability of the industry. Manyara and Jones (2007) who applied CBT into case studies of tourism enterprises (CBEs) for poverty reduction in Kenya illustrate the point. The conclusion was that current CBE models focus on conservation rather than adequately addressing the priorities of local communities. They therefore reinforce a neocolonial model. The current model of CBEs relies heavily on donor funding, thereby reinforcing dependency. Three critical success factors for CBEs are awareness and sensitization, community empowerment, effective leadership and community capacity building.

Harris (2009) integrates PPT into CBT analysis and comes up with the term pro-poor community-based tourism in a case study of tourism in Bario, Sarawak, Malaysia. The author argues that CBT can deliver desirable benefits and perhaps provide insights into some of the facilitating conditions that enable this to happen. The argument continues that PPT is not an outcome of the growth of global tourism. Instead CBT is a type of PPT that is operated by rural villagers themselves. In order for CBT to be effective in benefiting the community, some major facilitating conditions have to be available. One is that non-traditional and emerging forms of tourism must be appropriate for their needs rather than the other way round. However, as with ecotourism, CBT may benefit the local community but not the poorest of the poor. This study found that the term CBT might be the most appropriate in the case of tourism development in Laos, rather than PPT. In the case of Nam Ha Ecotourism Project (NHEP) in northern Laos, a new term was actually created and named community-based ecotourism (CBE). The NHEP initiative focuses on environmental preservation in the Nam Ha National Protected Area (NHNPA) with support from international donors. This is similar to the case of Xepian Ecotourism project in southern Laos, supported by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The projects involve local people by creating tourism activities. The aim is to contribute to preservation, which is the end goal. Inclusion of local people in the project is seen as a means to also fight slash and burn activities and eliminate poppy cultivation. Local inclusions in these cases are in line with CBT. Preservation of National Protected Areas by introducing trekking activities means a market for ecotourism. Thus CBE emerged from combinations of these
development objectives. Whether CBE is the best means to generate net benefit for the poor or not is a challenging task of the projects.

3.7 Researching tourism and poverty reduction; recapitulation of theoretical influences

As we have seen, research on PPT is found in two contrasting camps: those who are proponents (Goodwin 1998, 2008, 2010, Ashley et.al, 2000, 2001, Ashley & Roe 2002, Jamieson 2003, Jamieson & Nadkani 2009) and those who are opponents (Mowforth and Munt 2003, 2009, Harrison 2008, Harrison and Schipani 2007, Brown and Hall 2008). A general observation is that PPT developed partly along with neoliberalism, particularly after the failure of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs), and was provided by the Banks for the indebted countries as an alternative tool for economic reform. Proponents thus promoted tourism as a sector that was expected to boost economic growth. Proponents expect trickle down effects of tourism for destination countries and see tourism as a tool for development. Critics, on the other hand, have casted doubt about the potential of tourism to benefit social and economic development in tourist destinations. This is due to some negative aspects such as leakage due to high rates of foreign ownership, low multiplier and spread effects outside tourism enclaves, reinforcement of patterns of socioeconomic inequality and spatial unevenness, and exploitation of local labor and cultures and loss of social control to outsiders (Brohman 1996, Timothy 2001, Brown & Hall 2008). Empirically, there is no consensus on the effectiveness of PPT for reducing poverty in low-income tourist destinations.

Few studies have been carried out on tourism and poverty reduction in Laos. Recent works are by Harrison and Schipani (2007, 2009) and Suntikul (2007, 2009, 2010) and by Flacke-Neudorfer (2006, 2007, 2008) and Khouangvichit (2010) who examined gender and tourism in Laos. The findings of the research vary from case to case. Harrison and Schipani (2007) claim that private tourism is a better approach in poverty reduction than donor aid-led tourism projects. A critique of donor aid-led projects is also in terms of their capitalist mode of tourism development that comes with the aid rather than a focus on the poor (Harrison and Schipani 2009). The research by Flacke-Neudorfer (2006, 2007, 2008) on tourism, gender and ethnicity does not discuss the link to poverty reduction. Khouangvichit (2010) took majority group of Laos who participated in mass tourism as a case study of tourism and gender. These studies are important background sources for the present study, where I aim to further examine how tourism relates to poverty reduction in Laos. My study examines how tourism development is exercised in Laos through the influence of donor aid-led
tourism projects and under the promotion of free market reforms and with the purpose of contributing to poverty reduction in the country. I draw on different theoretical perspectives to understand these processes. A relational understanding of the concepts of place and space are important as I focus on four tourism processes at different spatial scales in Laos: policy formulation, practices of tourism and poverty reduction policies, gendered divisions of labor, and a micro-economic perspective. Policy formulation may be seen as a platform to provide space for the poor to identify their needs and in order to gain access to tourism benefits. Policy formulation is also a platform for supranational organizations to influence the global South under political globalization. The World Bank and other international organizations provide funding and technical assistance in tourism development projects as part of socio-economic development and for poverty reduction. Assessing stakeholders who participate in tourism policy-making processes and the contents of tourism policies allows us to examine the power play between these tiers and how they influence the agendas. What is expressed in the agendas is analyzed in order to assess whether they address the needs of the poor. In these cases, the voices of the poor should be included.

Practices of tourism illustrate how policy agendas are manifested ‘on the ground’ in interactions between different stakeholders on different spatial scales. The practice is related to various socio-economic development projects and involvement of stakeholders from government offices and local people at different places and scales. The power is thus not only negotiated between donor agencies and central government, but also between various provincial governments and village authorities. In certain places, power relations between agencies expose both mutual and conflicting interests, which might bring negative or positive outcomes for the poor.

Gender division of labor is an analytical framework that disaggregates homogeneous poor into women and men. This asserts that specific place conditions construct specific gender relations that allow us to see how gender may intersect with ethnicity and how this in turn may affect access to tourism work. Power influences of different donor agencies, government and private sector also needs to be examined in different spatial contexts. Finally, a micro-economic perspective may analyze how tourism incomes are distributed between households in different places where tourism activities have different ownership (private or public), different management or marketing strategies. The ownership of tourism may reflect how tourism benefits people differently in these places; different ownership may affect the distributional effect of tourism income. The ownership is a primary platform in distributing outcomes of the production. Under capitalism, the profit is mainly for the owners who share most of the earnings, with an unequal share.
between the owner and the workers. The publicly owned tourism performed by the state is supposed to have a strategy to distribute income equally between the workers in any given group. Inequality was evidenced in both cases, which reflects class relations in tourism income distribution.

4 Methods and data

4.1 Research methods

The choice of research method depends on research interests and research questions. The main research objective for this thesis is to examine how tourism contributes to poverty reduction at different spatial scales from policy level to grounded field practices. In order to acquire this knowledge various research methods have been applied, both documentary study and empirical data analysis from fieldwork. Analysis of policy documents was the first avenue to gain this kind of knowledge because it is a rich source of data for social research (Punch 1998). Government and private company official documents or agendas could arguably function as enabling frameworks for poverty reduction (Scheyvens 2007). The perspectives of low-income groups should be stated in tourism agendas in order to provide a ground for practices regarding poverty reduction. In practice in villages, households and personal lives it is crucial to perceive how tourism benefits the poor. The approach by which to acquire knowledge about practices of tourism is related to the experiences of the people whose lives are affected by tourism development, and in this study this is being addressed at the community level, the household level, and the personal levels.

Based on my research interest this study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Mixed methods are considered possible which gives greater prominence to the strengths of the data-collection and data-analysis techniques (Hammersley 1996, Morgan 1998, Punch 1998, Bryman 2008). For the specific arguments, Punch (1998) and Bryman (2008) provide that mixed methods are used in practice in social research for the purpose of triangulation, completeness, and enhancement. Triangulation means that the results of an investigation employing a method associated with one research strategy are cross-checked against the results of using a method associated with another research strategy. Combining both research methods may provide a fuller picture to the results of the study. The completeness adds more comprehension to a set of research questions, which can be achieved by adoption of both quantitative and qualitative methods. In my knowledge inquiry process I have used mixed approaches in order to contrast how tourism is presented as contributing to poor people in tourism strategies; how practices of tourism take place in villages; what
gender and ethnicity mean in tourism practices and how tourism impacts economically at the household level.

Content analysis (CA) and thematic analysis (TA) were employed as two qualitative methods in this study. CA has been described as a method for systematic description of the manifest contents of a text (Berelson, 1952, Xiao & Smith, 2006). Specifically, the CA is used to identify contents and reveal a number of recurring themes (Coomber, et al., 2006: 112). The method is thus related to reading of texts; it is qualitative in nature (Krippendorff 2004). A content analysis approach has some applications for documentary analysis in relation to tourism policy research. By using content analysis, researchers systematically analyze some dimensions that appear in written form (Henderson, 1991, Fennell, 2001). In this thesis, the content analysis did not focus on specific keywords but on “key points of interest” that were related to the research question and which were manifested as issues related to benefits for the poor in tourism policy (Albrecht, 2010: 97). The study employed content analysis to analyze tourism policy documents to answer the research question of what strategies of poverty reduction were mirrored in tourism policy in Lao PDR. The major themes from the documents were employment effects, linkage opportunities, knowledge base, and cultural assets (Paper I).

Thematic analysis (TA) is considered as a major strand of qualitative methods in the sense that it follows common procedures of most qualitative methods in the social sciences. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe TA as a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. TA is not based on any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore it can be an inductive approach or bottom-up way of inquiry, where themes are identified closely related to data themselves, or it can also be used in a theory-driven approach where themes related to specific research questions are analyzed (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Frith and Gleeson 2004, Toerien and Wilkinson 2004). For this thesis, thematic analysis was applied as an analytical method to analyze interview data from fieldwork to answer two research questions: in what ways did the state of Lao PDR promote tourism development as a poverty reduction strategy at the local level, and how did constructions of gender and ethnicity impact on women’s possibilities to benefit from community-based tourism initiatives? These inquiries focused on complex social realities ‘on the ground’ at the village level and in the interviewees’ personal lives (Papers II and III).

In contrast, a quantitative method was applied to analyze empirical data on incomes from tourism, which also were collected from fieldwork. Gini-coefficient and quintile share were the statistical methods used to analyze
the quantitative data in this case. Gini-coefficients have been widely used for analyzing income distribution in two or more populations or in a single population over time (Lee 2009, Wen and Sinha 2009). Wen and Sinha (2009) describe the Gini coefficient as a measure of the relative degree of a population that diverges from the state of perfect equality. In this case, the Gini-coefficient was not applied to test any hypothesis about inequality but to analyze the distribution of household income generated from two tourism projects. The purpose was to examine the economic impacts at the household levels of two community-based ecotourism projects in Northern Laos. The incomes of households were quantified and used as data for measuring the Gini-coefficient and quintile share. The analysis of quintile shares shows how tourism incomes are differently distributed among households in two case studies.

4.2 Data collection and data analysis

Access to the field

Research for the thesis was conducted in two provinces, Luangnamtha and Champasak, which are located more than 1000 kilometers apart; Luangnamtha is located in the northeast and Champasak in the southeast of Laos. The distance poses a constraint for travelling to the sites; Luangnamtha is for instance located almost 700 km from Vientiane Capital, which means about 24 hours of travel by bus. The two provinces were chosen as research sites because Luangnamtha was the first province where ecotourism was introduced and promoted as a best practice for poverty reduction in Laos. Champasak is a province that adopted and extended the tourism model of Luangnamtha into practice in a new context.

Conducting fieldwork in Laos requires permission to conduct research; this is a process set up by the government in order to make sure the information is going to be used for research purposes only and that it does not pose any threat or harm to national security. The process applies to all researchers and government staff; in my case as a lecturer at the university and as such a government employee, a permission letter from National University of Laos was processed to the provincial authority of each research site. Fieldwork was consequently carried out during repeated field visits between 2008 and 2010. During the first fieldwork in February 2008 I introduced the research project to provincial, district and village authorities. I presented the research proposal to the head and the deputy-head of the provincial tourism departments (PTD) and asked for permission to use policy documents and collect data in the villages. I also asked them about the background of tourism development in the provinces and about the tourism strategies and
related tourism documents. The collected documents were used for the policy analysis in Paper I.

During the first fieldwork, I also visited districts and tourism villages in order to prepare for the forthcoming interviews. In the districts of Sing in Luangnamtha and Pathoumphone in Champasak, I presented the research proposal to the heads of the district tourism offices (DTO) in a similar procedure as at the PTDs. I visited two villages in Luangnamtha; one that is part of a tourism project run by the district and another that belongs to the Aka Experience operated by a privately owned firm. I also visited two villages in Champasak of which one is part of an aid-led tourism project and co-existing with a private lodge. In both provinces, ethnic tourism is the main focus. In the Northern Province, tourism was closely related to ethnic minority groups such as Akha, Khmu, Hmong, and Lenten. In contrast, the majority Lao is more involved in tourism in the south. In the villages, I presented my research interests to the headman and tourism manager. Brief socio-economic data and tourism information were collected. In March 2008, I visited both provinces with one of my supervisors from Sweden. We visited the PTD, the DTO and two tourism villages. We made informal interviews with tourism staff, managers of private tourism lodges, the village tourism manager and villagers. The collected information formed part of my empirical data and was also used to design the interview guide and questionnaire for the forthcoming fieldwork in the villages.

Selection of respondents and data collection tools
In my study I selected a number of key informants and respondents based on the purpose of the research. Purposive sampling is a recommended technique as it guides the researcher on the basis of wanting to interview people who have experiences relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2008). I interviewed people working in any type of tourism activity; people belonging to the poorest and the richest groups in the villages and also people who were excluded from work in tourism. In May and June 2008 I visited the Northern Province and focused on the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project (NHEP) and the Akha Experience (AE). I made a trekking tour along the whole trail, accompanied by a Canadian researcher, a research assistant from the Faculty of Social Sciences, National University of Laos, the head of the provincial tourism service unit and a guide. In the south, I focused on the Xe Pian Ecotourism Project and the privately owned ecotourism lodges King Fisher and La Folie. It took between 5 to 8 hours to reach the villages, with the highest elevation of 1200 meters above sea level.

The main data collection tools were semi-structured interviews, life history interviews, participant observation, and questionnaires. The semi-structured
interview means that the interviewer ‘asks key questions in the same way each time’ and provides support questions to gain understanding about a specific issues but in a more limited way than in in-depth interviews (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 111). In this research, a list of key questions was prepared in advance related to the implementation of tourism in the village; incentives to participation; benefits and drawbacks; strategies to overcome difficulties, and alternative development schemes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in nine villages in Luangnamtha and five villages in Champasak provinces. The number of interviews in the villages varied and most of them were conducted in villages where lodges were available. In total about 50 semi-structured interviews were conducted. In this type of interview the researcher asks questions in a rather straightforward way and it was sometimes difficult for the respondents to answer, partly due to language difficulties, and the interviews became quite short. The interviews were made in Lao language, which is spoken in the villages but is not the mother tongue of the ethnic minority groups. Some interviews were made with the help of a interpreter. The semi-structured interview allows only limited responsiveness to individual personal contexts (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). In the three first fieldwork periods I used semi-structure interviews, but I found that it did not work out so well. In order to examine the issues of gender and ethnicity more in depth I decided to change strategy and do life history interviews. In-depth interviewing was thus not a method from the beginning of the research project. Instead it was chosen because of the development of the research process. These interviews lasted between 30 minutes and about 3 hours. A tape recorder and a notebook were used to preserve statements. The life history method was used in five ethnic villages from both provinces including majority Laos, Khmu, Lanten, Hmong and Akha people. In total about 40 interviews were conducted, but due to time availability and structure of the article format only the Akha ethnic group is analyzed in Paper III. The life history method allowed me to get more in-depth information about for example women’s lives before and after involvement in tourism, which shed light on the issues of ethnic tourism and gender relations.

During my field visits I also used participant observation to gain more understanding about the circumstances in the villages. I observed tourism activities and followed trails and I could observe for instance the situation related to hunting, which was claimed to be a threat to tourism in both the northern and southern provinces. A questionnaire was also designed and in January 2010 I collected quantitative data on incomes from tourism. The questionnaire consisted of nine parts: personal information, family background, procedures to become involved in tourism projects, employment within tourism, earning and spending income from tourism
work, non-economic benefit of tourism work, additional work and income, perception of tourism for poverty reduction, and general comments on how to improve tourism activities in the village. The samples were selected from the villages’ record books, which were available in the villages. Lecturers from National University of Laos, University of Champasak, and a city guide from the province assisted with the research. Heads of household, both men and women, answered the questionnaire. The survey was made in four villages, two located in the Northern province and two located in the Southern province. In total 82 interviews, which represent roughly 75 percent of 110 households from two villages in the Northern Province, were analyzed and reported in Paper IV. A brief summary of research methods and data collection in this study is provided in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
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<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>What strategies of poverty reduction are mirrored in tourism policies in Laos?</td>
<td>In what ways does the Lao PDR state promote tourism development as poverty reduction?</td>
<td>How do constructions of gender and ethnicity impact on women’s possibilities to benefit from community-based tourism initiatives?</td>
<td>What are the economic impacts at the household level of two community-based ecotourism projects in Northern Laos?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study areas</td>
<td>National Tourism Strategies, two Provincial Tourism Strategies, Luangnamtha and Champasak Province, two district annual plans and reports</td>
<td>Two provinces: nine villages in Luangnamtha and five villages in Champasak</td>
<td>Luangnamtha province, one village, the Akha ethnic groups, a part of the Akha Experience operated by Exotissimo</td>
<td>Luangnamtha province, 2 villages, Khmu ethnic for publicly owned tourism and Akha ethnic for privately owned tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>17 documents, approximately 390 pages, key informant interviews</td>
<td>24 in-depth interviews, key informant interviews</td>
<td>9 life histories, key informant interviews</td>
<td>82 household questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Content analysis of tourism policy documents</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and in-depth interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and life histories</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics, Gini-coefficient, Quintile shares</td>
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Table 6. Summary of research focus and methods of the four papers.

Finally, interviews were made with government officials in Vientiane and some donor aid-led project staff. Government staffs were interviewed at the Laos National Tourism Administration, the Cooperation and Planning Department, the Marketing and Women’s Union Division, the Department of Statistics, the Poverty Reduction Office, and Lao Women’s Union. Several donor agencies in Laos, who are involved in tourism development, including Asian Development Bank, Netherlands Development Agency, and UNESCO.
office, were also interviewed and visited to collect tourism documents and supporting data.

Methodological reflection
Methodological reflexivity is related to the relationship between the researcher and the researched and to how data is collected and analyzed. Snap and Spencer (2003, 20) argue that researchers should provide as much information as possible, in terms of both technical details and of conduct of the investigation. Hall (2004) adds that we should start with ourselves and reflect on how we situate ourselves in the fieldwork. As a lecturer at the university and as such a government employee, I am aware of my status and of some of the ways it may affect my research project and my relations to interviewees. I was new to both research sites, but local tourism government staff provided me with generous help and research collaboration, in particular in the Northern Province. After my presentation of the research proposal, research sites were suggested by the provincial tourism staff during the first field work. However, after the first visit, other tourism villages were also visited and included because I considered them more relevant in providing a fuller picture for my research project. In the final site selection there was thus no obligation for me to follow the initial suggestions.

During the fieldwork I was often accompanied by research assistants from the National university of Laos as well as local government staff, interpreters and a guide. I am aware that this might have created a reluctant situation for informants and respondents. In this regard, my awareness of being an ‘outsider within’ (Dahlström 2002, Griffith 1998, Khouangvichit 2010) might partly have addressed this limitation. I am an insider in the context of Laos, but at the same time an outsider in the local context. I sought ways to fit into the local context by for instance staying in the villagers’ houses instead of staying overnight at the village lodges. I looked for ways of developing closer personal and informal relationship with the interviewees. There were however situations where it was impossible to avoid interference by third persons like other family members and villagers during the interviews. Thus some in-depth interviews became more like groups views, for example when talking about the marriage traditions of the Akha. The influence of privileged and patriarchal positions in data collection in the interviews with government and village authorities was another concern. I addressed this through not relying solely on these authorities, but also on interviews with other villagers. For instance, management of the village tourism fund and payments were examples where I found that interviews with different groups of villagers provided a fuller picture of the issues.
Language barriers were a complication when conducting interviews with ethnic minority groups, such as the Akha, the Khmu, and the Hmong. In particular women of these ethnicities could not communicate in the Lao majority language. Even if interpreters were employed this had advantages and disadvantages. Akha men, such as the tourism manager, a guide and villagers were initially used as assistants during interviews and data collection with questionnaires. Using the manager as an interpreter was a disadvantage because he has power over the villagers regarding tourism management and transparency in terms of payment and village funds. Using guides and the villagers as translators was preferable instead of the powerful headman and manager, and they were found to be more neutral persons to process these matters. The participant observations during trekking and staying at lodges reflected a different relationship between me and people in the villages. I followed guides along the trail and observations at the lodges were not organized in advance. The occurrences of hunting men, for instance, were found during the trail by chance. Throughout the research process I have been aware of how relations of power might form the findings, and while this is unavoidable it has to be recognized and reflected upon. The initial interviews with villagers with positions in the village administration and in tourism mirrored an understanding of the situation from a privileged and patriarchal position, and as an outsider within I had to be aware of my own situation in this regard. I interviewed villagers from various groups; I visited the sites repeatedly, and did not rely on the interviews from the village administration to conclude my findings. I changed my data collection from semi-structured interviews to in-depth interviews and used guides and villagers as interpreters in order to have a more neutral situation when conducting interviews.

5 Paper summaries

5.1 Paper I: Tourism policy for poverty reduction

This paper examines current national and provincial tourism policies in Lao PDR and analyses to what extent tourism strategies for poverty reduction were mirrored within the agendas. The policies were found to be produced with a top down approach in which the central and provincial government ideology was strongly supported and formulated. The agendas were indirectly influenced by donor aid-led tourism projects. A number of tourism projects emerged as part of the national and provincial tourism strategies to achieve tourism development goals. The characteristics were identified as being basically ad hoc policies aiming to fulfill general socio-economic development goals rather than benefits directly targeted at the poor.
The content analysis showed that there were several spaces emerging in the texts which could be coined as benefiting the poor: employment effects, linkage opportunities, knowledge base, and cultural assets. However, priority was not explicitly given to the poor. Paid employment was presented as a major direct benefit through the rotation system created by donor aid-led tourism projects. Both national and provincial strategies all expected to benefit from this type of employment. After the promulgation of the tourism law, direct employment created by foreign direct investment in tourism is also seen as a promising source of income for the poor. Being positive about the private sector, however, the strategies of promoting locally owned tourism, in particularly small-scale or grassroots tourism enterprises were not visible in the policies. There were few signs of cooperative tourism in the province; and practical guidelines were not given.

The linkage strategy was represented as a promising future for the poor and was often given great emphasis in the strategies. This strategy has not been formulated out of concern about poverty reduction, but primarily in order to prevent financial leakage, which is high in the country. Backward linkages are promoted rather than forward linkages; these linkages include food and food festivals and supply of construction materials. The forward linkages on the other hand are only to a limited extent mentioned in the agenda; these include tour guides, laundry services, retail shops, taxi and private bus services. The opportunities for the poor to benefit from these two types of linkages are presently rather few. The supply of some types of food and construction materials would be possible, as well as being local tour guides. However, tour guides need basic training and the provincial training strategy has not yet been specified in terms of which groups are prioritized.

The agendas also demonstrate an interest in using a stronger knowledge base for tourism development in Laos and implicitly expect to spill over that capacity to the poor. The explicit knowledge base takes the form of tourism law, general knowledge of tourism, hotels, guesthouses and restaurants, and specific training related to tourism guides, hospitality, and services. This kind of knowledge is presently mainly possessed by government bodies who act as agents of knowledge transfer in the form of mandatory actions. The tacit form of knowledge which takes the form of learning by doing and sharing experience among the villagers is not emphasized. Only the ‘best practice’ from Nam Ha ecotourism project is cited as good practice for both national and provincial tourism strategies. There are therefore certain obstacles to be overcome in tourism learning processes. The majority of the practices are modeled by professionals from Western countries on behalf of donor aid-led projects, which in addition focus more on environmental protection rather than on poverty reduction.
'Cultural assets' emerged as an explicit space for the poor in the strategies. Cultural assets were promoted as an untapped potential for tourism development in the provincial strategy that includes customs, typical ways of dressing, traditional festivals and rituals. Objects and performances were related to the assets, through which the poor could benefit from tourism. Handicrafts were also presented as a link between local culture and tourism development in that the poor were expected to have this type of traditional knowledge for producing handicrafts. Marketing and knowhow techniques were however not mentioned in the agendas, such as how the poor could extend their knowledge to tourism. Traditional performances that often come along with seasons and months of the year were said to be assets that the poor could benefit from. The commodification of these kinds of practices needs to be organized and marketed for regular income support and a practical strategy would still need to be formulated along with the agenda.

5.2 Paper II: Tourism and the question of poverty

This paper examines tourism implementation at the village level. It asserts that different places experience varying impacts of tourism and at different magnitudes. Tourism projects have been implemented in different villages and are competing with other development projects. Due to existing rural development schemes such as village consolidation and relocation programs, villages have to adapt to these programs and to tourism projects aiming at modernization of the rural lives and eradication of poverty. Tourism projects have competed with economic development projects, which partly claim the same natural resources such as rubber plantations and road constructions. Tourism actors interact with other development actors including local government and the private sector, who want rapid development based on their own approaches. Therefore, using tourism as a tool for poverty reduction is challenging in various ways at the community level and at different spatial scales.

Tourism development in these villages had to adapt to both rural development projects and tourism activities. In some cases, such as in the Khmu and Lenten villages, the villagers had to merge two villages together due to small populations, and in such cases they had to abandon their previous tourism infrastructure and resettle at a new village ground. The relocation or merger of villages of different ethnic groups may transform socio-cultural practices and may mean a gradual abandonment of certain practices. The study found a certain contradiction between these village consolidations and tourism projects, which promote ethnic identity as the attraction. In terms of tourists' perspectives, this would presumably mean that 'authenticity' is lost, as villages are removed from original sites. It was
found in the study that with relocation there was a certain mistrust among different ethnic groups regarding the management of the tourism projects and the transparency of tourism payments. In other cases however there was a learning process and an adaptation to the changes caused by both types of policies. It was found that the head of the village was playing a crucial role in the adaptation. The villages of Nikhom Lieng Sad and Kum Ban Patthana adapted well to village relocation and unification programs. Nikhom Lieng Sad avoided the shocks by gradually adapting themselves to both relocation and tourism. They could maintain both activities and still enjoy tourism benefits. A similar case was Kum Ban Patthana, who could declare itself as a ‘developed village’, meaning that village poverty was eradicated.

Tourism projects were closely related to other environmental, cultural and social processes. In practice, local people in tourism villages had to adapt to other major development schemes, in particular rubber plantations. Government representatives together with private investors, mainly from China, were increasingly interested in this development model in tourism villages. In another case there was an innovative solution emerging as a local initiative. The villagers found that their indigenous knowledge of cardamom plantation was applicable and possible to combine with an ecotourism project. They suggested an alternative to both the Western blueprint (ecotourism projects) and to Chinese investments (rubber plantations). In all, the solutions for the villagers to both rural development schemes and tourism seemed not to come from the state but were rather related to the power of negotiation of local community leaders and villagers’ own livelihood strategies. The bottom-up approach in this case was rather different in that local knowledge played a role in harmonizing rural development with tourism development. It appeared that the role of local knowledge was important in providing an alternative intervention and facilitated effective local participation in both rural development and tourism projects.

5.3 Paper III: Ethnic tourism in Lao PDR: gendered divisions of labour in community-based tourism for poverty reduction

Although gender equality is actively encouraged in official policies of Laos, gender is not the main emphasis in the tourism strategy for poverty reduction, in particular not for ethnic minority women. This paper takes a closer look at and disaggregates the poor into women and men who belong to different ethnic groups and social organizations. The impact of tourism for women with low incomes is examined. In practice, the gendered division of labor in tourism was related to both traditional beliefs and contemporary
practices, which have significant impact on ethnic minority women in remote areas.

The findings highlight that patriarchal practices merged with the introduction of capitalist modes of tourism production in the ethnic tourism initiative Akha Experience. The belief in spirits and sacrifice practices, Lieng Phi, has governed Akha’s lives over generations and has created patriarchal structures in which men prolong their social power over women in the family organization and in society. The practice of traditional belief discriminated women from opportunities to get an education and led to unequal roles in the family and in society. Lacking education, women had limited chance to be promoted for leading positions in tourism, such as manager and tour guide, which can earn higher incomes than other positions in tourism. This specific practice strengthened gender inequalities in tourism so that often only men held positions such as village tourism managers and tour guides. However, Akha women had turned some ethnic-specific practices into tourism businesses. Massage was previously served by Akha women only for visiting guests and parents. The massage is now a part of the Akha Experience tourism program. Through this division of work in tourism, Akha women have changed their roles from domestic unpaid workers to paid workers. The inequality was however still seen in wage rates for positions in tourism. Women’s working positions, such as masseuses, were lower than those of the men and the fee for massage had never increased since the beginning of the project.

This kind of patriarchal structure was coupled with the tourism mode of production and continued to hamper women’s employment and payment in tourism. This confirmed that tourism was not really working for the poor. Ethnic minority women found it hard to negotiate with the private tour operator, Exotissimo, which has an exclusive 15 year contract with the Akha Experience. The belief in spirits and sacrifice practices, Lieng Phi and women’s practices in tourism are ‘signs’ of authenticity in ethnic tourism. These practices are being implicitly preserved for tourists and thus commodified in new tourism. This creates a paradox as preservation of the unique character of these practices required for ethnic tourism is distracting from opportunities to empower poor people and ethnic minority women. It is a challenging task to maintain this kind of authenticity and attraction and simultaneously have the ambition to eradicate gender inequalities and poverty. The village women’s union (VWU), a mass organization, had emerged as a platform for changing the position of Akha women. One Akha woman, head of the VWU, was selected as assistant to the tourism manager. The union has acted within local government to empower women. This type
of gender equality was promoted along with existing patriarchal structures of the general government authority at the local level.

5.4 Paper IV: What is the Economic Impact of Ecotourism for the Poor in Lao PDR?

Paper IV examines the differences in tourism incomes on the household level in two specific places. The findings revealed that apart from general provisions of food, accommodation and guide services, some ethnic practices were converted into tourism activities and generated additional incomes from tourism products. The uniqueness of certain ethnic practices was commodified into tourism products and used as income generating activities. The publicly owned tourism enterprise promoted some Khmu ethnic practices, for instance making handbags and jar-wine (traditional rice wine) as tourism souvenirs and drinks. On the other hand, the privately owned tourism company promoted massage and cultural shows for tourists in Akha villages. These specific place initiatives increased incomes to the households in the area.

Nevertheless, the inequality in the distribution of tourism income prevailed in practice. Both public and privately owned tourism initiatives demonstrated significant household income inequalities. The Gini coefficients were 0.41 among households in the village where the publicly owned tourism operated, and 0.39 among the households in the case of the privately owned tourism project. The quintile share analysis confirmed that a small minority of the population received nearly half of their income from the publicly owned business and more than half from the privately owned business. The result implied uneven and unequal development in the tourism sector. The PPT benefit for the poor households was thus questioned.

6 Concluding discussion

This thesis examines how tourism contributes to poverty reduction in Lao PDR. It is argued that for tourism to benefit the poor, tourism development initiatives should focus on low-income groups, promote locally owned tourism enterprises, and emphasize women’s empowerment in tourism. In examining arguments inspired from alternative tourism development approaches and PPT, the thesis explores tourism for poverty reduction from different angles and at different spatial scales: national and provincial tourism and poverty reduction policies; practices of tourism and poverty reduction policies in villages; gender division of work in ethnic tourism, and economic impacts of community-based ecotourism at the household level. In
this concluding chapter I will discuss major themes and findings of the thesis.

Theorizing alternative tourism development approaches to poverty reduction

A basic principle of PPT is that tourism should be working for the poor. In line with previous research (Sharpley and Telfer 2002, Mowforth and Munt 2003, Scheyvens 2007, Cole 2008b), this thesis found that for tourism to work best as a tool for poverty reduction it requires emphasis on low income groups, bottom-up initiatives, women’s empowerment and locally owned tourism projects. Although I identified some spaces for the poor in tourism policies in Laos, there was limited mention of and emphasis on the principles of PPT such as women’s empowerment and locally owned tourism. The specific focus of tourism policy assumed that the poor can homogeneously benefit from tourism, not least related to employment effects, linkage opportunities, knowledge base, and cultural assets (Paper I). All these four aspects were highlighted assuming that people who receive these benefits are all poor. Policy formulation mainly took place within government authorities and international organizations. The space of power in tourism policy was in this case rather fixed within the boundaries of the authorities with almost no sign of how power could be exercised with participation of the poor.

Some distinctive features of alternative tourism development approaches were brought up by the donor aid-led tourism projects like the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project (NHEP), the GTZ initiative, and the Xe Pian Ecotourism project. These projects are primarily concerned with nature preservation including forests and wildlife. Before the start of these projects, the traditional livelihoods of local poor people such as slash and burn activities, poppy cultivation and hunting were identified as potential threats to the environment. The NHEP created a ‘best practice’, which was heavily based on Western consultants (Schipani 2008). These tourism models are categorized partly as combinations of community-based tourism (CBT), ecotourism and pro-poor tourism (PPT) approaches. The inclusion of local people into the project became a solution to preservation and eradication of poppy cultivation. Combining these ideas created a community-based ecotourism project, similar to the Xe Pian Ecotourism project in the southern province. The direct employment in these tourism projects was organized according to different types of tourism rotation services such as food and drink provision, accommodation, cultural shows, massage, and handicraft selling (Paper IV). Although the criteria for participation was not clear cut, all people were assumed as poor and in fact, the poorest group of the poor were left out from such rotations. Nevertheless, the NHEP was
awarded as an ‘excellent’ project of tourism for poverty reduction by UNDP in 2001. The way tourism is promoted as poverty reduction fits into the definition ‘any tourism that is generating net benefit for the poor can be PPT even if the richer people benefit more than poorer people’ (Ashley et al. 2001).

These community-based ecotourism projects are still not locally owned tourism projects. NHEP and Xe Pian Ecotourism operate through the provincial tourism service unit (TSU), which acts as the gateway office for the tourists. The GTZ initiative operates under a 15-year contract of a private company (Paper III, IV). The local people only participate in the rotation services as mentioned above. The poor are mainly receiving income through labor wages and the village tourism fund. However, local poor people initiatives are enacted from the ground up, a kind of alternative tourism strategy. Tourism is a seasonal industry and not all households can get their turn in the rotation. Using other forms of local livelihoods as a tool of rural poverty reduction is still applicable in this sense (Rakokdi 2002, Choke et al. 2007, Tao and Wall 2009). The role of traditional knowledge on subsistence agriculture is still applicable in this situation. The case of cardamom plantation was an example where local people combined ecotourism with their need to preserve forests, and the rubber plantation which needed clearance of jungle and bush (Paper II). This was a situation where local people adapted themselves between the ‘ecotourism’ project that promoted green business from Western societies and natural based development from new oriental Chinese style, rubber plantation. This provided a new frontier as local poor people compete for resources with different external actors and at the same time, they contribute to the government’s vision of poverty reduction and Millennium Development Goals, a must do task.

**Patriarchal structure hindering women’s empowerment and poverty reduction**

Severe poverty is mainly occurring among ethnic minority people, whose traditional beliefs and practices are still central in their life-world (Chazée 1999, Lao PDR 2001b, Chamberlain 2007). The beliefs and practices of animism follow patrilineage such as continuity of the clan, which reveals a patriarchal structure (Chazée 1999). In this structure men maintain their power over family and society (Timothy 2001, Devedzic 2002, Pritchard et al. 2007). These practices create unequal roles between men and women, both in the private and public spheres. Women are excluded from the selection of becoming heir and leading the clan. They are also unlikely to be encouraged to receive education.
When it comes to tourism, this tradition partly influences practices of gender empowerment and poverty reduction. In the case of the GTZ initiative ecotourism project for instance, even though the project staff tried to balance tourism work between men and women in the village, they were actually hindered by these traditions, which discriminate against women. The criteria for selection of manager and guide were issued by the project, but in practice they still relied on the knowledge of the village headman. The practice of the Akha was that family members belong to the father’s lineage (Flacke-Neudorfer 2007). Only the sons of the family, either the first or the last born, were allowed to do Lieng Phi, a symbol of the continuity of the clan. Only men were put forward for education to lead the clan and thus they can work for higher tourism positions such as managers and guides, which require basic education in English and guide training. The recruitment and management of the tourism project is running into this traditional practice without pre-determination (Paper III). This influence was difficult to avoid, as the project relied on knowledge of the headman, who facilitated the process.

Pro-Poor Tourism strategies point out the problem of stereotyping gender relations in tourism work, where men and women are placed in unequal occupations in the work force (Sofield et al. 2004). If gender is socially constructed and intersects with different social relations such as ethnicity, women’s possibilities to receive tourism benefits are different from men. This thesis shows that women are still hindered by traditional beliefs and practices, which results in unequal tourism positions and wages. Women who are assistants and do not speak the Lao language have limited chances to attend meetings with tour operators and propose better wage rates for massage served by women. The wage of women’s massage did not increase in comparison to men’s job as guides since the beginning of the project of Akha Experience (Paper III). This was a situation where a patriarchal structure ran against women’s empowerment and excluded women from equal participation in tourism positions and economic benefits. This minimizes the potential of using tourism for poverty reduction.

Uneven and unequal tourism development under a capitalist mode of production

Being part of economic globalization, tourism is repeating similar processes as in other economic sectors. Community-based ecotourism and pro-poor tourism are tied to the market mechanism that is a principle of the capitalist economy (Harrison 2008, Harrison and Schipani 2009). In the context of privately owned tourism, the Akha Experience, the tour operator leaves the wages free floating for the villagers who work for the lodge, based on market exchange rates. The fee is paid in US$ Currency rather than in the local
currency, Lao Kip (Paper III). There is no safeguard for the fluctuation of the exchange rate. Although the agreement of the company and the villagers about the labor wage can be renegotiated yearly, there is not much practical progress brought about since the commencement of the tourism project. The minimum wage rate for all payments is specified in the initial agreement, but the payment is still free floating based on market exchange rates, including the massage service served by women. This shows a characteristic of the capitalist mode of production, which is more concerned with profit maximization rather than the responsibility for the loss that might occur. The operator does not take any risk in case of the payment. In this case, poor people and ethnic minority women are drawn into a global marketing channel through this local social-economic context. Women’s labor, in particular ethnic minority groups, who are disadvantaged in many aspects in relation to men - not only in terms of educational opportunities, local elite power, patriarchal structure - are hindered from being empowered and get an unequal opportunity in employment, and obtain less benefit from tourism development.

Both publicly owned tourism and privately owned tourism produce inequality in tourism income distribution and thus strengthen class polarization in earnings from tourism. The Gini-coefficient and quintile share reveal that regardless of ownership-type, such issues are occurring. The Gini-coefficient indexes of tourism income for both cases reveal higher inequality than the national average. The quintile share analysis confirms these figures as only a minority of the population receives nearly half of their income from the publicly owned business and more than half from the privately owned business (Paper IV). Pro-poor tourism (PPT) is not anti-capitalist; it is rather formulated to incorporate the poor into the capitalist market by increasing employment and collective benefit (Harrison 2008). The PPT benefits for the poor households are thus questioned as the income gap between the poor and the rich is becoming wider. The expansion of capitalism under the ideas of new tourism in the form of ecotourism, community-based tourism and pro-poor tourism (Sharpley and Telfer 2002, Mowforth and Munt 2003, 2009) rather provides prerequisite conditions to allow for new forms of exploitation of cheap labor from peripheral destinations. Thus whatever the terms are, if the structure of the income distribution is not controlled, guarding and directing net benefits down to the poor, the tourism will hardly ever benefit and help to eradicate poverty. In this sense, other tourism developments like ‘conventional tourism’ run by small family businesses could be making larger contributions to local development and poverty reduction than many of the ideologically-driven community-based tourism initiatives (Harrison and Schipani 2007, Hitchcock et al. 2009).
Aestheticisation of poverty or empowering the poor

The idea of using and promoting ethnic tourism is presented as an alternative way to empower the poor and eradicate poverty. Ethnic tourism relies on the perception of ‘unique culture’ in the destination to attract tourists. From the perspective of the tourists, seeking ‘authenticity’ is a key factor. To experience ‘authenticity’, cultural experiences and practices are put forward as targets of the tourist’s gaze (MacCannel 1999, Urry 2002). Different aspects of ethnic tourism, in particular underdevelopment of ethnic groups and their marginality may even be major sources of attractiveness, and preservation of their distinctiveness can be a pre-condition for the sustainability of their tourism (Azarya 2004, Cole 2008a). Suntikul (2007) argues that the very remoteness of communities and the perceived ‘authenticity’ of their way of life are important attractions for tourists interested in ethnic minorities in Laos (Paper II). In tourism policy the ‘cultural asset’ emerged as a space for the poor to benefit from tourism development (Paper I). A specific case in this study, the belief and practices of ethnic people such as Lieng Phi and women’s practice of massage were also perceived as ‘signs’ of authenticity in ethnic tourism (Paper III). These practices were being implicitly promoted as cultural experience and thus targets for the gazes of the tourists. The debate about this kind of ‘authenticity’ and gazing has actually been extended and related to poverty. Some researchers have termed it aestheticisation of poverty or poorism (Moforth and Munt 2003, 2009, Baran 2008). The aestheticisation of poverty is debated and in this context reveals some problematic aspects of ethnic tourism. This study pointed out the contradiction of preservation of specific practices required for ethnic tourism and promoting opportunities to empower poor people and ethnic minority women.

Government intervention and political empowerment

This study showed that the role of state intervention in tourism mainly focused on the policy making process and the implementation of tourism projects in the village. In the policy making process, the role of government was not limited to preparing drafts, facilitating consultation, and finalizing the policy. In implementation, the role of government included establishing tourism sites, training local people, monitoring, and running tourism gateways, including marketing campaigns. Although the role of government intervention in tourism has been widely discussed (Harrison 1994, Brohman 1996, Jenkins 1997, Clancy 1999, Dieke 2000, Williams 2004, Hall & Jenkins 2004, Hall 2008,), the role of political parties and government interventions from other departments has received less mention (Dieke 2000). In this study other government departments played roles in influencing tourism projects both in conflicts and in facilitating tourism projects for poverty reduction. The village consolidation and rubber
plantations were examples of conflicting interest as they targeted the same
groups of people and the same natural resources.

This thesis also found that the intervention from local political parties and
mass organizations, like the village women’s union (VWU), were important
for tourism practices for poverty reduction and women’s empowerment. The
cases of Nikhom Lieng Sad, Kum Ban Phattana, and VWU in the Akha
Experience illustrate the point (Paper II, III). These cases show that for
tourism practices in a former socialist economy the local political party and
mass organizations maintain important roles in the villages during transition
from central planning to market economy. These forms of organizations are
still valid and closely related to the implementation of tourism projects. The
Nikhom Lieng Sad and Kum Ban Phatthana tourism villages were indirectly
steered by headmen who are members of the local political party of Lao
People’s Revolutionary Party (LPRP). The VWU adds a view of how women
might be empowered by tourism. The VWU is established in every village in
the country as women’s representatives in social and economic affairs and
has some political power. They participate in and inform development
projects, such as tourism, to promote the role of women through the
organization. The selection of women to work in tourism projects is partly
based on this organization, as in the case of an Akha woman who was
selected as assistant to the tourism manager (Paper III). The role of such
organizations influences tourism projects and shows signs of women’s
empowerment.

Local government intervention plays an important role for political
empowerment in tourism for poverty reduction. In general, local
participation in tourism is not dealing with political structures. This study
gave insight into how in one case local political empowerment came not from
tourism but from the role of the local political party. This provided a case of
how a single political actor influenced a tourism project for poverty
reduction. It was considered an advantage that an actor initiated an
intervention to redistribute benefits to the poor from a bottom-up approach.
Government interventions from the tourism department usually act as a
gateway to tourists. The distribution of tourism benefits to the poor in the
village was a crucial part, which tourism government representatives from
the towns cannot be inspecting daily in the village. Thus only a stronger
village political organization played a role in directing tourism benefits to the
poorest groups. Empowering local political agents as such was important for
the redistribution of tourism benefits to marginalized groups, as long as the
poor could not present their own voices. If local political agents acted as
representatives of the poor, it improved the situation, at least in the short
term.
Tourism for poverty reduction as a social process at different spatial scales

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that tourism for poverty reduction is not a specific approach, instead it works as a social process at different spatial scales which can be part of aid-led tourism projects and state-led development, a capitalist-market, an elite idea of tourists (aestheticisation the poverty), an alternative development scheme (in case of cardamom integrated with ecotourism), shaped by patriarchal structure, and local government intervention (the role of members of the village political party and VWU). These processes take place at different interrelated spatial scales; from supranational agents in the form of funding and technical assistance in aid-led tourism projects; to national and provincial levels (i.e. through policy frameworks) down to local government intervention through project implementation at village level (i.e. the role of the village political party member and VWU); to privately owned tourism in determining the impact of household economic income and gender division of labor in tourism, and the local ethnic practices that have shaped gender divisions of tourism labor and benefits.

This requires deriving solutions directly from social contexts at different spatial scales rather than from a particular theoretical apparatus. The CBT, ecotourism and pro-poor tourism rather follow development ideas of the Western context that hardly fit into the contexts of all countries in the South. There are signs of local social contexts that determine tourism development in the villages such as patriarchal structure, alternative development schemes with local initiative, and local government intervention. Although these factors are not all positive contributions, they are still needed in many ways. The role of local government and traditional knowledge for instance are still important to tourism development for poverty reduction. That local people seek their alternative ways and adapt to national development programs is a promising solution to both tourism and other rural development projects. The role of alternative tourism development approaches, which stress initiatives of low-income groups, are thus still valid.

Private investments are still needed together with donor aid-led tourism projects for improving local people's living condition and for escaping poverty, rather than solely following CBT, ecotourism and pro-poor tourism approaches. Privately owned tourism was not doing worse in terms of local economic impact than publicly owned tourism. The inequality of both cases was rather the same and class relation still emerged in both cases. Thus the private sector could be promoted together with other types of tourism ownership as it is realized that the combination of both could help to
Eliminate village poverty and result in a ‘developed village’ or Kum Ban Phatthana faster than other cases.

Tourism development for poverty reduction is thus a process of economic and social transformation and is a qualitative concept that entails complex social, cultural and environmental changes rather than solely economic growth and a diversification of a country’s economy (Donnellan 2005). Poverty reduction by the means of tourism is in this case not only represented through economic benefit; the thesis also highlights noneconomic impacts, the policy making process and practices, with contributions of different institutions, as three core areas of PPT strategies. The driving forces of tourism development for poverty reduction are not contained in a specific tier, but constructed through social categories (institutions, ethnicity, and gender) in different spatial scales (national, provincial, village, household, and personal levels).

7 Summary in Lao language (不已สะอาดเปิ่นเกษตร)

คำสำคัญมีดังนี้ แม่ใจเดียวกันทักษะภูมิทัศน์ทุกอย่างทุกข์สิ่ง เริ่มต้นเฉพาะ งานผู้ที่มากกว่า แบบแล้ว มีสิ่งที่เกี่ยวกับแบบ hilos เริ่มเป็น ปัจจุบันโดยการบันทึกในข้อมูลปี 1980. จังหวัดท่องเที่ยวที่สิ่งที่มีนำ้ผลที่แตกต่างกัน มีข้อคิดใน ข้อมูลของภูมิทัศน์ของผู้ที่มีการท่องเที่ยวที่ที่เป็น การผ่านจากท่องเที่ยวครั้งหนึ่งไปเป็นการส่งผลต่อเยาวชนที่วิถี ที่ใส่ในทุกกรณีที่แตกต่างกันที่ผู้ที่สิ่งที่มีการท่องเที่ยว แบบผู้ที่ โอกาสเพื่อจะนำไป คุณภาพปี 2000 อาศัยได้ที่ท่องเที่ยวได้เริ่มต้นจากจะ เกิดการเปลี่ยนแปลงในทุกประการที่มีการอนุรักษ์รูปแบบ ที่ผูกขาดสิ่งที่มีการท่องเที่ยวในทุกประการ การปรับปรุงในระบบที่ผูกขาดสิ่งที่มีการท่องเที่ยวในทุกประการ การเปลี่ยนแปลงที่ผูกขาดสิ่งที่มีการท่องเที่ยวในทุกประการ การเปลี่ยนแปลงที่ผูกขาดสิ่งที่มีการท่องเที่ยวในทุกประการ การเปลี่ยนแปลงที่ผูกขาดสิ่งที่มีการท่องเที่ยวในทุกประการ การเปลี่ยนแปลงที่ผูกขาดสิ่งที่มีการท่องเที่ยวในทุกประการ.

The driving forces of tourism development for poverty reduction are not contained in a specific tier, but constructed through social categories (institutions, ethnicity, and gender) in different spatial scales (national, provincial, village, household, and personal levels).
1) ยุทธศาสตร์กายกู้ของพืชดูดความชุ่มชื้น ต้องมีให้เป็นประโยชน์อย่างย่อม-
กูร้าบ, และการเปรียบเทียบ

2) ทบทวนนักบ่มไม้เขย่ากู้ของพืช ต้องดูดความชุ่มชื้นในสภาพภู?
ดิ์ในช่วงปีที่ปี ให้เกิดเป็นอย่างไร

3) ทบทวนวิศวกรรมดูดความชุ่มชื้นกู้กันใช้พืชแบบเติมเวลา ปีกับปรับใช้เขย่ากู้ของพืชได้ ต้องดูดความชุ่มชื้นของพืชกู้กันใช้

4) ต้องดูดพืชกู้กันของพืชมีมุมมอง ให้ปรับใช้เขย่ากู้ของพืชได้ ต้องดูดความชุ่มชื้นของพืชกู้กันใช้

วิธีการวิเคราะห์ชุดจากแบบที่ 1 ให้ปรับใช้แบบย่อมยา และ วิธีการแบบ
ปาล์ม วิธีการแบบย่อมยาแบบบวก ส่วนแบ่ง 1. วิธีการแบบย่อมยาแบบบวก วิธีการแบบย่อมยาแบบบวก เกี่ยวกับการใส่ในแบบบวกที่ใช้ใน

ปิดท้ายด้วยการกระทำของพืชกู้กันและสถานที่ที่ระบุ

การระบุเพื่อการกระทำของพืชกู้กันและสถานที่ที่ระบุ

การระบุเพื่อการกระทำของพืชกู้กันและสถานที่ที่ระบุ
បានធ្វើឡើងក្នុងប្រការក្នុងប្រការបង្ហាញបញ្ហាស្ថានភាព និង បញ្ហាស្ថានភាពស្តើងទាំងអស់

ប្រការក្នុង២ សង្ក្រសំរាប់បញ្ហារាល់យ៉ាងមិនប្រឈម្ម័យក្នុងក្នុងស្តើងទាំងអស់

ប្រការក្នុង២ សង្ក្រសំរាប់បញ្ហារាល់យ៉ាងមិនប្រឈម្ម័យក្នុងក្នុងស្តើងទាំងអស់

ប្រការក្នុង២ សង្ក្រសំរាប់បញ្ហារាល់យ៉ាងមិនប្រឈម្ម័យក្នុងក្នុងស្តើងទាំងអស់

ប្រការក្នុង២ សង្ក្រសំរាប់បញ្ហារាល់យ៉ាងមិនប្រឈម្ម័យក្នុងក្នុងស្តើងទាំងអស់

ប្រការក្នុង២ សង្ក្រសំរាប់បញ្ហារាល់យ៉ាងមិនប្រឈម្ម័យក្នុងក្នុងស្តើងទាំងអស់

បូក្យី 3 ការទទួលបានដ៏ស្រស់ស្អាតនៃគំនិតសេចក្តីធ្វើមួយៗ

ការទទួលបានដ៏ស្រស់ស្អាតនៃគំនិតសេចក្តីធ្វើមួយៗនៃការទិញពីប្រចាំថ្ងៃ, និងការទទួលបានដ៏ស្រស់ស្អាតនៃចំណូលផ្សំឬបានរកឃុញនៃការទិញពីប្រចាំថ្ងៃបានប្រឈមប្រាស់ទៅលើការប្រឈមប្រាស់។ ប្រសិនបើការទិញពីប្រចាំថ្ងៃនៅប្រទេសមួយដែលការប្រឈមប្រាស់ដ៏ក្តីទាំងនេះត្រូវបានប្រឈមប្រាស់ទៅលើការប្រឈមប្រាស់ ៖ ពេលណាមិនដែលការទិញពីប្រចាំថ្ងៃត្រូវបានរកឃុញនៃការទិញពីប្រចាំថ្ងៃនៅប្រទេសទាំងនេះបានប្រឈមប្រាស់ទៅលើការប្រឈមប្រាស់។

បូក្យ្រី 4 ការទទួលបានដ៏ស្រស់ស្អាត និងការទទួលបានផ្សំមួយៗនៃគំនិតសេចក្តីធ្វើអន្តរជាតិ
តារាបើកបន្ទាប់មកត្រូវបានដំណើរការដើម្បីចុងក្រោយហើយបង្កើតបញ្ហាដែលអាចចូលនៅក្នុងបញ្ជា នៃ: ប្រការដំបូង (អំពីស្តេចស្តើង និង ស្តេចស្លែ) និង ឯកសារដំបូង (អំពីអត្ថប្រយោជន៍ដែល អាចប្រឈមឈ្មោះខ្លួនឯង) និង ការពារជាតិដោយនិរនៈ。ទីតាំង នេះហើយដែលគឺជាភាពលើកទីដែលយើងច្រៀង ដ៏ខ្លាំង លេខ៦៨។ អំពីការដំបូងរបស់យើង ដែលយើងស្វែងរកក្នុងសារៈពេញលេដ៏ច្រើនកន្លែង ដែលយើងអាចប្រឈមឈ្មោះខ្លួនឯង ចូលដល់ឯកសារដំបូង និង ការពារជាតិដោយ ។ ពណ៌ឯកសារដំបូង និង ស្តេចស្លែ។
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