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Where Gendered Spaces Bend:
The Rubber Phenomenon in Northern Laos

GEOGRAFISKA REGIONSTUDIER NR 89

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Abstract

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This thesis seeks to understand and explain gendered everyday life in the village of HatNyao in Northwestern Laos, specifically in relation to rubber cultivation, by using an ethnographic approach and methods. The 'rubber boom' is changing the landscape of Northern Laos, and in the process is reshaping gendered everyday life. Gender relations in the village of HatNyao are undergoing various transformations whereby previous gender structures start to erode. Additional changes will probably continue to occur, largely due to increasing labour shortages. Gendered everyday life in HatNyao is therefore 'bending' with the changes associated with rubber cultivation, as well as in relation to different spaces of the everyday and household diversity. The concept of 'paradoxical gendered spaces' is invoked to capture the ways in which the dimensions and activities of the everyday vary with, in particular, ethnicity and age. Most households in HatNyao have improved their living conditions due to rubber cultivation. Nevertheless, inequalities are increasing within the village: better-off households have improved their situation, while for others it has been more difficult to adapt to the new conditions of everyday life and rubber cultivation. As the number of villages introducing rubber in Laos is increasing, alongside the number reaching the crucial tapping stage, it is essential to understand how rubber cultivation in smallholder communities interacts with gender relations and the division of labour. There are thus both 'good' and 'bad' outcomes from introducing rubber in Laos, since it depends on the context, as well as on the diverse spaces of the everyday.

Keywords: Laos, LuangNamtha, rubber, gender, HatNyao, everyday life, transitions, paradoxical spaces, intersectionality, ethnography, Hmong, phenomenon, gender contract, intersectionality, border-region, division of labour, China

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Slagavallen, Härjedalen, August 2012

Abbreviations

APB	Agricultural Promotion Bank
ANRPC	Association of National Rubber Producing Countries
ARBC	ASEAN Rubber Business Council
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry Office
FAO	Forestry and Agricultural Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
GNI	Gross National Income
GRID	Gender Resource Information and Development centre
HDI	Human Development Index
ICEM	International Centre for Environment Management
IRSG	International Rubber Study Group
IISRP	International Institute of Synthetic Rubber Producers
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Lao TFAP	Lao Tropical Forest Action Plan
LFA	Land and Forest Allocation
LSC	Land Survey Certificate
LT	Land Title
LTD	Land Tax Declaration
LUP/LA	Land Use Planning/Land Allocation
LWU	Lao Women's Union
NAFReC	National Agricultural Forestry Research Centre
NAFRI	National Agricultural Forestry Research Institute
NGPES	National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy
NSC	National Statistic Centre
NEM	New Economic Mechanism
NTFPs	Non-Timber Forest Products
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
TLUC	Temporary Land Use Certificates
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

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1. Introduction

This is a story about the Hmong rubber village of HatNyao in Northern Laos and about the men and women living their everyday lives there. My argument in this thesis is that gendered spaces bend with the transformations concomitant to the rubber production in HatNyao. Men's and women's everyday lives are in addition bending according to the different spaces of the everyday and between individual households, as well as in relation to age, ethnicity and socio-economic belonging.

Laos has for some time now been undergoing a process of transition. This process of transition, which is complex and shall be discussed (Rigg 2005), is a result of many different factors. Transition, according to Rigg, can be connected to diverse processes that are both interlinked and overlapping. A process of change is not straightforward, is not valid for a whole community and has different consequences for the people undergoing this 'change'. Laos is clearly undergoing a shift from subsistence to market dependency, but besides this there are also other types of shifts connected with the market (Rigg 2005). Rubber production has brought one of the largest transformations in Laos and Southeast Asia, having resulted in a 'rubber boom' (Hicks et al. 2009; Shi 2008) and which is changing many people's lives, especially in the rural areas. There are several reasons for the current rubber production expansion and why it is seen as the solution to poverty reduction in Laos and in the study area of this thesis, Luang Namtha. It is a result of processes and transformations interacting in Laos and in the border region of North-Western Laos. These are at the same time intertwined with the introduction of rubber in the village of HatNyao, relevant for the gendered everyday lives and the way gendered spaces bend. Forestry and national market policies, the growing Chinese market and the ethnic minorities in the border region are all aspects and processes relevant to the rubber development in Northern Laos. The village of HatNyao, situated in North-Western Laos and close to the Chinese border, was one of the first villages in Laos that started to plant rubber on a larger scale in 1994, and their success is widespread in Laos, as well as in the whole region. Several studies (Alton et al. 2005; Manivong 2007; NAFReC 2009; Shi 2008; Thanthathep et al. 2008) have been carried out in HatNyao including its rubber production. This thesis will contribute with an insight into the ways in which rubber cultivation is integrated with other dimensions and spaces of the everyday in relation to men's and women's daily lives. My argument is that these understandings are of impor-

tance for the rubber development in the border region of Luang Namtha, as well as in the whole of Laos, since the dimensions and spaces in the everyday are moulded by how men and women live their everyday lives. The everyday life in HatNyao has, as in a large number of other places, many dimensions where different spheres are in interaction, such as the cultivation of rubber and rice, childcare, the collection of forestry resources and household labour. These spaces of the everyday are gendered, but at the same time paradoxical. Men and women have historically, up to the present day, been bound to certain spaces in everyday life. Constructing general and traditional separations of men's and women's labour is, however, an essentialist analysis, where there are no differences between men's and women's labour. Nevertheless, men's and women's material bodies and the fact that women deliver babies while men do not is a major influence on the gendered division of labour in other countries, as well as in Laos and in HatNyao village. This is the basis for the division between men and women and for the divisions between sex and gender, reproduction and production and public and private, separations discussed in this thesis. However, this is not to reject a diversity of female and male bodies or that the performance of the body can be socially constructed.

I also want to argue that gender relations cannot stand alone but are inter-related with the context at a certain locality, such as the rubber cultivation in HatNyao. In this way not only are labour market conditions central but also the relations between households in HatNyao and the social organisation of the Hmong and in the village. Intra-household relations and the intersections of age, ethnicity and socio-economic belonging are also shaping men and women's local gendered practices. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand how gender relations are shaped and reshaped by individuals' actions, especially when the everyday is undergoing a process of transition. Men and women in the village of HatNyao have, since the introduction of rubber cultivation, experienced a transformation in their gendered everyday life, and it is therefore a place where gendered spaces bend.

Research focus

The aim of this thesis is to understand and explain the gendered everyday lives in the village of HatNyao in Northern Laos in relation to rubber cultivation. By using an ethnographic approach and methods, the thesis aims to answer the following questions:

- In what way are the ethnic Hmong in HatNyao village, their social organisation and decision-making processes interconnected with gendered everyday life and rubber cultivation?
- How do the relations between and inside the households and their management of rubber production interrelate with gendered everyday life?
- How are men's and women's everyday lives organised in relation to rubber cultivation, intra-household relations and other spheres of the everyday?
- How do men's and women's physical bodies interplay with representations of femininity and masculinity and gendered division of labour?

Understanding the everyday in HatNyao village is an analysis of here and now, where different processes are closely interconnected. The everyday setting comprises specific spaces of activities, not too far away from home, as a result of daily routines and actions. Locality and place are thereby still essential for many people, even though everyone is living their lives under complex conditions. Processes at different levels are numerous and transformative, grounded in history, culture and gender, moving in and out from the local context, a relation which is 'dialectical and in flux' (Freeman 2001). By understanding the everyday in HatNyao, the analysis can reach a high level of complexity, where diverse practices can be apparent and understood.

I will now proceed to give a background of the ethnic Hmong, particularly from a Laotian context, important for the gendered everyday life in HatNyao. I will also present the country of Laos in terms of geography, population and agriculture, before discussing the rubber development in Laos and the diverse processes in parallel and involved with rubber. Finally, I will give a historical background of rubber, global trends and the Chinese influence of rubber in Luang Namtha. I will then move on to previous research important for this thesis.



Figure 1. The provinces of Lao PDR and the location of Luang Namtha in North-western Laos. (Source: GIS unit at NAFRI).

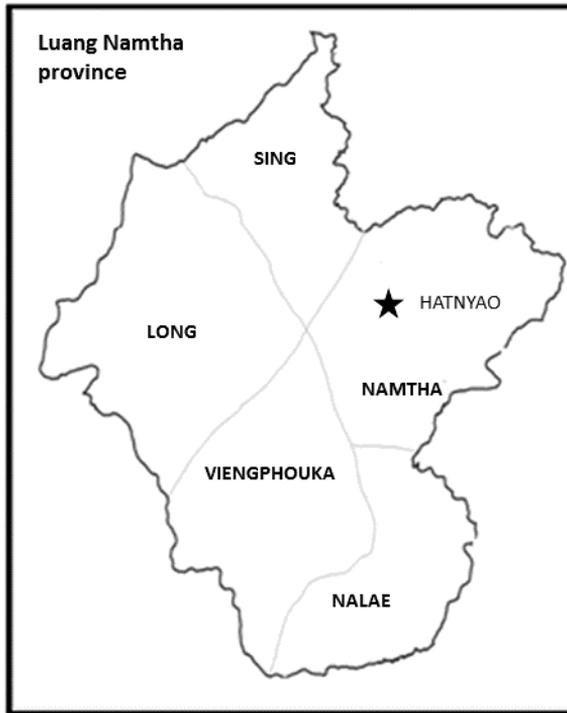


Figure 2. Location map of HatNyao village in Luang Namtha province and district. (Source: GIS Unit of NAFRI).

The ethnic Hmong

The village of HatNyao is an ethnic Hmong village in the province of Luang Namtha, located in North-Western Laos, seen in figure 1 and 2. The village of HatNyao is presented in more detail in chapter 4, but I regard it as important to introduce the ethnic Hmong already in this chapter, and in particular their history from a Laotian perspective. I will also demonstrate the patrilineal structures in relation to gender and status along the life-course. The ethnic Hmong today live in Thailand, Vietnam, Burma, China and Laos. The Hmong are among the most ancient peoples in Asia. They probably originated from the Yellow River area in China but have been a people without a homeland for more than 4,000 years (Yuang 1992). Due to a war between the Hmong and the Chinese in the middle of the 19th century, many Hmong migrated to Southeast Asia (Treuba and Zou 1994, cited in Liamputtong Rice 2000). But before that, somewhere between 1815 and 1818, the Hmong had already begun to settle in the mountainous areas of Laos (Quincy 1995,

cited in Liamputtong Rice 2000). In 1918, the Hmong in Laos rebelled against the colonisers at that time – France – as the French had imposed a tax on them. However, the most difficult period for the Hmong was the civil war in Laos between 1949 and 1975, which changed their way of living (Quincy 2000). In 1961, the Hmong started to participate in a fight against the communist Pathet Lao and the communist North Vietnamese army that invaded Northern Laos. The Hmong and other ethnic groups wanted to protect their freedom and defend their rights to the land. From 1961 to 1973, thousands of Hmong were consequently involved in the ‘secret war’ financed and operated by the US CIA. More than 15,000 Hmong soldiers died in the fighting and 30 percent of the Hmong population left their villages. In 1973, the Royal Lao government and the communist Pathet Lao called for peace and national reconciliation and a new government was formed. Two years later, however, the Pathet Lao began to arrest anti-communist leaders, as a result of which Hmong people were abandoned and isolated in the mountains and also became a target of retaliation. Over the next fifteen years, more than 100,000 fled to Thailand, where many of them died of hunger and disease, or were killed crossing the Mekong. Since 1975 400,000 Laotians (Lao, Hmong, Khmu, Mien etc.) have fled Laos, in excess of ten percent of the Laotian population (Yuang 1992). There are today around 200,000 Hmong living in Northern Laos, though quite a number of groups have moved further and further south (ibid). Furthermore, many live in refugee camps in Thailand, but there are also ethnic Hmong who have resettled in Western countries. A majority of these live in the United States, but some also in Canada, France, Argentina and Australia (Liamputtong Rice 2000).

Before the second Indochina war, as well as later on, the ethnic Hmong in Laos were dependent on agriculture, living as they did in the hilly rural areas (Donnelly 1994). Agriculture consisted of upland rice, corn, squash, cucumbers, mustards and poppies, together with the raising of pigs, chickens, horses and cattle. For Hmong generally, rice is and has always been the preferred staple food (Ovesen 1995). The ethnic Hmong were therefore nearly self-sufficient in subsistence production, where the major cash crop was opium. Both labour exchange and waged labour were practised in the harvest of opium, in situations of labour shortages within the households. The labour used for cultivating opium is also more intensive than the work related to rice or corn, though poppy gives greater rewards (Westermeyer 1983). In opium cultivation, practiced in upland fields, men generally remove the larger brush and trees, and women and children also may participate in the clearing of underbrush. Thereafter the fields are set on fire and the preparations for planting can start. When the crop is mature enough, it is thinned, and four months after planting the poppy is ready for harvest. These duties are carried out by men, women and older children of the family (Westermeyer 1983). The division of labour in relation to rice is similar to opium in general, with the women, according to Symonds’ study (2004), doing most

of the weeding and harvesting. Women are furthermore responsible for the household work, such as cleaning, feeding the animals and cooking. Women continue to perform their daily duties in pregnancy, since it is seen as a normal physical condition and therefore they are assisted merely with heavy lifting or extensive labour (Symonds 2004). When a woman has just delivered a baby, it is said that her body is in a state of disequilibrium with nature and so she should not participate in any routine work for thirty days. Her husband therefore takes care of her duties around the house during this time (Liamputtong Rice 2000).

The comparison between opium and rubber cultivation is interesting as they share several similarities, discussed later in this thesis. Some of the domains in the everyday can also be seen in the Hmong village of HatNyao. However, I would argue that these spaces of the everyday are more complex and differ between individual villages and households and intersect with age as well as socio-economic belonging. I will also show how the gendered division of labour among the Hmong in HatNyao is changing, to no small extent due to the rubber.

Age, gender, and status in life

Most researchers who have studied Hmong societies would argue that it is male-dominated and that women have a structurally subordinated position, because of the patrilineal structures, where spiritual rituals and public life is male-dominated (Symonds 2004). It is therefore crucial to deliver a son to continue the patrilineal clan structures, even if the daughter is important in a different way. Marriage is, as a result, central in a Hmong society, since through it the clan and lineage can continue, by reproduction. For a woman, marriage is of considerable significance, as it affects her status in life to a larger extent (Liamputtong Rice 2000). By marriage, two families and two clans join together in a new alliance that strengthens the Hmong community (Yuang 1992). Upon marriage, girls become 'women' (*tus poj niam*)¹ at the same time as boys become 'men' (*tus txiv neej*). Thereafter a woman is defined in relation to her husband and later to her firstborn child. However, a man keeps his given name until he fathers several children, when his wife will give him a name of honour. A married man stays in his native household and in his lineage, whilst a woman transfers her loyalties to her husband's family. Even so, she does not change her name, but keeps her original clan name. A cross-cousin marriage is most preferable among Hmong² (Symonds 2004), where marriage between people of the same clan is proscribed. There are, according to Bertrais (1978, cited in Symonds 2004:60) both arranged

¹ In this thesis I will include the Hmong word, between brackets and in italics. I consider important to write it in Hmong, as the concepts are unique in this context.

² Brother's daughter marries sister's son.

marriages and marriages of mutual consent, where the fathers and other elder male relatives have the final say (Symonds 2004). Bride-price is customary in Hmong societies, which binds a woman to her husband and his lineage; for this reason the bride-price is also a woman's social insurance (Tapp 1989). In cases of polygamy, the first wife is entitled 'oldest mother', the second wife 'middle mother' and the third 'youngest mother' (Symonds 2004). A divorce is generally seen as the woman's fault and she has to leave her children with her husband's family. Symonds (2004) argues that a divorced woman has a marginal position, as she is no longer part of either her father's or her husband's lineage. A widow is, on the other hand, cared for by her dead husband's family, and the optimal situation is that she remarries one of his brothers or cousins (Symonds 2004). When a woman marries a man who is not Hmong, she will be considered to marry out of Hmong society and her child becomes 'other', as the child belongs to the father's descent group (Symonds 2004:9). The status of a woman rises when she delivers a baby, even more so if it is a boy and if she bears several children. Infertility is therefore difficult for a woman, according to Symonds (2004:174), even if she can "gain respect as an herbalist, a shaman, or a midwife".

Age and status in life and the ways in which they intersect with gender are important pillars of most societies, but are particularly significant among Hmong, where there are different age categories, each referring to certain age characteristics (Symonds 2004). In a society that has no written records of birth, chronological age is not very important; it is rather what a person can perform at a certain age and level of maturity that matters. Thus a person's age is assumed from observing behaviour – 'he is old enough to walk' or 'she is old enough to have three or four children'. In traditional Hmong society, children furthermore learn to take on responsibility early in life and they rapidly become involved in the family's social and economic activities (Symonds 2004). Children are hence important in HatNyao as well. What is also noteworthy in the Hmong community is respect for the elderly, especially older men. As this thesis will reveal, gender, ethnicity and age interact in such a way that it is difficult to say which one of them is most important.

According to what has been established about gender relations and the Hmong in general, I would argue that the gendered practices vary with the diverse spaces of the everyday, as this thesis will demonstrate. It is not possible to deny that male supremacy exists, particularly in relation to the patrilineal structures, but it is important to consider the different spaces of the everyday, as well as the different stages in the life-course. Symonds (2004) moreover argues that there are areas in which Hmong women have a strong voice and are paid great respect from both men and women, for example in childbirth and ritual concepts of the afterlife.

Lao PDR

Lao People's Democratic Republic is the official name of the country in English, from now on shortened to Laos or Lao PDR. Laos is geographically placed in the region of Southeast Asia, a landlocked country with borders to Thailand, Burma, China, Vietnam and Cambodia (Evans 2002a). Laos consists of relatively densely populated lowlands near the Mekong River and the more sparsely populated mountainous uplands; 80 percent of Laos is regarded as mountainous (Khouangvichit 2010). The Mekong River has a total length of 4,000 km with almost half of it (1,865 km) running through Laos. The average climate is tropical monsoon with a rainy season from June until October. In general terms the climate in Laos is tropical, but in the mountainous parts of the country, like in the North, the climate is semi-tropical (Manivong 2007).

From a historical point of view, Laos is not only geographically a country in-between, but also politically, as it has been caught between different kingdoms as well as political systems. Laos has, along with the other countries belonging to Indochina, been colonised by France, from the late 1800s. Even though the French rule was not so difficult for Laos, the official language was French and being colonised affected Laos in different ways. By 1940 the French relinquished power to the Royal Lao Government and French rule ended within ten years. However, political struggle in Laos continued as the government, with assistance from the USA, fought against Pathet Lao, in turn supported by North Vietnamese communists. Pathet Lao won the battle and in 1975 Lao PDR was created, ruled by the later Lao People's Revolutionary Party, a one-party government still running the country. Despite this, Laos is still a Buddhist country, albeit with some minority religions (Evans 2002b). Laos has also been referred to as a 'forgotten country in Southeast Asia' (Neher and Marlay 1995) and is furthermore a state constructed after World War 2 (Jerndal and Rigg 1998). Hence it does not have a history of national continuity in the way that its neighbouring countries enjoy.

The country of Lao PDR is poor and underdeveloped and, in fact, one of the least developed countries in the world. Farming is the most important industry, though the technical industry and service business has grown in the last decade; a lot of the country's resources are unused. Lao PDR is in need of foreign aid and loans, which constitute a large part of the country's budget. In 1999 nearly half of the population was considered poor by the World Bank. The differences are large between the Vientiane area and the more distant rural areas, which are where many ethnic minorities live. The health situation in Laos is worse than in neighbouring countries: the child mortality rate is higher, the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is over 400 per 100,000 live births, and diseases such as malaria, dysentery, tuberculosis and

pneumonia are common. Landmines left over from the Vietnam War³ are still causing casualties in the country every year. Only a small part of the population has access to hospitals and several of these are of poor quality (Evans 2002a). Furthermore, 27 percent of the population live below the poverty line. The average number of years in education for the whole population is only four and the literacy rate for women in 2005 was 63.2 and 82.5 for men (UNDP 2009). Life expectancy at birth is 67.5 years (UNDP 2010). In 2011 Laos had an HDI ranking of 138 out of 187 countries and was considered as a ‘medium developing country’, ahead of both Cambodia and Nepal (UNDP 2010). This can be compared with 2001, when Laos was ranked as number 131 out of 161 countries, and only Bangladesh had a lower ranking among the Asian countries (UNDP 2001). According to these statistics, conditions in Laos are to a certain extent improving. However, table 1 demonstrates Laos’ position in relation to the PPP in comparison to selected countries, showing that Laos still is a poor country, from both a global and regional perspective.

Table 1. Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), GNI in \$ per capita, 2009⁴

	2009
Laos	2,210
USA	46,730
China	6,770
India	3,260
Sweden	38,560
Thailand	7,640
Vietnam	2,850

Source: World Development Report 2011.

Population

Laos is a lowly populated country, consisting of only 6.2 million people (UNDP 2010). According to an informant at Nafri, there are yet another 2.4 million Chinese and Vietnamese living in the country, who are generally not counted into the total sum. Many people who have been studying Lao question whether there is such a thing as the nation of Laos, because of the many ethnic minorities. The term ‘Lao’ or ‘Laotian’ has in the past referred to a group of Tai people, also called *Laotian* by the French. Lao can therefore

³ Also known as the American War in Southeast Asia.

⁴ GNI (Gross National Income) is the broadest measure of national income. It measures total value of both domestic and foreign sources claimed by residents. GNI comprises gross domestic product plus net receipts of primary income from foreign sources. PPP rates provide a standard measure allowing comparison of real levels of expenditure between countries, just as conventional price indexes allow comparison of real values over time. PPP GNI per capita is PPP GNI divided by midyear population (World Development Report 2011:357).

refer to the nation as well as diverse ethnic groups, even though only half of the population bears the name of Lao. Most people outside Lao, however, relate to the term as meaning the nation (Evans 2002a). The many ethnic minorities in Laos are in this context important to mention in describing Laos, especially since the village of HatNyao is ethnic Hmong. Reading different reports or books about the ethnic groups in Laos, a general division of three groups are usually presented. The reason for this is that the differences among the population tried to be resolved by reducing ethnicity to location and altitude. The majority of the population living in Laos, according to this classification, are Lao or Lao Loum and can be broken up into four or five dialect groups. Lao Loum live in the lowlands of Laos and along the Mekong valley. The second classification of the ethnic groups is Lao Theung or the midland people living in mountainous areas. Lao Soung is 'Sino-Tibetan' people inhabiting the northern mountains of Laos and the group where the ethnic Hmong can be placed (Evans 2002a). This is a classification referring to the landscape and ecology in Laos, seen as a 'natural classification', nonetheless debated as many argue it is not a good way of dividing such an ethnically diverse population.

From an anthropological point of view this three-fold division into Lao Loum, Lao Soung and Lao Theung makes little sense. Groups with almost nothing in common are grouped under headings which have a loose geo-environmental basis but scant ethnic logic (Jerndal and Rigg 1998:822).

In relation to the quote, an alternative ethno-linguistic categorisation also exists, divided into the Tai-Lao language group, Mon-Khmer, Sino-Tibetan or/and Tibeto-Burmese language groups (Trankell 1993:12).

Land, agriculture and forestry

When the Communist Party took power in Laos in 1975, all land was reallocated to the people, represented by the state (Ducourtieux et al. 2005). Later changes to the land policies in 1991 gave villages, organisations and individuals the right to use land (ICEM 2003). Therefore, there are two kinds of formal land tenure in Laos: Temporary Land Use rights and Permanent Land Use rights. The former are issued as Certificates (TLUC), given by district authorities to individuals and organisations. The permanent land use rights or Land Title (LT) are issued if 'the land has been managed and used under three years' without breaking the land-use regulations.⁵ LT can be transferred, leased or 'pledged as collateral', compared to TLUC, which cannot (Tsehalicha and Gilmour 2000). In addition, there is the Land Tax Declaration (LTD), which only allows for use and inheritance, and the Land Tax

⁵ LT are often issued as Land Survey Certificate (LSC) in the rural areas (Schoenweger and Üllenberg 2009).

Receipts, given for tax payments and used by villagers, when land is sold or leased (Schoenweger and Üllenberg 2009). Land can be leased to an organisation, individual or juridical entity based on a legal contractual agreement (Definition of Land: Article 2 2008). Furthermore, land concessions can be granted to an individual or juridical entity by giving the right to use the land for a specific purpose based on the conditions and term specified in the legal contract. The land concession-holder shall pay the concession fee, natural resources royalty, and other fees as specified by law.

More than 70 percent of the population in Laos live in the rural areas (Population Census 2005), where agriculture is counted as 47 percent of the GDP. Furthermore, 80 percent of the total labour force are in agriculture (NSC 2005a, cited in Manivong 2007). The majority of the households in Laos are therefore dependent on agriculture including livestock rearing, fisheries and forest exploitation (FAO 2005). The most important crop is rice – paddy and dry hillside fields – which often is just enough for the household members, and therefore rice cultivation shapes the lives of the villages. Paddy rice is cultivated in the lowlands, while upland rice production occurs in the dry hillside by slash-and-burn cultivation techniques and is much more weather-dependent than paddy rice production. Gardening and rearing animals complete the agricultural activities of the household (Ireson 1996). Shifting cultivation (slash-and-burn, swidden agriculture) is the dominant production system in the uplands of Laos. More than 150,000 households or around 25 percent of the rural inhabitants use this agricultural cultivation system. Furthermore, it accounts for up to 80 percent of the agricultural land if unplanted fields are taken into account (Roder 2001). Shifting cultivation involves clearing the fields, leaving the vegetation to dry, and thereafter burning it for temporary cultivation (van Gansberghe 2005). Additionally, shifting cultivation is often interrelated with animal husbandry, fishing, hunting and the collection of NTFPs⁶ and the crop/fallow rotation. The most common type of shifting cultivation in Laos is when the village is located at the same place, but the fields are rotated within the crop/fallow cycle. Swidden cultivation is not one single cultivation system, but several different arrangements and varies, for example, with the physical and social environment or population density (Kunstadter and Chapman 1978). The forests in the rural areas give the inhabitants different kinds of food, medicine, wood for houses, material for household tools, fodder for animals and fuel-wood. This is especially necessary for the ethnic groups living in the mid and upland areas. In total, up to 40 percent of the Lao people have the forest as a resource for their livelihood, and for many people the forest is similar to a safety-net (LWU and GRID 2001; Rigg 2006). In 1998, 34 percent of the total exports in Laos were wood and wood-related products (World Bank 2001). The forest cover in Laos has been reduced from 70 percent in the

⁶ Non-Timber Forest Products

1940s to today's 41 percent, although the numbers are not fully confirmed (Tsechalicha and Gilmour 2000). The biggest reductions have occurred in the North and the Centre (Sisouphanthong and Taillard 2000). Slash-and-burn cultivation and uncontrolled logging are the main reasons for deforestation and forest degradation, according to Lao's government (LWU and GRID 2004). Despite the decreasing forest areas, UNDP (2001) argues:

Nonetheless, in national percentage terms, Lao PDR remains one of the most heavily forested countries of Asia and one of the region's richest countries in terms of biodiversity (UNDP 2001:75).

To conclude, demonstrating the geographical and population background of Laos and the fact that it is a country highly dependent upon agriculture and forestry make it easier to understand the processes of change that Laos is undergoing and the rubber development.

Rubber production and processes on the move in Laos

The first rubber in Laos was planted in 1930 in Champasak Province by French colonisers. However, it was not until the late 1990s that rubber production received attention from Lao policymakers, traders, business groups and other stakeholders (Thanthathep et al. 2008:2). The turning point came in the beginning of the 21st century with the tapping procedure started by the early rubber producers in HatNyao village. After that many began to "recognise the economic profit of rubber" (ibid:3) and the rubber production has since then profoundly increased in the whole country by local farmers as well as by the private sector and the state. By 2008, most provinces in Laos had rubber plantations, and foreign companies were operated by mostly Chinese in the North, by Thai in the Central areas and by Vietnamese in the South. The prospects are that rubber is going to be one of the main exports from Laos in the future (Thanthathep et al. 2008). In 2002, Laos was exporting 22 tons to China, which increased to 443,620 tons in 2007 (Douangsavanh et al. 2009).

Nearly 60 percent of all the rubber plantations in Laos are situated in the North, whereas 22 percent are located in the South and nearly 18 percent in the Central parts of Laos. The increase in rubber was predicted by Thanthathep et al. (2008) to reach 200,000 hectares by 2010, and hence demonstrated later by NAFRI (2011). The future prospects for Laos is that another 81,400 hectares will be approved for concessions and therefore Laos will reach over 300,000 hectares of rubber plantations. More than half of them will still be located in the North. Laos will, according to NAFRI (2011), be one of the main natural rubber producers globally and in Asia. The average yield is expected to reach around 1.77 tons per hectare and year

by 2015. From 2011 to 2015 rubber production in Laos will in addition reach an increased rate of processing as several companies have invested in small and large rubber-processing factories, producing dry rubber clots, un-processed rubber and smoked rubber sheets. This will upgrade the production efficiency to reach international standard (NAFRI 2011).

Table 2. The total amount of rubber in hectare and prospects of rubber production

	2003	2007	2010	2015
HA	900	28,800	234,000	>300,000
HA in production	NA	NA	NA	260,320

Source: NAFRI (2011); Thanthathep et al. (2008); Douangsavanh et al. (2009).

As can be seen from table 2, the rubber in Laos has increased tremendously over the last ten years and most of the tapping has not yet started, so there is going to be a large increase in rubber production in the following years. The lack of labour is therefore of great concern. Luang Namtha is expected to experience the greatest problem in labour shortage, as they can provide only around 40 percent of the labour needed and will probably have to recruit it from other provinces, instead of recruiting from abroad (NAFRI 2011).

A key input in rubber cultivation is labour. With plantations expanding beyond the local labour capacity of Luang Namtha, labour shortage and migration, both internally from mountainous north-eastern provinces and externally from China, is already underway and will continue rising in the coming years (Shi 2008:4).

Rubber production in Laos is highly influenced by the neighbouring countries, by being the main importers of rubber. In most cases it is the raw rubber of sheets, lump or clot being sold, with minimal or no processing (Douangsavanh et al. 2009), or sold to those companies processing the rubber into sheets or smoked rubber, then being exported (NAFRI 2011). The rubber price has generally been rising in recent years, but it varies with geographical location in the country, as well as with the processing of the product. The dried sheets can be retailed for a higher price than the selling of rubber lumps (Douangsavanh et al. 2009).

Laos does not yet have an existing institution on a national level for rubber management, in contrast to the neighbouring countries, bound to regional or international umbrella cooperatives, such as ANRPC or ARBC⁷. These countries pool a certain amount from their national rubber income for research into rubber. NAFRI used to be the coordinating unit for managing the

⁷ The Association of National Rubber Producing Countries, ASEAN Rubber Business Council.

rubber in Laos, but it has been difficult to get the full picture of rubber, as there are so many actors involved – domestic as well as foreign (NAFRI 2011). The need for carrying out rubber research, supported by the government, has been crucial for other rubber-producing countries (Manivong 2007). This is lagging behind in Laos, even though the MAF's plan was to have a Rubber Research Centre in Luang Namtha and two additional stations in Oudomxai and Bokeo. To my knowledge this has not been realised, at least not in Luang Namtha. Douangsavanh et al. (2009:3) also recommended increasing the capacity for technical staff in rubber production, marketing, research and development.

Land arrangements, socio-economic considerations and environmental risks

Of all the rubber plantations in Laos, 75 percent are plantations grounded on concessions, both foreign and Lao, while 25 percent are based on smallholding farms, like in HatNyao, an important illustration of an alternative to large-scale concessions (Manivong 2007). There have been many problems with concessions in Laos, as also stated by the Prime Minister, who argues that there are social, economic and ecological problems with these processes (Vientiane Times 2007a, cited in Douangsavanh et al. 2008). In the South “investors destroy crops and teak owned by villagers to make way for rubber plantations without informing them first”(Vientiane Times 2007b, cited in Douangsavanh et al. 2008:15). There have been reports of losses of possessions, not being compensated for, as well as losses of non-asset resource rights by villagers (NTFPs) and public goods by the state, not compensated for (Dwyer 2007). The socio-cultural and economic impacts of large-scale rubber plantations have been studied by Baird (2009) in Southern Laos. The villagers here have lost access to common land such as forests and pasture, crucial for local livelihoods. Older farmers were also excluded by the companies as workers (ibid). “On concessional plantations, villagers lose access to land and trade in their entire livelihood systems to become wage labourers“(Shi 2008:32). The findings by Vongkhamor, Phimmasen et al. (2007) also showed a number of problems in land management and rubber, as well as lack of knowledge regarding planting and managing rubber. Furthermore, there appeared to be little discussion regarding alternatives to rubber and also in what way rubber could be diversified for other livelihoods.

Intercropping rubber could minimise the risk of environmental monocultures, complementing rubber with, for example, tea, livestock, food crops or other cash crops (Raintree 2005a). This would bring an increased income, improve ecological sustainability, buffer the microclimate for rubber trees and cause less soil erosion (ibid:15). Most rubber plantations in Laos, however, use monocropping systems, though it is common to intercrop with rice,

maize or pineapple in the first years, before the increased shade from the rubber trees makes that more difficult (Alton et al. 2005). The method can also reduce the risks for smallholders of exposure to rubber price fluctuations (Douangsavanh et al. 2008). Other reports of environmental concern have been a warmer climate and delayed rainy season, as well as changes in the wildlife population, especially near the plantations (ibid) and in HatNyao itself. There are also indications where the water has decreased in the rivers as well as a decrease of forests around the village. Moreover, according to Baird (2009), the natural aquatic balance has been disrupted by the large-scale rubber plantations and villagers are therefore afraid to consume water from the streams. There are also environmental concerns regarding the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers, especially in watershed management.

As the tide of rubber sweeps from China into Laos, says Tang Jianwei, an ecologist of Yunnan's Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden, the entire region is being transformed into an 'organic factory' – with alarming environmental consequences (Mann 2009:564).

The risk of fire in the rubber plantations is something discussed by Alton et al. (2005), where quite often instructions on how to control fire are lacking. Many villages do not dig fire lines or breaks in their plantations and thus several villages in Luang Namtha have lost rubber trees in fires, one of them being HatNyao, as lately as spring 2010. Rubber planters in Laos have also experienced problems with pests and diseases destroying the rubber trees (Douangsavanh et al. 2009). The environmental risks are, of course, important to consider in relation to rubber production, especially as the trend is that the monocropping systems are increasing.

In this section, I have presented the general picture of rubber development in Laos and the speed of plantation expansion, especially in the North. This brings several consequences such as the increasing lack of labour and the need for further research on its effects on land and people. This thesis is one contribution towards understanding the ways in which people's everyday lives are being transformed by rubber production. There are, however, several situations regarding rubber production that are important to consider in understanding these changes, whether they are small-based arrangements or larger-scale investments, which bring different outcomes for local people and for gendered everyday life, where locality and geography is important.

Policies in interaction with rubber

There are a number of dynamics interrelated with the introduction of rubber production in North-Western Laos and in HatNyao village: forestry policies, national market policies, the growing Chinese market as well as the border region and the ethnic minorities living there. In the following section I will

demonstrate in what way forestry and market policies are relevant for rubber development in Laos. I will return to the Chinese influence and ethnic minorities in chapter 4.

Forestry policies and strategies have affected the uplands of Laos and have been important for the expansion of rubber production, especially in Northern Laos. Some of them can also be linked to regional and international guidelines and conventions, like the national Tropical Forest Action Plan (Lao TFAP) officially adopted in 1991. The plan identified six major themes, one being sustainable use of forests and plantation forestry development (MAF 2005). The government also aims to increase forests in Laos from 40 percent to 70 percent by 2020, whereby tree-planting will contribute to a significant extent. To reach these targets, the government provides support in the form of distribution of land for plantations, property rights, tax releases and also free seeding to farmers and organisations (MAF 2005).

The National Socio-Economic Development Plan also suggests tree-planting for commercial production to reduce shifting cultivation systems (CPI 2006), which is also supported by the NGPES⁸ promoting both private and public sector investments in forest plantation development, making it become a reality by endorsing foreign direct investment. The government in addition encourages poor households to establish forest plantations by allocating suitable land in rural areas (ADB 2005). However, it is as yet unclear whether rubber should be considered as an agricultural product or as a forest plantation species, important not only in this context, but also in relation to the agreements with investors and to the different policies and institutions (Douangsavanh et al. 2009). A solution to the problem of shifting cultivation, considered by the government to be one cause of deforestation, is to provide alternatives that limit the need for these practices (ADB 1999). It is, nevertheless, necessary to recognise the diverse reasons for deforestation in Laos, such as commercial logging, as well as the fact that shifting cultivation is subject to interpretation (Ireson and Randall - Ireson 1991; Jerndal 1997; Trankell 1993). According to Fujita and Thongmanivong (2006), the trend in Northern Laos is a shift to a cash-crop-oriented system going hand in hand with a reduction in upland agriculture. Government policies have a strong connection to these changes as they want to decrease the swidden systems and at the same time increase the forest cover. But the pattern of agriculture has also changed in Northern Laos, due to both increased market pressure and intensification of agricultural practices. The shift away from traditional subsistence agriculture has seen a rise in cash crops which also can be linked to the integration into the market economy and the development of roads, interrelated with the introduction of rubber in the uplands. Manivong (2007) maintains:

⁸ National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy and forest strategy.

To achieve the aim of stabilizing shifting cultivation and eradicating poverty in the mountainous region of Northern Laos, it is recognized that more sustainable and income-generating agricultural practises have to be identified and adopted. One of the possible alternative approaches to support this transformation is the introduction of perennial cash crops such as rubber to increase farmers' income (Manivong 2007:3).

The general economic development policy in Laos in this context is important to mention, based on the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) initiated in 1986. NEM has two main goals: to stabilise the economy and transform central planning to a market-oriented growth strategy (ADB 1999), making villages less subsistence-oriented (Rehbein 2007). The fact that Laos joined the ASEAN as well as the GMS has been important for economic development in the country (BTI 2008). The NEM also meant that trade barriers were liberalised, internal trade within and between provinces was no longer regulated, the exchange rate system was integrated and prices were decided by market forces. Foreign investors were also offered lucrative business and companies owned by the state were privatised (Ivarsson et al. 1995, cited in Khouangvichit 2010). These new challenges, especially the intensification of market relations in the rural areas, impact rural people's livelihoods. In this context, it is necessary to know who has the capabilities to adapt and who has not (Rigg 2005), the latter creating greater inequality, which is manifested at the regional, inter-village and intra-village levels (Rigg 2006).

For those groups and individuals who are unable to take advantage of the new opportunities that market integration is offering, this process of natural resource decline is leading to a parallel process of livelihood decline (ibid: 130).

Another element in shifting cultivation policies is to reduce the production and possession of opium and the traffic of it. The government has therefore initiated alternative sources of income generation for traditional growers of opium poppy in upland areas (ADB 1999). Policies of opium reduction have also had an impact on the introduction of rubber, where highland communities and the government of Laos have seen rubber as a way of replacing opium cultivation (Cohen 2009). Pushed by the USA and the UN, Laos proscribed the production and ownership of opium in 1996. Rubber has therefore come to be an alternative development and substitute for opium cultivation in Laos (ibid).

An additional dimension relevant in the context and in relation to the introduction of rubber is land policies. The Land Use Planning and Land Allocation (LUP/LA) in 1993 was based on zonation of land and forest, giving villagers the right to use the land (Helberg 2003) whereby each household was allocated land based on the household's labour and resources (Thongphanh 2004). The aim of the Land and Forest Allocation (LFA) was

also to define village boundaries and conserve forests on a village level, a project led by local authorities such as the District Agriculture and Forestry Organisation (DAFO). However, the LFA also wanted to limit villagers' access to upland swidden fields, by conserving these areas (Thongmanivong et al. 2009).

The forestry policies presented on diverse levels and the different dimensions interrelated are therefore relevant to highlight. It also shows how market policies and market-driven initiatives are connected with these policies. As a result, this has an effect on the introduction of rubber in Laos and in the uplands. The processes of interaction presented are central aspects of the ongoing transformations in Laos and rubber production in the country.

Global trends in rubber

For almost fifty years, natural rubber was one of the most important development booms in Brazil, but in 1876, the British smuggled rubber seeds from the Amazonas to the Botanical Gardens in London. "Through grafting, the British developed more resistant varieties that were later sent to the British Colonies in Asia where massive rubber plantations were established, particularly in Malaysia, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Singapore" (IISRP⁹ 2009:3). The difference between rubber techniques in Brazil and Asia was a substantial factor in the movement of rubber production between continents. The well-organised plantations in the British colonies resulted in a significant rise in productivity and the economic benefit increased. Because of its more effective way of producing rubber, Asia came to dominate global supplies of natural rubber with over 90 percent of production. In 1985, Malaysia accounted for one-third of global rubber output, but fell back from its position as the world's largest natural rubber producer when Thailand overtook it. One explanation for this is that other countries in Asia had lower labour costs and available land to expand their rubber production, compared with Malaysia (IISRP 2009; Tully 2010). Rubber production can thus be seen as a raw material that is part of the global economic system, moving to places that are most economically profitable and where the expenses incurred by, for example, land and labour can be reduced. The end-products of rubber number over 40,000, of which tyres, medicinal devices and surgical gloves are just some examples (Mooibroek and Cornish 2000). Natural rubber constitutes more than 50 percent of these products and is therefore of great importance in the tyre industry (Hayashi 2009).

By 2001, natural rubber consumption accounted for 40 percent of the total amount of rubber consumed worldwide (IISRP 2009). The total world rubber industry, including both natural and synthetic rubber, has been growing since the post-war period and, whilst many believed that synthetic rubber would

⁹ IISRP (International Institute of Synthetic Rubber Producers).

prove more sought-after, this was not the case (Manivong 2007). According to Mann (2009), natural rubber is cheaper than and superior to synthetic rubber. In 2008 the total number of rubber plantations globally was nine million hectares: 95 percent of them were located in Asia and 75 percent in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia (Thanthathep et al. 2008). The largest consumers are, however, China, the USA, Japan, India and Malaysia. It is predicted that total consumption of natural rubber will increase to 13.2 million hectares by 2018 (Prachaya 2009, cited in Fox and Castella 2010).

Table 3. World natural rubber production in, 000 tonnes

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Latin America	228	241	253	263	275
Africa	445	443	423	459	470
Asia	9,386	9,401	9,043	9,637	10,253
TOTAL	9,687	9,877	9,690	10,401	10,977

Source: International World study group, www.rubberstudy.com 091130, 120214, 120614.

Table 3 demonstrates global production of natural rubber over the last five years, showing that Asia is clearly in the lead of the other continents. In the last quarter of 2008 there was a decline in the price of natural rubber, which continued into 2009, causing a downturn in production (Hang 2009). Thailand has the highest levels of rubber production among the Greater Mekong Subregion countries (GMS)¹⁰, as they also are world-leading, followed by Vietnam and China. Both Myanmar and Laos are, however, upcoming countries in rubber production per amount of hectares.¹¹ But the rubber plantations are increasing in the whole region, where “more than 1,000,000 hectares have been converted in the last several decades in non-traditional rubber-growing areas of China, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar” (Fox and Castella 2010:1).

In 2002 China overtook the USA and Japan in rubber consumption with 18.2 percent of global consumption (Prachaya 2004, cited in Douangsavanh et al. 2008). The future prospects are that by 2020 China will account for 30 percent of global consumption (Burger and Smit 2004, cited in Alton et al. 2005). China’s increasing demand for rubber is interrelated with the consumption in the automobile and tyre industries, where China’s economic development led to a high demand for private vehicles along with a growth in the tyre industry (IRSG 2007, cited in Hicks et al. 2009). It is likely that

¹⁰ Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and the Southern Yunnan province in China.

¹¹ It has been difficult to get the production figures from both Laos and Myanmar. For Laos, at least, one explanation in this matter is the absence of a national rubber institution.

by 2020 China will need 11.5 million tons of natural rubber, of which only four million can be provided by themselves (IRSG 2004, cited in Fox and Castella 2010). China has in this way no suitable land left for rubber cultivation, pushing the rubber into neighbouring districts in Northern Laos (Shi 2008). Laos, as a relatively new rubber country, in this context can offer lower costs and land (Ching 2004; Jampasut 2004, cited in Manivong 2007). The Chinese connection with Northern Laos is therefore essential for rubber development in this region, as Alton et al., as well as Shi (2005; 2008), argue:

Luang Namtha province, with its proximity to China, is under direct and immediate influence of Chinese market forces. China's soaring demand for rubber, stagnant domestic supply, and high land prices to a large extent account for the trend of rubber development in Luang Namtha and the rest of northern Laos (Shi 2008:18).

It is important here to highlight Laos' position in the so-called 'Global South'¹² as a fairly poor and 'underdeveloped'¹³ country, highly dependent on the other countries in the region and especially China. This can be illustrated by an additional quote from Shi (2008):

In many ways, rubber in Luang Namtha is only a microcosmic view of a much wider phenomenon throughout Laos, Asia, and far corners of the developing world: China is rising, forging ties, pouring investments, and dispensing aid, all at a ruthless pace, to the global South (Shi 2008:72).

In that sense, Laos is still a country in the traditional South, with less capability to develop and highly affected by the world market on rubber, set out by more developed regions and countries. Or as Massey (1995:225) puts it: "The 'gap' between the 'first' world and the 'third' world is not just a gap; it is also a connection. The uniqueness of place, then, set within this concept of uneven development, is also interrelated, structured inequalities." At the same time the development/poverty approach in studies on the Global South deprives to show the everyday life, according to Rigg (2007), even though people generally are poor and many are struggling for survival. "Ordinary people in the Global South are, like everyone else, extraordinary and to appreciate this requires that they become more than objects to be 'developed'

¹² 'Global South' is related to poor and marginalised groups of people, referred to as a counterpart to the 'Global North', defined as "clusters of wealthy and westernized people and ideas that are dispersed globally, hence transcending geographical boundaries" (Bergquist 2008:30). The concepts of Global North and South indicates that the described characteristics for these areas like developed, the west or the North versus underdeveloped, the rest or the South are not in the same way as they used to bound with geographic areas. Instead, areas of the Global South can also be found in the North and vice versa (Rigg 2007; Bergquist 2008).

¹³ I am aware of that the concept of development has been and *is* widely debated (see for instance Thomas 2000), but not something I will discuss any deeper in this thesis.

(Rigg 2007:10). These statements are relevant in this thesis and for gendered everyday life in HatNyao.

Gendered everyday life: earlier research

I will now move on to present earlier research carried out in relation to my research topic and focus on research mainly carried out in Laos, where gender, space and the everyday as well as processes of change are central. I will then give an overview of previous research performed on rubber and gender dimensions, principally from Laos and Asia, but also from South America. Finally, I will also present research on the everyday and the problematic division of production/reproduction. Furthermore, I will demonstrate research that concerns gender in relation to agrarian societies, including in areas industrialised for a longer period of time.

Gender and transformations in Laos - a review

The socio-economic transformation that is taking place in Lao is changing the natural environment, which in turn has deep impacts on gendered lives (LWU and GRID 2001). Gender relations and other cultural and societal boundaries have in Laos been reshaped due to changing political and economic conditions, as well as cultural ideas (Ireson 1996; Ireson Doolittle and Moreno Black 2003)¹⁴. Nevertheless, regional, national and international structures intersect with local settings differently, in relation to ethnicity and other social parameters, as well as with the human environment. The agricultural cooperatives, followed by the International Communist standard, came to change gendered division of labour in agriculture. These changes also occurred when the NEM was introduced in Laos, though individual men and women were influenced differently by these changes (Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black 2003).

Khouangvichit (2010) has analysed socio-economic transformations and gender in Laos in two local examples from the mining and tourist industries. She demonstrated how local gendered relations are interlinked with market transformations in the country. These industries have brought new opportunities for rural women to obtain employment and to participate in informal economic activities. In some households women have even become the main supporter of the family. Women have in this way become 'mothers of the market', empowering other women to 'unlock' their traditional roles (Khouangvichit 2010:182). However, this does not mean that there has been a dramatic change in the domestic area, where women still have the main

¹⁴ The focus of the book by Ireson (1996) lies on women, although this section of the thesis seeks to demonstrate the relation between men and women.

responsibilities. There were only a few tendencies to such changes, as these transformations take extended time. The gendered division of labour was divided in relation to 'heavy work' carried out by men and 'light work' carried out by women. In some cases there was furthermore a change regarding women's greater possibilities for decision-making, especially for those women with high incomes.

Intra-household and inter-household relations among Khmu in the uplands of Laos have also been examined in relation to the replacement of upland rice with paddy rice cultivation (Moser 2008). The results indicate that paddy rice cultivation to a larger extent involves men in replacing traditional shifting cultivation. The explanation for this is that the introduction of paddy rice was given to the men in the households, since they were the head of the household and therefore the men received the knowledge of how to cultivate. The transition into paddy rice cultivation thus almost excluded women from the decision-making processes, since the implementation procedures did not consider women's needs. Inter-household institutions, on the other hand, were less affected by these transitions.

Gender, forest resources and rural livelihoods have also been examined in relation to a development project in two Lao Loum villages and four Lao Theung villages (LWU and GRID 2004). The concluding results showed how women to a greater extent were involved in unpaid family labour, which reinforced their economic dependence. Men had, at the same time, better access to paid labour or other non-farm employment. Women in these villages were expected to carry out the majority of the household labour, which restricted them from participating in economic activities, though women in other ways were involved in cash-crop production. Men to a larger extent participated in the development project activities, compared to women, as many of the events were taking place in the evening when women were busy.

Schenk and Choulamany (1995) found indicators demonstrating how gender relations were challenged by transformations in agriculture. Economic transformation has created opportunities for women to earn an income and to attain increased knowledge. The new economic policies in Laos can, however, threaten women's decision-making power, access and control over resources (Schenk Sandbergen and Choulamany Khampoui 1995). The introduction of small tractors, for example, has increased male dominance in agrarian production, as men are to a higher degree associated with the tractor or power tillers, even though activities related to the use of small tractors had in the past been carried out by women. This has also increased male decision-making in that sphere for the first time and reduced traditional female skills and knowledge. Another example is related to the policies of opium reduction, where women have been the main cultivators and retailers of opium. Due to opium reduction policies women have lost an important source of income, which has affected their role and status in production in a

negative way. Furthermore, as many local farmers were encouraged to leave the forest and move to the low land, due to the policies of reducing slash-and-burn cultivation, the workload for many women increased (Ibid 1995).

The work by Chamberlain (2005) examined women's time utilisation in relation to the market economy among three ethnic categories in Khammouane province. He argues that ethnicity is significant in income generation, as well as in inter-village relations, decision-making and developmental changes. Gender roles are furthermore fluid, where women's traditional roles shift to men and vice versa when appropriate. The importance of ethnicity and gender has also been examined by Phommavong (2011), where the tourism industry have had different impacts on men and women. In the ethnic minority of Akha, the group analysed in the thesis, men had greater opportunities to participate in the tourism industry, as they speak Lao, compared to Akha women, who generally do not.

To conclude, the aim of this section has been to demonstrate various kinds of research carried out in Laos, with a focus on local gender relations and the interconnections to processes within and outside the country. The research has shown how changes in the rural landscape brought opportunities as well as constraints for both men and women. This dissertation contributes to that field of research by analysing gendered everyday life in relation to rubber, which today is drastically transforming the landscape in the uplands of Laos. Furthermore, by having the everyday as the starting point for the analysis, it is to a greater extent possible to grasp all activities relevant for both men and women. In this way a larger complexity also becomes apparent, where men's and women's practices are bending with the spaces of the everyday, with the individual households, as well as in relation to processes of transformation. As the examples show, gender relations are always flexible and have different outcomes in relation to transitions in the everyday life. However, the local setting sets the agenda in the way gender relations are created and recreated, as well as the importance of ethnicity. These aspects are also important in HatNyao, where gender relations interact with relations within the ethnic Hmong, as well as with the particular local setting, such as labour market conditions.

Men, women and rubber cultivation

There are few studies in relation to rubber cultivation where gender is taken into consideration and therefore I shall present here a review of research from different countries. Research on women's labour in cash crops in Brazil indicated that women play a more important role in the production of rubber than was earlier recognised (Simonian 1991). In the early rubber boom of the 1920s and 1930s, it was quite common for women to tap rubber, and there are still women working on the processing of latex in the area (Simonian 1988, cited in Campbell 1996). In another study of the same area, it was

found that 64 percent of the women had cut and collected rubber and that over 75 percent of the women collected rubber repeatedly, which was cut by men (Kainer and Duryea 1992). Women's work therefore needs to be highlighted in relation to rubber, or as Campbell (1996) argues;

Studies such as these change our understanding of women's labour investments in productive activities widely perceived as 'men's work'. This knowledge suggests recognition of women as key economic players (Campbell and Xapuri 1996:32-33).

A thesis on rubber smallholdings in Sri Lanka indicated that the labour activities were strongly dependent upon gender (Thennakoon 2002). Land preparation was normally undertaken by males, or by both men and women. The harvesting or tapping, the most labour-intensive work, was, however, mainly a female activity or in some households a mixed activity. Other activities related to the labour involved in rubber production, such as raising seedlings in polybags, planting, fertiliser and pesticide application and weeding, were generally done by both men and women. The gendered division of labour in rubber smallholdings was, however, something that differed between households, and also between the three villages in the study.

The effects of age, sex and tenure on job performance of rubber tappers in Malaysia has also been examined (Ali and Davies 2003). More than half of the people working on these rubber plantations are women. Men and women also perform the same types of job in relation to rubber and are paid the same rate for the rubber latex. The study indicated that women produced a higher output compared to men, a difference which was just over six per cent. The output was also higher with age, peaking in the mid-forties. Tapping rubber is the only livelihood for women in this context, as their responsibility for domestic chores restricts them from taking a second job. Men, on the other hand, have the possibility of doing so, after finishing their work related to rubber. As the rubber is thus the only source of income for women, they are to a higher degree motivated to work harder.

Strasser (2009) examined rubber cultivation in Southern India, also taking gender into consideration. The results showed a great heterogeneity of incomes between rubber holdings of different sizes. In households working at other holdings in the tapping procedure, the couples worked together at the plantations and therefore cooperation was crucial. For women in households with a high social status, family members (often husbands) did not permit them (often their wives) to take an off-farm job, even though this would benefit the household. In other households, women had taken over the (hard) job of collecting latex from the rubber trees and additionally produced the rubber sheets, a procedure carried out after their men had tapped the trees. In a few cases women mentioned that they occasionally also tapped the trees, particularly if the men could obtain second waged employment. Women

moreover carried out additional agricultural activities. This resulted in a very stressful situation for the women, in carrying out multiple daily activities. In households with a lower income, there was generally stronger collaboration between family members, most often between the husband and the wife.

From a Laotian viewpoint, Thanthathep et al. (2008) claim there are limited studies on the socio-economic impact of rubber tree plantations in Laos, including in HatNyao. From their findings they argue that women are heavily involved in planting, maintaining rubber trees, tapping and harvesting, as well as looking after their children and performing household duties. Rubber plantations in Asia have also shown how women participate in tapping and labour related to rubber nursery. Women are viewed as more suitable for “handling bud grafting, bud-bank maintenance and tapping” (Thanthathep et al. 2008:10). Additionally, Baird (2009) showed how women at large-scale plantations in Southern Laos could no longer find any firewood and therefore had to spend more time collecting it. Furthermore, women were not allowed to bring their smaller children to the plantations, which made it difficult for some of them to work there. Gender is also mentioned in the report by Douangsavanh et al. (2009), since women in Laos have been important in the rubber process. Besides taking part in the labour related to rubber, they look after their children and do housework, as well as collecting NTFPs.

To conclude, this section has drawn from the results of diverse studies in relation to gender and rubber cultivation, in cases brought from Brazil, Sri Lanka, Laos, Malaysia and India. Most of them have focused on the gendered division of labour in the cultivation of rubber and some have also included the sphere of reproduction as a factor influencing gendered division of labour. The work by Strasser demonstrates as well the importance of considering socio-economic belonging and the differences existing between the households. It is also necessary to understand the different types of arrangements for rubber cultivation, whether it be a rubber smallholding or a large-scale plantation, since it affects the outcome and the relations between men and women. My argument is moreover to reconsider women as economic players, highly involved in rubber production, as also put forward by some of the studies mentioned. Gender relations are, furthermore, diverse and complex, as seen in previous research, and are always interrelated with other social patterns in the society such as income, ethnicity or age, but also to everyday life as a whole, the domestic sphere and other activities of the everyday. Such relations are essential for my work. Nevertheless, few studies have focused on local gendered everyday life in relation to rubber in Laos, or taken these relations into specific consideration, though it is an important area for research, as argued by NAFReC and Thanthathep et al. (2009; 2008). As a result, there is a gap in grasping the everyday life of the villagers, where also other spheres of the everyday affect the cultivation of rubber. As will be argued in more detail in chapter 2, there is a tradition of thinking, acting and carrying out research on the public worlds of our lives and not the

private. As a consequence, the traditional female sphere is neglected, or the separation of the public and private is being recreated. An analysis that does not embrace the everyday, in which the public and the private are in constant interaction, gives an outcome where certain people and sorts of labour are left out. In this thesis I will therefore analyse the gendered spaces intertwined in the everyday, embracing the traditional spaces of production and reproduction.

Gender, geography and everyday life

Having looked at Laos and rubber cultivation, I will now move on to present earlier research on gender and everyday life. Defining the everyday, it can be seen as certain circumstances under which individuals meet the daily necessities for food, rest, love and earning a living (Ahrne 1981). I define the everyday as all the practices carried out daily from early morning until evening, including the individual varieties in the everyday, where also certain events affecting the everyday are included. In this way both the spheres of production and reproduction are involved and intertwined. In the discipline of geography, particularly in feminist geography, these themes are significant. The first researchers to highlight these issues in geography were Doreen Massey, Linda McDowell, as well as Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt. The work by Hanson and Pratt (1995) shows that labour market segments are place-bound and interplay with gender as well as with various spheres of life. Massey (1984) and Massey and McDowell (1984) have analysed regional divisions of labour and its relation to the domestic sphere. This research focused on labour market changes and its interaction with gendered division of labour, both in the outside workplace and at home. Feminist economic geographers of the time thereby came to new understandings of gender divisions of labour in the labour market and the representations within it. The division between production and reproduction is not a separation of its own, according to McDowell (2006):

This division, as many feminist scholars have argued, is one that is paralleled by a gender division – the public world is a world of men, the private world that of women, based on ‘natural’ associations of love and care, untainted by the cash nexus (McDowell 2006:36).

Feminist economists and geographers have also analysed why the private world has been absent in defining economics and the activities associated with the economy (Massey 1997; McDowell 1999; Mitchell et al. 2003). Gender in the everyday is further discussed by Rose (1993:17), focusing on women’s everyday life. She “examines the spaces of the everyday and the maps that women’s movements chart as they pursue their ordinary labours and pleasures across space and time”. Some of the very earliest feminist

geographers adopted time-geography¹⁵ as a way of grasping the everyday and the ordinary.¹⁶ There is, though, according to Rose, a distinct difference between time-geography and feminist geography, as the former does not make a separation between the public and the private and thereby treats people's paths as universal but at the same time masculine. Friberg (1990) has applied time-geography in studying women's everyday life and their limitations and restrictions in the everyday. On the other hand, she is critical of time as a linear perception as this means of comprehending time is separated from daily life in that emotions, feelings and everyday tasks are encapsulated into time measurements (Friberg 1990). For the purpose of this thesis, everyday life is not only about masculine and feminine spaces but includes intersections of ethnicity and of age, together with the everyday differences between the households and in regard to socio-economic status in HatNyao village. The problem is also, as Friberg argues, that time-geography is too much associated with a linear comprehension of time, which to me too is difficult to apply when studying gendered everyday life in HatNyao.

Another perspective that has influenced everyday life is the concept of life-forms, first introduced in the 1980s by Højrop and Rahbek Christensen (1983), according to Tyrkkö (1999).¹⁷ Yet the authors omit the relationship between structures and everyday practices and have thereby, according to Tyrkkö (1999:31), failed to analyse those practices where structures are shaped, maintained and changing in everyday life. Several researchers have tried to incorporate the structural life-form framework with gender theory and/or an acting subject (Friberg 1990; Hoff 1988; Jakobsen and Karlsson 1993). Life context¹⁸ theories have been more successful in bringing gender relations into the everyday and are critical of the separation of the different spheres in everyday life, such as the formal and the private (Tyrkkö 1999). Prokop (1981) analyses the women's life context, where not only material goods are produced, but also social relations, sustainability and modes of consciousness, all of them based upon production forces. Strandell (1983, cited in Tyrkkö 1999) on the other hand deals with life contexts and the conflict between the public and the private, as well as between family life and working life.

Tyrkkö (1999), however, is critical of the aforementioned perspectives, even though she is influenced by both life-form and life-context theories. She thinks that the everyday as a world of routines needs to be more problematised, as the routines are considered as everlasting and regular as well as

¹⁵ The concept was launched by Hägerstrand (1974).

¹⁶ See, for example, Miller (1982), Hanson and Pratt (1980), Palm and Pred (1974) in Rose (1993:167).

¹⁷ The theory analyses the structural situations of the everyday according to modes of production and thereby structures individual life-forms in relation to profession as the main category (Højrup 1983).

¹⁸ In Swedish *livssammanhang*.

taken for granted. The people and groups acting in the everyday are in an ongoing process of change and faced by new situations. Life-form theories are in this way too conservative. Transformations that take place in the everyday are furthermore not a linear movement, rather a process of contradictions and intersections of practices. The organisation of production or the family is by space and time and to a certain extent this makes the distinction between the spheres disappear (Tyrkkö 1999). I agree with Tyrkkö on these matters: the everyday is more multifaceted and needs to a greater extent to be problematised, especially since gender is also integrated with age, socio-economy and ethnicity. For the gendered everyday life in HatNyao this is most relevant, where the gendered spaces intersect with other's social parameters. Furthermore, there are various gendered practices that exist side by side and are in a process of transformation due to the introduction of rubber. I will return to these discussions about gender and the everyday in the next chapter.

Gender and agriculture

Since the 1980s, research has been carried out on women in agriculture and the gendered division of labour on family farms (Brandth 2002)¹⁹, research relevant for HatNyao, where agriculture constitute everyday life. From the beginning researchers wanted to make women more visible in agriculture and therefore it was important to analyse the hours worked, what kind of tasks were performed, and their access to property as well as to the decision-making processes. In the mid-Nineties, there was a shift towards not seeing men and women as fixed categories but rather as identities that are constructed through meaning and practices. Another transition was to look into the everyday life and the representations of men and women in agriculture (Brandth 2002). Gender relations in rural geography have largely concerned the division of labour in agricultural production and the experiences of women (Little 2002). A more extended research has come to focus on rural identities, where masculinities and femininities are performed. Little argues that gender roles in agriculture have mostly been viewed in relation to the production process and not in the ways these roles are related to femininity and masculinity. Some scholars (see Bryant 1999; Little and Leyshon 2001) have also stressed the need to focus on material practices of the body (Little 2001). To some extent, this thesis endeavours to make a contribution to this field, one of its aims being to analyse how men's and women's bodies interplay with the division of labour, as well as representations of femininity and masculinity in gendered everyday life. These matters are highlighted by Little (2001):

¹⁹ See Brandth (2002) for an overview.

Rather it is to look at ways in which constructions of the rural both incorporate and reflect bodily practices and to show how rural gender relations are performed through the physical qualities and activities of the body. [...] Work on the body is one key area in which research on rural masculinities and femininities needs to develop. [...] This is particularly true of rural social spaces where a focus on embodiment needs to inform our understandings of the performance of gender identities (Little 2001:669).

Land inheritance is central to the field of agriculture and gender, as also seen in this thesis and something that has consequences for the transformations in rubber cultivation systems and for the patrilineal structures in HatNyao, where sons generally inherit the land. This has also been seen in other societies, for example in two Estonian municipalities (Grubbström and Sooväli Sepping 2012), historically and at present, where the sons generally inherit the land and care for their elderly relatives. The sons were here considered more suitable to take over the farms. This has also been indicated by others, such as Price and Evans (2009) from a British context.

The research that has been carried out into gender and rural geography in the discipline of geography, however, mainly deals with a Western context, primarily in the territories of Great Britain, Scandinavia and North America, where the Southern and poorer parts of the world are left out. The empirical work in this thesis is therefore by necessity a geographical input, to gain new insights and understandings from another part of the world. The villagers in HatNyao are undergoing diverse transformation processes in their gendered everyday life, particularly since the rubber was introduced. I therefore see it as interesting to present research carried out in societies that used to be agrarian but moved to stages of industrialisation and mechanisation. I want to stress that these examples cannot directly be transferred to HatNyao, since it is much more complex. It is a different time, where local and global processes are much more interconnected; but HatNyao is also placed in another geographical context, which must be considered. Nonetheless, these cases have been self-sufficient agrarian farms transforming into societies more dependent on markets and paid labour and therefore share a common experience with the villagers in HatNyao.

In a study of a farming community in Southern Sweden in the beginning of the 20th century (Götebo Johannesson 1996), women were participating in both indoor and outdoor labour, while men generally only took part in the outdoor labour. Be that as it may, a strict division in everyday life has hardly existed, neither for men nor women. The cyclic perception of time is instead fluent between the borders of pleasure and labour (ibid). However, mechanisation came to change the gendered division of labour, the most telling example being the way in which dairy work, once exclusively the domain of women, became masculinised, at the end of the 1930s. The author demonstrates too how the activities associated with reproduction are invisible, in contrast to the *real* work associated with the farm's income.

Sommestad's thesis (1992) also shows how dairy management between 1850 and 1950 came to be masculinised. This should be understood as an historical process of moving from an agrarian to an industrial society. The dairies were expanding in terms of both production and staff, and the industry came to be more characterised by technology as well as science. The work by Flygare (1999) on family farming during the twentieth century in Eastern and Western Sweden puts focus upon the internal relations and the interconnections between farming, family, individuals and the farm itself. During the first part of the twentieth century, many farms hired farmhands, and women were allotted the hardest and most demanding work. Later, as the employed labour was rationalised, the married women had to take over this labour, while being responsible for the reproductive activities at the same time. Flygare (1999) furthermore shows how women had labour duties in different spheres of the everyday and were left to work on the farms, while their men had a job outside the home and enjoyed higher status. Similarly Thorsen (1989) argues that women in the agrarian society have been more flexible. Women have been able to cross the border to 'man's labour' and at the same time, by their labour in agriculture, contributed to the very existence of the agrarian households. On the other hand, men's outdoor work has had higher status than indoor work generally performed by the women. The mechanisation in agriculture, however, made women and their labour less flexible, since the labour became male-dominated.

The research by different scholars presented in this last section is all historical work carried out in Sweden and Norway, focusing on a period when both countries were characterised as agrarian societies. The gendered everyday lives in these contexts and in agriculture act as interesting cases to illustrate what is taking place in the rubber village of HatNyao. What happened in Sweden one hundred years ago should nevertheless not be compared to what is happening in Northern Laos today, since it is placing countries in the Global South in a timeframe in relation to their development. However, there are similarities in the gendered division of labour at the agrarian family farms, besides the fact that they are all moving to a process of marketisation and leaving self-sufficiency behind. This has an effect on gendered everyday life, but in different ways, as locality is important, which is why it also differs between the Nordic examples.

Outline of the chapters

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. One of the advantages of writing a monograph, as well as of having an ethnographic approach, is that it enables the writer to tell a whole but complex story, where the different chapters are themes bringing the story together. Therefore, the research questions are not fully addressed in just one chapter of the thesis, but are integrated into several chapters.

The next chapter, chapter 2, deals with gender and the everyday from a theoretical perspective, where I continue to discuss the problematic division between production and reproduction, sex and gender. Chapter 3 presents epistemological and methodological considerations and reflections, together with the methods used. Chapter 4 gives a general description of Luang Namtha, the border region, and HatNyao village, its organisation and socio-economic structures. Chapter 5 focuses on the social organisation and gender among the Hmong and its importance for rubber cultivation; and chapter 6 aims to describe and analyse the different dimensions of labour in relation to rubber, inter-household relations as well as the market activities and income distribution, from a gender perspective. Chapter 7 analyses men's and women's everyday lives in the households and in diverse spheres of the everyday, but also the representations of men's and women's work and the relation to their material bodies are analysed. Finally, in chapter 8 I will give a concluding discussion on the whole thesis.

2. The situated everyday life

Writing this chapter has been a journey which started at one point, took another path and is to a certain degree still on the move. This journey is also the result of having an approach of openness and flexibility between theory and empirics, concomitant to the ethnographic approach. Gender and feminist theory, the kind of theories this chapter is based upon, are broad theoretical frameworks with diverse approaches. I will, however, steer this chapter and the different theories presented in such a way as to provide an understanding of gendered everyday life in HatNyao. In relation to this, Lykke (2009) argues that the researcher can be seen as a guide, influenced by Haraway's (1991; 2008) expression, *situated knowledge*, where it is possible to reach a partial understanding.

The guide is not relativist: she has instead a duty to share her knowledge to the tourist about the landscape and demonstrate, give advice, explain and point out. But she is never – as the eye above – some authority. In the relation between the guide and the traveller – it is always the travellers' curiosity, interests and passions and search for knowledge which decides what she or he pay attention to in the guide's stories and pointing of sights (Lykke 2009:22).

This means that my obligation is to present a theoretical framework which helps me and my readers to understand the gendered phenomena that is taking place in the village of HatNyao. For that purpose, as a researcher I place myself in the middle of the theoretical mass. This chapter is therefore a process and a journey, a result of my personal experiences, knowledge from fieldwork in Laos, the understanding of theories, as well as my bodily practices in Laos. In one way I as a researcher am the guide to the reader and at the same time a traveller on my own.

This chapter will henceforth continue with a discussion on dualistic ideas and the everyday, initially focusing on the sex/gender division. I continue with body-materialistic theories, which try to bridge the two terms in the sex/gender boundary by paying attention to the body and the material. I will thereafter examine the concept of intersectionality and the way different social categories are integrated. In the following section, the production/reproduction division as well as the term 'labour' is discussed. I will consider the problems with the production/reproduction division, especially

when studying gendered everyday life. Finally, I will introduce the term 'gender contract' in analysing local gendered practices in HatNyao.

Dualistic ideas

In the philosophy of science, originated in the Western world, there is a tradition of thinking in opposite pairs as a way to structure the world we live in. The world has therefore been divided into polarities such as nature/culture, male/female, subject/object, emotion/sense and rational/irrational. The source of these dualisms can be traced back to the Enlightenment and Descartes' body-and-soul dichotomy. Here, bodily sensitivity is traditionally associated with the female and the rational with the male (Hallberg 1992). The rational philosophy is, according to several feminists, grounded in the philosophy of Descartes, who places the rational at the centre and separates the body from the spiritual.

Dualistic ideas can sometimes, but not always, be regarded as dichotomies. Miegel and Schoug (1998) explain a dichotomy as a division of a category into two sub-categories and as a duality that organises different classes with a binary relationship. This relationship is often characterised by one sub-category which defines and thereby excludes the other. A dichotomy is also characterised by a position of normality and a position that is contrastive. In this sense, normality is what divergent is not, and vice versa. Even though these binaries are in our minds and hard to translate into 'reality', human beings seem to have a need to categorise and bring order to our world and 'reality' (ibid). Lundahl defines dichotomies as ways of expressing 'representations about difference' (1998:92). For example, the male/female divide is characterised by the fact that one is different from the other: male and female are opposite poles different from each other. Someone who is regarded as male cannot at the same time be female; you are one thing or the other. Dichotomies are furthermore often interconnected to other dichotomies, for example, male/female is often interrelated to the separation of culture/nature and active/passive. The normal does not need a clarification compared to the *other* which needs to be explained (Lundahl 1998). In the division of female/male, male is the norm, while female and its characteristics always need clarification. Derrida (Derrida and Kamuf 1991) claims that the binary opposition legitimises one of the sub-categories at the cost of the other category, which becomes marginalised. Sex/gender has in this way, as have other dichotomies, a hierarchical order, where the biological sex has not been paid the same attention as what is termed 'gender' – the social construction of sex (Lundahl 1998). Dichotomies have been widely criticised by

post-structuralists,²⁰ who have wanted instead to deconstruct central and natural polarities both in the present and in the past. The ideas of how the world has been divided are essential in this study, since the separations affect the relation between sex and gender - men and women - which is the central focus of this thesis. The separations are a part of the 'partial and localised objectivity' (Barad 1996; Haraway 1991; 2008) in the everyday life in HatNyao village, where the separations are both a constructive and an objective reality, issues further discussed in chapter 3.

Post-colonial theories have also criticised the dichotomist way of thinking, inspired by Said's book *Orientalism* (1978). Said argues that the Western views about the non-Western world affects people, both the colonised and the colonisers, and are still vivid in today's politics and cultural practices. In the post-colonial school, both political activism as well as philosophical arguments can be found (Landström 2001). Post-colonial theories share a critique of the 'knowledge production' in Western social sciences and humanities, including Western feminism. The geopolitical critique, raised by the post-colonial school, argues that Western universal science is seen as a continuum of colonialism. One of the goals of this perspective is therefore to reform parts of Western knowledge production. The feminist post-colonial theorist Spivak (2001) also claims that feminist knowledge produced in Western countries is put forward to the rest of the world.

The post-colonial perspectives enable us to see the nature and value of recognising 'a world of sciences' – that is, multiple scientific and technological traditions, each exquisitely adapted to regional needs and interests (Harding 2009:414).

The post-colonial perspective has been critical to the dominating production of knowledge, especially concerning sex/gender, as well as the production/reproduction division. Thus, post-colonial theories and post-colonial feminism are interwoven with the feminist critique and hence are of importance in this study. Post-colonial theories have shown the necessity to highlight the differences within the category of women, as well as within the category of men (Mohanty 1999). These theories have also been crucial in my relations with the people in Laos throughout my fieldwork, which is further discussed in chapter 3. Another dimension of post-colonialism is interrelated with modernity and development, matters that I will soon return to when discussing time and change in gendered everyday life.

Schough (2001) contends that, if the logics of dichotomies are so engrained in our ways of thinking, it may be impossible for us to completely

²⁰ The theories of many of the so-called '*post theories*' in geography, as well as in other disciplines, were a reaction and criticism to structuralism and have focused more attention to cultural aspects in geography, sometimes referred to as the *cultural turn* (Hansen and Simonsen 2004).

sidestep them. “We have to admit we are playing with dichotomies, are a part of them, tease with them, question them and fantasise about different orders” (ibid:19). In one way, that would otherwise be to ignore ‘reality’, where I refer to matters that I or my informants cannot deny and a reality that in part exists outside of our interpretations of it. As I shall argue in this chapter, the material body is an example of this ‘reality’, or, as Haraway would say, a ‘partial objectivity’ (1991; 2008). As Kobayashi (1994) expresses it:

There is still room for analytical categories [...] both because they reflect empirical conditions and because we seem to need to work through them to achieve theoretical progress. And, ironically, without categories we also run the political risk of making our subjects invisible by denying their commonality. But the challenge is twofold: we must utilise categories that are meaningful to and that will address the problems of contemporary women; and we need to establish a dialectical relationship between what we read as material, historical categories and our emerging analytical system. In the process we might hope to avoid creating new myths about women’s work that will impede understanding in the future. Of course we will likely fail in this regard, but we can hope at least to be critically aware of our failures (Kobayashi 1994:xxx).

I do not think we can totally escape from the way we have divided the world. Whilst we must be aware of the problems with this way of thinking, it would be naïve to imagine we could totally escape from it.

Sex/gender

The first separation I will deal with is the sex/gender division, as it is most fundamental to gender/feminist theory. Discussing sex/gender, it is important to mention the language problems involved, as the concepts are used in different ways in different languages. Nouns in the Hmong language, spoken in HatNyao, are divided into a sizable number of different classes, similar to genders in some European languages, but based on categories other than sex (Lee: article 32). Even so, as shall be seen, the sex/gender division is significant also within the Hmong community as it is noticeable in empirics and in the representations of men and women. What is also of interest is that sex and gender are not used in the language, although there are Hmong-related words for men and women in relation to their status (Symonds 2004), as was mentioned in chapter 1.²¹

²¹ The Swedish words ‘*kön*’ and ‘*genus*’ refer to the English ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ respectively, but Sweden is the only Scandinavian country that has introduced the term ‘gender’. Whilst numerous Swedish research institutes renamed ‘women’s science’ as ‘gender research’, Norway and Denmark instead renamed it ‘research about sex’ (*kønsforskning/kjønnforskning*). In Danish, gender is expressed as ‘sociocultural sex’ (*sociokulturel*) and sex as ‘biological sex’ (*biologisk*) (Lykke 2009).

In this work I will mainly be using the concept of gender, on certain occasions sex/gender or only sex, following the argument that sex and gender are inseparable and both refer to social constructions and representations, as well as the materialism of the relation between men and women. Referring sex to biology and gender to social constructions reshapes the problematic division between them. This has been and still is an ongoing debate in feminist and gender research and will probably continue to be so. In the early texts written on gender-related matters, the attention was on women only, but here I am interested in the relation between men and women. Even though some of the literature refers only to women in discussing gender relations, I still found these texts useful, as men are as important as women in the relation between them.

According to Lundahl (1998), the term 'sex' has referred to different meanings and understandings during the last century. In the beginning of the 20th century, biological and essential understandings of sex dominated the discourse, and the differences between men and women were proclaimed and seen as natural. During the 1950s and '60s, different theories arose and a new tradition of science was developed as women's science, demonstrating the need for research on women. Throughout the '80s and '90s, the gender concept was launched, which constructed a distinction between sex and gender. Additional focus was also put on the hierarchical structure between sex/gender and males/females. This development indicated a clearer separation between sex and gender, where sex refers to biology and gender to the social construction of sex (Lundahl 1998). The social constructivist approach launching the gender term has been an important contribution to the field. It has questioned biological determinism and cultural-essential thinking about sex (Lykke 2009). Rubin (1975) contributed to the sex/gender discussion by launching the concept of the gender system. She argues that sex and gender do not have to be seen as universally biological differences. Secondly, Rubin states that the gender system provides an analysis of power relations between men and women, but also the differences between them. This has opened up new perspectives in feminist/gender theory, where other categories are salient in explaining the relation between men and women, such as age, socio-economic position, ethnicity and sexuality (Bosseldal 1998). It has also developed the research into masculinities and the different varieties of being male. One way to intersect other social categories with the sex/gender divide is the theoretical framework named *intersectionality* (e.g., de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005), a framework I shall soon revisit.

Parsons' (1956) and others' before him interest in the survival of the family, has contributed to and increased the differences between men and women. He argues that survival of the family, as an institution, requires men and women to perform different tasks in the household, according to biological references. A woman's role is to be responsible for the housework and the children, while the man earns the family income. Bosseldal (1998),

oppose these statements and claims that most constructions about the differences between men and women have as their point of departure in female biology and women's capability of bearing children, and that this is the only clear difference – women have a uterus and men do not. Other differences between men and women can be, and have been, disregarded. But the separation between sex/gender is still very significant, even though the differences today are related more to social roles than the previous biological ones. These statements are of importance for gendered division of labour in HatNyao, as some of the spheres of the everyday are grounded in women's capability of bearing children. Nevertheless, they are also interrelated with representations and constructions about men's and women's duties and material bodies.²²

Throughout the 1990s, deconstruction and social constructivism affected feminist/gender theory. These influences have to a certain extent weakened the categorisation of male and female, even though the sex/gender divide is an official structure in society, independent of place and culture (Lundahl 1998). Gender constructivists have wanted to present social and linguistic gender constructions and deconstructions. The focal point is the way in which sex is performative, the 'doing' of sex, as well as discourses (Lykke 2009). Derrida's deconstructive theory has also had an effect on the sex/gender divide, as he claims that there are no such things as a man and a non-existent man. Instead, there will always be meanings that shift between the borders, and the goal for deconstruction is to loosen-up hierarchies and oppositions (Derrida 1981). According to Derrida, the categories of 'man' and 'woman' are useless as the different variations of them are more important. One of the feminist deconstruction theorists, Butler,²³ has aimed to deconstruct and criticise the division of sex and gender that she claims has been dominant in feminist/gender theory. Butler argues that biological sex is socially constructed and it is therefore not relevant to think in terms of truly male or female (Butler 1990;2007).²⁴ Bossedal states (1998) that, whilst there are problems with the sex/gender divide, she cannot agree with Butler's theories, and adds:

Out of this despair came the understanding that the poststructuralist feminism forced me into a corner that I was not willing to stand in (ibid:128, own translation).

²² There are, of course, many diverse male and female mixes of bodies and personalities. Nevertheless, some bodies are meant to bear children (even if some women, of course, cannot) and some are not (unless they used to be women and changed their material sex): hence the materiality of a body.

²³ Butler's theories have had a big impact on the debates around sex/gender and are referred to by Lykke, Bossedal and Lundahl (2009; 1998; 1998) *inter alia*.

²⁴ This is further discussed under body-materialistic theories, as Butler has been interpreted differently. Butler has also reversed her ideas on certain points (Butler 2007).

There is nothing to support the argument that a woman's (or man's) anatomy should be in contradiction to the culturally constructed woman (or man). Acknowledging that the male and female sex each has a particular body with unique experiences does not mean to be a biological essentialist (Bossedal 1998). An alternative for those who do not see the materiality of the body as a problem, but see problems with a body empty of history and meaning, is, according to Moi (1999), to return to de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* (1949) (1995). There, the body itself is recognised as something valuable, but not what this individual body becomes and how the body is interpreted. As individuals, we are always creating ourselves in becoming ourselves, but without our subjective bodies. The body is, to use Beauvoir's word, a *situation*, which means that it is a part of our lived experience (Moi 1999). Young (2005) argues that Moi's concept of the *lived body* is a better one to use than 'gender' or 'sex'. Young nevertheless finds the concept of gender to be valuable in demonstrating power relations and analysing social structures.

The body as a situation is the concrete experienced body as meaningful, as social and historical situated. It is this concept of the body that is totally disappearing from Butler's report of sex and gender (Moi 1999:74).

According to Bossedal, Moi's critique of Butler shows another way to transcend the position of understanding personhood by biological sex alone. This cannot be solved by looking at discourses but in 'people's social practices, interaction and personal experiences' (Bossedal 1998:130). Butler is, on the other hand, critical of de Beauvoir's idea about the body being unimportant in the Cartesian sense of separating body and soul, as she retains this dualism (Butler 1990; 2007).

In this section I have presented a review of the historical development of the terms 'sex' and 'gender'. Different eras each give their contribution to knowledge production, which must be seen as a process of adding new understandings and creating new knowledge. To a certain point I agree with Moi, in the sense that we need to take our own lived bodily experiences more seriously. What she is missing, however, is that this does not necessarily result in a contradiction to theories trying to deconstruct the sex/gender divide. Moi (1999) is not only critical of Butler, but also of Haraway, whom she accuses of completely constructing the body, which I will argue is not true. Rather than being either/or, a combination of Moi's statement and body-materialistic theories makes sense. The perspectives relating to the personal experiences of the body as well as to the material female and male bodies must be highlighted and valued. However, Lundahl (1998) argues that the interrelation between sex and gender has been little problematised and that the relationship between sex and gender is rarely discussed as a dialectical one. The consequence is that sex is seen as something biological, natural and taken for granted whilst the term 'gender' always needs an ex-

planation (Lundahl 1998). This may sound like a paradox, but my interpretation is that the biological sex is taken for granted, representing the normal or natural, compared to gender, which to a greater extent is ‘unnatural’ and constructed. Putting more focus upon the ‘natural’ and how, for example, the taken-for-granted biological body can be explained and experienced in *different* ways would to some degree erase the distinctions between sex and gender. Therefore, I will now move on to body-materialistic theories. According to Lykke (2009), there is a point in not totally explaining the meaning of sex, since gender research and its categories are diverse and in constant motion. Body-materialistic theories develop this argument further.

Body-materialistic theories

Gender constructivist theories have made their contributions to the field, but on the other hand they have, to a certain extent, reduced the biological body. This has also made the distinction between biological and sociocultural sex even stronger (Lykke 2009). However, social constructivists have had an impact on body-materialistic theories, which is why Lykke labels these theories *post-constructivist*. In doing so, she emphasises that body-materialistic theories both cross and include each other. Instead of reducing the body and the biological sex to social inscriptions *only*, Haraway and other bodily-material feminist thinkers introduce ways of seeing the body as non-determined and non-essential. The feminist philosopher Grosz (1994), presents the body and sex as a framework for subjectivity. Grosz wants to break down the dualistic thinking of body/soul, nature/culture. To go beyond this division, we must start in the body, with its individual and multiple characteristics, to be able to discuss subjectivity and identity (Grosz 1994). It is then possible to avoid the trap of dualisms, since femininity, body and irrationality are subordinated to masculinity, soul and rationality. She also claims that the constructivist view of the body as a sociocultural product is a passive view of the material body. Instead, we need to take the biological sexed body and sex differences seriously, but in a non-deterministic way.

To avoid dualisms and hierarchies, Haraway (1991; 2008) suggests the famous Cyborg Manifesto, which challenges the borders between nature and culture, and between gender and sex. These concepts are not universal, but changing and contextually constructive. They are not original creations, neither biologically nor culturally.²⁵ Haraway problematises the fixed status of biology and instead looks at biology and non-human actors as active agents. In relation to the cyborg theory, Haraway deals with the body as the “apparatus of bodily production” (Haraway 1991:197), a contribution to body-

²⁵Haraway’s way of thinking has been developed in interplay with several other theories (Lykke 2009). The interdisciplinary research field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) and feminist post-colonialism as well as ANT (Actor Network Theories).

materialistic theories. This is important in understanding the sexual body – not as biologically deterministic *or* as a surface of social inscriptions. Haraway thereby breaks with classic social constructivism that ignores the body’s actual materiality, widely discussed though it is.

I am making an argument for the cyborg as a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings (Haraway 1991:150).

Judith Butler is sometimes also counted as a body-materialist, but is rather somewhere between feminist sex-constructionism and body-materialism (Lykke 2009).²⁶ Butler does not only see gender as sociocultural, but also the biological sex as discursively produced. She is, though, interested in the relation between biological and sociocultural sex and does not simply ignore the body. She is also critical of the sex/gender division which has been reproduced by social constructionists. Butler (1993) reflects upon how body-materialistic processes are interconnected with the biological sex and understood as action-decided. Butler is in that sense body-materialistic as she points out the combination between discourses and the material body in the production of sex and sex differences. Butler, as compared to other body-materialists, however, puts the agency of the material body as second-handed. Barad (1998) claims that Butler is not a social constructionist in its simplest terms, which Butler many times has been criticised for. Barad instead states that Butler lacks an understanding of the way material is materialised, where the material is too passively managed (Barad 1998).

It would be a gross misunderstanding of Butler’s work to accuse her of collapsing the complex issue of materiality to one of mere discourse, of arguing that bodies are formed from words, or of asserting that the only way to make the world a better place is through resignification (Barad 1998:2).

The status of being pregnant and its relation to this discussion is handled by Irenius (2011). She argues that pregnancy makes many women’s bodies ‘public’ and also reduces women to bodies only. From an historical perspective this has been negative for many women and has also made them reduce the meaning of the body, where ‘biology’ has become an insult to many feminists. Irenius reasons that a more balanced view of body and soul is needed in the feminist movement, as it is impossible to separate them. Furthermore, “for women to deny their bodies and their own biology is not a sustainable way to liberation” (Irenius 2011).

Body-materialistic theories are important in understanding the division of labour between men and women and their everyday life in HatNyao, which

²⁶ Here it is necessary to return to Butler, who has been very important in these debates as she focuses attention on the problematic separation of sex and gender.

is bound not only to social constructions. The representations of what men and women should do often refer to the material body and imply that certain forms of labour are hard work, referring to men's physical strength. The material and the body can therefore not be ignored, as the bodies are there and are significant in the division of labour between men and women. Gendered everyday life is not *only* about social constructions *or* the material body; rather, there is an *intra-action* between them, where the bodily practices need to be taken more seriously. The traditional division of the spheres of production/reproduction, discussed in more depth later in this chapter, is just an extension of sex and gender.²⁷ This means we should take reproduction and the way it is intertwined with production more seriously in understanding the everyday. Division of labour in gendered everyday life is furthermore interrelated with what the body permits and restricts: in some cases the material is more significant and in others the material body is more related to representations of male and female and therefore divides the labour between men and women. Anyway, the bodies are *there* and must be considered. In addition, I consider it important to present different theories and opinions about what constitutes the relation between men and women, when undertaking research on gender relations. However, these relations do not stand on their own in the performance of everyday life. Additional social dimensions are also salient, which is why I shall now proceed with the intersectional perspective.

Intersectionality

The term *intersectionality* has in feminist theory been used to analyse the ways in which certain societal hierarchies interact with constructed categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, socio-economic belonging, sexuality, age/generation or nationality (Lykke 2003;2005). In the following paragraph I will focus attention on age, which turned out to be important for this study, since the gendered practices in the households vary along the life-course and hence with age. Ethnicity is also significant in an intersectional analysis and is handled in chapter 5, in relation to the ethnic Hmong.

Intersectionality is grounded in a critique disparaging earlier gender and race-based research, which could not demonstrate the subordinated and the lived experiences. For example, it was not possible to understand 'black' women's experiences when research in feminist studies focused on 'white' women and research regarding race concentrated on 'black' men (McCall 2005). Intersectionality therefore started as an interplay between feminist and post-colonial theories as well as those of the Black Feminist Movement.

²⁷ What I mean is that the term 'sex' traditionally refers to biology, the body, women and reproduction, while 'gender' traditionally relates to social construction, the mind, men and production.

Feminist post-colonialism has been very clear about the importance of exceeding cultural-essential understandings about sex/gender, focusing as it does upon issues of power and differences between women. As in the intersectional perspective, processes of interactions are important, integrating and 'making' sex, race and ethnicity (Lykke 2009). The typical Third World woman is described as one living a damaged life, due to her feminine sex and her belonging to the Third World (Mohanty 1999). The Western woman, on the other hand, is well-educated, has control over her body and the freedom to make her own decisions. Western women thereby become the standard for all women (Mohanty 1999). Consequently, there still exist racism, colonialism and imperialism beyond the sisterhood (ibid:204). Mohanty's text *Under Western Eyes* (1988) raises a critique against universal sisterhood, which creates a hegemonic feminism whilst the white Western middle-class feminist movement created a united 'we'. This sisterhood did not consider the differences among women due to geopolitics, class structures, ethnicity or race. To move beyond this essential way of thinking, the representation that all women in the world have the same interest must be abandoned, according to post-colonial feminism. This perspective has, however, several approaches and should not be regarded as one theoretical viewpoint (Lykke 2009). For post-colonial and anti-racist feminists it has been important to distance themselves from liberal and relativist representations of *multiculturalism* which could then create a backlash in cultural-essential ways of thinking (ibid).

Returning to the term intersectionality, there has been a discussion in Sweden on how it should be used and interpreted. One perspective has been to present an analysis of the ways in which the categories construct each other, characterised by an *intra-action*, rather than *interaction*, between them (Lykke 2005). According to Barad (2003), *interaction* is something different from *intra-action*, as the former is a situation where restricted units meet, but without a mutual transformation. *Intra-action*, on the other hand, is an interplay between non-restricted units which penetrate as well as transform one another. Lykke argues that intersectionality is about mutual processes where various phenomena construct and transform different categories, and that Barad's argument in this context therefore is important. It should also be mentioned that the different 'categories' used in an intersectional analysis are changing and not fixed or essentialist (Lykke 2005; 2003). In this way men and women are more complex and fragmented than belonging to certain categories and can rather be seen as hybrids where social and spatial borders may be crossed (Simonsen and Hansen 2004).

De los Reyes et al. (2005; 2002; 2003), who introduced the concept in Sweden, focus to a greater degree on issues of power, seeing social position as a product of class, gender/sex, sexuality and race. Intersectionality, according to them, is a way of making visible and problematising these different power relations. An intersectional analysis which focuses on the problem

of identity, rather than on issues of power, may lose the perspective's theoretical and political potential, which interconnects power and inequalities with individual actions in societal structures, institutional practices and present ideologies (de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005). To perform an analysis in which all social categories have the same importance and all are interacting in a situation is for me not possible. In certain situations sex and ethnicity are crucial, while in others different social categories are more relevant. Furthermore, the intra-action of social categories does not necessarily make issues of power less important.

Nevertheless, [...] many gender researchers agree that intersectional interactions between power orders and categories of identities are about mutual transformation processes and not just that sex/gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality etc. contribute to each other (Lykke 2009, own translation).

Interestingly, research similar to that on intersectionality has been undertaken, under a different name, even before the idea was introduced. Rose (1993), for example, uses the concept of paradoxical spaces to overcome the dualistic relationship that exists between the categories of Man and Woman. Rose is inspired by de Lauretis (1989) and 'the subject of feminism' to avoid spatial imaginations of the patriarchal dualism of Man and Woman. According to Rose (1993:140), the particular space that can be related to 'the subject of feminism' is a space that is "multidimensional, shifting and contingent". The space is also paradoxical, where concepts such as centre-margin or inside-outside exist simultaneously. Or as de Lauretis proclaims:

The movement between them, therefore, is not that of dialectic, of integration, of a combinatory, or of difference, but is the tension of contradiction, multiplicity and heteronomy (de Lauretis 1987:26).

Mahtani (2001) takes Rose's concept and applies it in the dimension of race to describe a new feminist geography for constructing identities. In Mahtani's study (2001:301), women were occupied in spaces of paradoxical characteristics: not black or white, but often both and neither and in a variety of spaces at the same time. Like Rose, Mahtani sees an "identity that represents a paradoxical space, where several social categories and spaces overlap at once" (ibid).

The concept of paradoxical spaces is similar to intersectionality, where women or men cannot be reduced to one specific space, but instead are in several different spaces at once which can differ with the situation. The men and women in HatNyao are thus bound not only to spaces of the everyday specifically. At the same time they are more than just men or women; they also belong to different generations, to different clans, as well as to the ethnic group of Hmong. In this context ethnicity is of particular relevance as the whole village is ethnic Hmong. Hmong, gender relations, age, clan and

spaces of the everyday therefore construct gendered everyday life in HatNyao. In certain spaces of the everyday some dimensions are stronger than in others, but nevertheless interact with other social perspectives.

Age

In discussions about intersectionality, ethnicity, class and sex are most often the subjects mentioned. Therefore I would like to add something about age, or the generational aspect, which has often been neglected, according to Krekula, Närvänen and Näsman (2005). One reason for that could be that age is taken for granted both in the everyday and in academia. Scientific disciplines have different definitions of age and ageing, disciplines which influence practices as truths. Age does not have a fixed meaning, being a social and cultural construct, where chronological age can be interconnected with physiological and cognitive processes. This in turn affects social and cultural meanings of age. Krekula et al. (2005) see it as important also to incorporate age into intersectional analysis. There is one important dimension of age and that is its naturalness to change, at least more often than other terms in intersectional analysis such as sex or race. This aspect is, however, no reason to exclude age from the analysis. Another aspect on age positions is that it cannot be divided into binary oppositions, as discrimination towards certain ages can vary. For example, the working age is normative, which means that both younger and older are divergent. Higher societal status is generally accorded those who are able to contribute and are able to produce (Närvänen and Näsman 2003; Turner 1989, cited in Krekula et al. 2005). For example, the subject of children has formerly been excluded but is today accepted in research (Aragão-Lagergren 1997; Cele 2006; van der Burgt 2006). Age differences can be of importance in examining the relationship between sex and age (Krekula et al. 2005) and, in my view, also in *intra-sections* of other terms, where ageing can be seen as a part of it and intersecting with other constructed categories. The authors also highlight situational analyses in contexts of variation, produced in everyday practices.

Age or the generational aspect is of certain importance in this work, as the main unit for analysis is on a household level. This is central in the division of labour, where families of different generations share the labour of the everyday, with a focus on rubber cultivation. In HatNyao village especially, teenagers participate in work related to rubber, though they are not the main labour force. Younger children, especially girls, help with housework. Children are therefore important to consider in gendered everyday life. In contrast to Krekula et al. (2005) I would argue that elders are also key in everyday life and have a high status in HatNyao village. The work by Twigg (2004) brings an interesting analysis to the field, as she combines ageing with the material body. Biological essentialism is to be avoided, but an exploration of the ways in which different meanings and experiences of the

body are in a dialectical relationship with ‘real’ ageing bodies “that experience real pain, sickness, and death—as well as other more enjoyable sensations” (ibid:70) is valuable. These conclusions are significant in understanding the intersections of age, gender and ethnicity and the division of labour within the households in HatNyao and, furthermore, how theories of intersectionality can be combined with body-materialism.

Gender and everyday life

I now move on to the division of production/reproduction, which is a problematic division in the same way as the sex/gender separation. As I see it, reproduction/production is an extension of the sex/gender division, where both reproduction and sex are subordinated and traditionally bound to femininity and women, in the same way as men are more associated with production and the mind. Everyday life has been examined in different ways and a number of scholars have met problems in going beyond production/reproduction, while others have made efforts to do so, as presented in chapter 1. In this section, I will demonstrate in what ways I found it valuable to analyse everyday life from a gender perspective. How is it possible to overcome the separation of production/reproduction in a fruitful way, while maintaining a focus upon gender relations at a household level? First I will give a brief introduction to the term ‘everyday’. Thereafter I continue with a background to the division between production/reproduction and the definition of labour. Then I move on to the concept of ‘gender contract’ and how this helps me to understand empirically what is taking place between men and women in the households in HatNyao and in their everyday lives.

According to Ahrne (1981), the everyday life is simple while at the same time difficult to grasp. The everyday embraces the reality of an individual, as well as the individual in interaction with nature, society and culture. In a sense there is an everyday for each human being. The everyday is generally perceived as a ‘world of routines’ of social phenomena. Repeated actions in the everyday are also composed of cyclical events and processes (Jakobsen and Karlsson 1993:17). Furthermore, the everyday focuses on ordinary people, everyday actions and commonplace events (Rigg 2007), all of which construct everyday life. “So the focus on the everyday is not only because normal living is everyday living, but also because the everyday begins and ends with the personal” (Rigg 2007:17). Grundström (2009:37, own translation) in addition states that “the everyday gives an understanding to the way individuals organise their activities in time and space, where differ-

ent activities are taking place, and to which places and spaces the individual has access”.²⁸

Production/reproduction and the definition of labour

In the feminist struggle of building a sex/gender analysis upon a Marxist foundation – the material base – the concept of reproduction was invented as a ‘sister’ to production. By suggesting a sex/gender system in parallel with an economic system, the way was prepared to understand variations in gender relations (Schoug 2001). According to Rubin (1975), the sex/gender system is as fundamental to society as the economic system. This has, however, changed over time as the two-system theory has evolved, involving capitalism and patriarchy as separated but nevertheless integrated (Hartmann 1981; Rubin 1975).

The historical development of capitalism aside, labour and family has been separated as institutions very different from each other, built upon diverse societal functions, interests and principles. Labour is defined according to economy and production, while family is defined in relation to relationships, sex and sexuality and thereby reproduction (Tyrkkö 1999:78). Criticism has been aimed at this dualistic and hierarchical way of thinking on the basis of its being a male dualistic idea. The binaries and categorisations do not represent men’s and women’s lives in a truthful way (Acker 1994:15). Furthermore, the separation is characterised by a relationship that has only two fixed choices, as aspects of production are defined by men’s practices, and aspects of reproduction by women’s (Tyrkkö 1999:79). Reproduction is generally defined as all the labour associated with reproductive functions intergenerationally, as well as on a daily basis. Production in simple terms means to create materials and shape these into things necessary for human beings (Forsberg 1992).

The separation of production/work and reproduction/sex has meant that the sex/gender system has been described always in relation to economic systems (Schough 2001). Efforts have, however, been made to include both working life and love life. Labour as a cultural process, picturing only one side of life, separated from the traditional view of paid labour, is not a successful analysis (Hanson and Pratt 1995). Separating economy and sex, labour/spare time and production/reproduction is thereby delimiting our perspectives, but, regardless of how ‘labour’ is defined, some kinds of labour produce capital and others do not. The foundation for everyday life is labour, but what is counted as labour varies with time and space (Schough 2001). The division between production and reproduction has also affected how

²⁸ Lefebvre (1974, cited in Grundström 2009) also uses the everyday to understand the relation between space and power, but Lefebvre’s considerations of gendered relations in the everyday are limited.

research on these topics has been carried out, as they have been studied separately. Traditionally research on labour has focused upon the physical production and its organisation. Women's science has, on the other hand, contributed with studies in reproduction as another aspect of analysing the working environment (Forsberg 1989).

A central aspect while discussing production and reproduction is the concept of time. According to Forsberg, time in production is traditionally linear, whilst time in reproduction has more of a cyclic character (Forsberg 1989). This should not be treated as essentialist, but rather that there are different understandings and meanings of time. Davies (1989) also claims that the interpretation of time is not a constant but varies with history, culture and groups of societies within the same history and culture. Western societies of today are generally characterised by a linear time, where there is a "minutely precise measurement of the clock on a concrete, practical level" (ibid:17). Following Davies, my own interpretation has been not to lay emphasis on generalisation regarding men's and women's division of labour or time, but rather to show how traditional so-called 'women's time' and labour have been valued in the literature and in relation to the capitalist economy and the Western way of thinking. This has also affected and increased the separation of the production/reproduction spheres, instead of viewing them as intertwined and interdependent.

The separation between home and labour, public and private are also important to mention, as they are interrelated to the separation between production and reproduction. Before industrialisation in Europe, the separation between the home and outside labour was not as detached as presently. At that time, agriculture was the main occupation for most people and their houses thereby represented both a living and a working space. This is not to say that there was not a division of labour between men and women (Domosh and Seager 2001). However, as the massive industrial transformations in Europe took place, the labour outside the home was separated from the private space to a larger extent. These changes eventually led to a development where work relating to income was performed outside the home. Most of the family members working outside the home were men, while women continued to work within the house on diverse tasks, but without payment. Nevertheless, during the earliest capitalist period women from the working and middle class did participate in waged labour outside the home.

It is important to recognise that the development of this ideology of 'separate spheres' served very particular purposes: the separation of a masculine world of work and production from a feminine world of family and reproduction was essential to the ideology of the emerging capitalist system (Domosh and Seager 2001:5).

In many pre-industrial societies the activities needed instead to be carried out in relation to seasonal cycles, especially when harvesting (task-oriented time) (Thompson 1974, cited in Friberg 1990). The separation between the everyday and labour is thereby more diffuse as time becomes characterised by a cyclical understanding. Here it would be easy to draw a parallel with HatNyao, considered a pre-industrialised society, and to see the transformation taking place in HatNyao, from self-sufficiency to a market-dependent community, as a process of development towards modernity. To some extent, labour is more divided in industrialised societies than in pre-industrialised societies, but the distinction between these two societies is not always very clear. It is therefore necessary to stress that the European industrial transformation and what is now happening in HatNyao are not comparable; this is also an important statement for post-colonial theory. There is no either/or; rather, it is that societies are in flux and in-between. Furthermore, time can be apprehended in different ways which vary with the situation. Hence the division of labour between men and women cannot be explained only by economic transformations and 'development'.

The concepts of work and labour have, nevertheless, come to be defined as activities that involve cash or other means of wage exchange. Activities and duties in the home are, on the other hand, practices of loyalty, duty or love and considered as non-work. As soon as a person is not part of the labour force – the accepted economic system – she or he is seen as unproductive and economically inactive. The separation also recreates patriarchal structures and women's economic dependence on men and, as a consequence, increases men's power (Domosh and Seager 2001). Furthermore, in every national economic system, reproductive labour is invisible. Domosh and Seager also argue that the important thing is not what kind of work it is, but *where* the work takes place. Cooking is, for example 'active labour' when it is sold, but economically 'inactive labour' when prepared in the house for consumption (ibid 2001:43).

They go on to state (2001) that observing the ways in which people live their lives and the division between the private and public spheres is not clear-cut, but rather fuzzy at the edges. Inspired by Simmel (1908), Tyrkkö (1999) argues in addition that the concept of a circle is a better way of studying the processes of everyday life, and this connects with Forsberg's (1989) argument about time. A human being is, in Simmel's argument, on the borderlines of several 'cross-cutting' circles, capturing phenomena that can be contradictory.

Instead of starting from a dichotomy between paid labour and family life, I would view an interaction as, rather, a complex pattern of mutual penetration which commonly defines a more or less transparent border (Tyrkkö 1999: 69, own translation).

In my opinion, it is important to give serious consideration to the specific local setting and people's experiences of living their everyday lives there, both men and women. By starting at the everyday level, it is possible to reach an understanding about different spheres in that particular setting. In the same way as body-materialists argue that we must give more thought to the material body, the everyday life is worthy of more attention, involving both production and reproduction as unseparable spheres. This is of some importance in understanding the relation between men and women in the everyday. I will now present how the concept of *gender contract* is useful when analysing local gendered everyday life, in combining the different spheres of the everyday.

Local gender contracts

The concept and theoretical framework of local gender contracts became important and apparent when I started to analyse the empirical work from HatNyao village. The local gender contracts have been useful and key for understanding the local gendered practices on a household level in HatNyao and among the fourteen households.

The gender contract has its grounds in the gender system, launched in Sweden by Yvonne Hirdman (1988). The gender system does not explain the variations between men and women; rather, it analyses the structures present in social organisations, institutions and frameworks in society. The contextual variations are, however, explained in the *gender contract*,²⁹ which is where the gender system is practised (Hirdman 1988). A gender contract is concrete representations, on different levels, of how men and women socially act and behave towards each other in relation to labour and love, and in this way combines the spheres of the everyday. Hirdman presents three levels of analysis in the gender contract: the abstract 'philosophical' level, the social institutional level and the individual level, where the gender contract is constituted (Hirdman 1993). Socio-economic structures, the family situation and age accordingly shape the gender contracts in diverse ways. The gender contract also holds various solutions to the working life/family life dilemma, as there is a diversity of different contracts (Hirdman 1988). In HatNyao village, the different levels presented by Hirdman, are in constant interaction and are all relevant for the gendered practices on a household level in HatNyao and constitute the gender contracts in HatNyao village. The way the labour is organised also shapes certain gender contracts specifically in relation to rubber production. But it is mainly in the household that they are formulated, between individuals, not necessary in a couple, but also in households with widows, between two men or two women, children or the elderly.

²⁹ The concept originally comes from Pateman (1988).

Forsberg (1998) contributes with a geographical analysis of the gender contract, where she views the contract as a combination of general structures and specific relations. According to Forsberg (2000), there is no such thing as a 'normal' gender contract; instead, several different gender contracts are constructed at the same time. Typically, local gender contracts organise people's everyday lives, and the way in which they spend their daily lives determines the everyday performance of gender relations, which includes both paid and unpaid work. The gender contract should furthermore be understood principally as a process which is reshaped and changed by our actions. Gender relations are constituted at a local level and that is why gender contracts vary between different localities (Forsberg 2001) and according to labour market conditions (Forsberg 2010). The local gender contracts therefore say something about the specific locality as well as they are 'pictures of reality' from inside (Forsberg 2000:388). The gender contract is, in addition, an informal and unconscious negotiation between men and women in their everyday practice (Forsberg 2010), where household members consider each other as equals and consequently view the division of labour in the household as conscious choices. As a result, each individual, for example in a household, may practise any kind of contract and the gender relations are shaped in the location where they take place (ibid).

The gender contract has, however, been criticised, since it seeks to provide general solutions and is used as a model in particular circumstances (Liljeström 1996, cited in Tyrkkö 1999). Silius (1992) understands the theory as structural and in search of common patterns in gendered practices. In this way the separation between the categories of men and women is being reproduced and hides individual actions under structural forms (Tyrkkö 1999). In relation to the critique mentioned above, I too am influenced by the gender contract, but I acknowledge some problems with it. First of all, I am sceptical of the concept itself, as I take a contract to mean something very formal, a piece of paper that represents an agreement between two or several parties. Hirdman (2001) admits that there are problems with the word *contract*, but also mentions the original meaning in Latin; *con-tractere*, which means 'to pull together'. In this context, it is better to understand the word instead as an agreement of men's and women's common contractual obligations and rights (ibid:84). Secondly, the gender contract has been used mainly in a Western context. Despite these obstacles, I would like to combine the gender contract with the other theories that I have demonstrated – body-materialistic theories and intersectionality – which are all important in understanding the gendered everyday life in HatNyao. My intention is not to use the gender contract to look for regional patterns, but instead I incline towards Tyrkkö's way of understanding the gender contract, viewing gender relations as an aspect of work and family organisation. Tyrkkö's analysis does not fix the categories of men and women with 'work' and family in a specific way. "An important motivation for this strategy is to avoid a dualis-

tic view of gender relations and the relation between working life and family life” (Tyrkkö 1999:75). Tyrkkö’s analysis designates contracts existing side by side and at the same time in different contexts. She is not interested in the categories of men and women in themselves, but in networks or a ‘structure of order’ of individual practices and structural circumstances (ibid:76). Tyrkkö claims that the contracts are a combination of actions and positions in the organisation of production and reproduction and of the everyday (see also Lindgren 1992).³⁰ This way of thinking about the gender contract is also something Stenbacka (Berglund et al. 2005; 2007) deals with. Coping strategies together with local gender contracts are used by Stenbacka (2007) in understanding the strategies developed by unemployed men in rural Sweden and how they deal with their situation. Stenbacka analyses how diverse relations change and interact and the way in which local actors adapt to these societal transformations. Stenbacka’s two case studies show that gender contracts, as well as coping strategies, are essential for understanding local practices and the restructuring of identities.

Like Stenbacka and Tyrkkö, I would like to reconsider the gender contract by using a more complex approach, aided by the empirical results from HatNyao, especially in relation to processes of change. The spaces of production and reproduction are intimately interconnected and thereby influence everyday life, but how the borders between them are drawn is a highly empirical question. When the starting point for the analysis is in the everyday, the border dividing production/reproduction must be crossed, since humankind lives in a world where that separation does not exist. Therefore the everyday can only be studied in conditions where both production and reproduction are present (Tyrkkö 1999). Kobayashi (1994) also points out the importance of the empirical context to avoid being caught in spatial divisions.

This dialectical understanding of the thoroughly material conditions of social life provides a theoretical means, not only of going beyond some of the more difficult dichotomies involved in comprehending social relations (agency/structure, ideal/material, etc., as well as separate spheres), but also the methodological means of understanding empirical conditions more fully. Furthermore the recognition that conditions differ from place to place provides us with a more powerful means of understanding differences among women, thus forestalling the development of feminist stereotypes and recognising that a wide variety of processes, virtually always overlapping and interlocking, serve to define difference (Kobayashi 1994:xxix).

A gender contract, in my view, is very localised and on the whole constructed within the family and the household, which is my central level of analysis for the gendered everyday life in the village. Some gender contracts,

³⁰ These discussions do not differ from Forsberg, but in the empirical results of this thesis the gender contract is constructed within the household. Forsberg, on the other hand, argues that there are general gender contracts on a national and regional level as well (2000; 2001).

however, can be of more general character, in particular those relating to the symbolic level and the representations of what men and women should do. These are, nonetheless, not always transferred into reality; moreover, the individual level does not necessarily allow for generalisations. That said, the individual situation is in itself important, as the gendered everyday life in HatNyao varies between households with age, with clan belonging, as well as with socio-economic status. A gender contract is in that sense truly empirical. I would also like to add body-materialist theories and give proper consideration to the interplay between the material body and social inscriptions in the gender contract.

The theoretical approach of gender contract has to a greater extent been used in Global North contexts.³¹ One aim of this study is therefore to take this approach into another context – to reach an alternative understanding of the area of research. Agarwal (1997) has already discussed these questions from another standpoint, similar to the gender contract. But instead she uses the concept of bargaining within the household and highlights the relations between co-wives of polygamists and between parents and their children. These aspects are also fruitful for the gender contracts in HatNyao village. The concept of bargaining has also been applied by Huijsmans (2010) among children and youth in rural Laos. The gender contract is most evident in chapter 7, which aims at examining men's and women's everyday life in the households and the division of labour in all the spheres of the everyday.

Concluding comments

Studies of the work that permeates all aspects of women's lives have contributed to an increasing recognition that the way we construct theory is changing and that we need flexible analytical categories, either because current ones do not fit the reality of women's daily lives, or because they are too narrow to capture its complexity. There is now greater diversity in women's lives than ever before, and therefore no single theory of gender relations will explain the circumstances of all women in all places or times (Kobayashi 1994:xii).

These words are of importance in this thesis, where empirics and theory are in constant interaction. Different theories, with what may seem quite different angles and diverse analytical approaches, have been necessary to explain the gendered practices of the rubber phenomenon in HatNyao. I started this chapter by introducing the concept of *situated knowledge* (Haraway 2008) as a way to demonstrate the intimacy between myself as a researcher, the gen-

³¹ Global North can, according to Bergquist (2008:30), be defined as “clusters of wealthy and Westernised people and ideas that are dispersed globally, hence transcending geographical boundaries”.

dered everyday life in HatNyao and what can be read in this chapter. Reaching this concluding discussion of the chapter has, as a consequence, not been straightforward, but a process and a bumpy journey.

Dualistic ideas, originated in the Western world, have consequences for feminist science and the construction of gender relations. To discuss sex and gender is, as I see it, an obligation for a thesis focusing on gender relations and everyday life. The sex/gender division is the most fundamental in gender theories and the production/reproduction divide is an extension of the separation between sex and gender. I have given a background to sex/gender and presented different perspectives on how to view the binaries' relationship. Body-materialistic theories have been used to show that the body cannot be seen only as a social construct and discourse. More important is the intertwined relation between the body, the material and the social constructs of men and women. It is not possible to deny that there is a particular female body, in the same way as there is a particular male body. This is not the same thing as saying that bodies cannot change in different situations and with time, or the fact that bodies at some point are material or a concrete personal experience. In the village of HatNyao these aspects are salient when discussing the division of labour between men and women and the relation to bodily capabilities. Crossing the border of what is material, a personal experience or gendered representations in the analysis, is in this sense necessary.

However, gender relations are not only about the interrelations between the body and social constructs. Gender relations are also constructed in relation to other social categories such as ethnicity, age and socio-economic belonging, which is why intersectionality is important. HatNyao is an ethnic Hmong village, so there is in fact only one ethnic group; nonetheless, there are diverse clans in the village with various statuses, which affects not only rubber production but also gender relations. Age is also an important factor, as the central level of analysis for this thesis is the household, where different generations live together. The historical background of the production/reproduction division aimed to present the way in which these relations have developed and the consequences of separating these two spheres. Starting from the everyday level decreases the risk of recreating the division of production/reproduction. When analysing gendered everyday life in HatNyao, the introduction of rubber cannot be separated from other segments of the everyday.

The gender contract is useful for examining gendered everyday life in HatNyao, both in terms of work and family organisation. In everyday life, different gender contracts can be found, even in the same household and at the same time. A gender contract can also change with a household member's actions. However, I would like to combine the concept of gender contract with the material body, where the gender contract can challenge the sex/gender division. The body is in this sense interconnected with social

constructivism. Analysing gendered everyday life is a highly empirical exercise, which is why this chapter has been constructed in relation to the results from HatNyao. Furthermore, the theoretical perspectives presented in this chapter are a combination of viewpoints, which I find not only very fruitful but necessary for understanding how gendered everyday life is produced in HatNyao.

3. Ethnographic approach and methods

The theoretical considerations presented in the previous chapter are interrelated to what I am about to discuss here, as both deal with feminist science. How gender relations are shaped in relation to men's and women's bodies, as well as to the social constructions of sex, and its consequences for gendered everyday life, are central in both chapters. I will therefore to a certain extent continue on this track, introducing the epistemological point of departure, but also the methodology and specific methods and how they interrelate. In relation to methodology, I have chosen to discuss the research process, but also ethical considerations and social relations 'in the field'. Apart from the concrete methods, I will present choices made during fieldwork and the way in which I have analysed the 'material', as well as the process of writing this thesis. In this first section, I will return to body-materialistic theories, as well as to Haraway's concept of situated knowledge. Her often-cited concept illustrates how the debates in feminist epistemology are treating sex as a scientific problem, but also the terms for knowledge production (Lykke 2009:151). Therefore, positions of 'woman', 'body' and 'emotion' are significant, simultaneously deconstructing and breaking down dichotomies of traditional philosophy and science (Lykke 2009).

Haraway's concept of situated knowledge means that science production should be understood as local or situated (1991;2008). Haraway criticises the so-called 'god-trick' in the positivistic science tradition, where researchers are outside the ones they study and thereby produce an objective truth about the world from nowhere. This 'god-trick' is according to Haraway an illusion, as the researcher always is in the middle of what is being analysed and studied. Haraway claims that researchers are inevitably placed 'in the belly of the monster', as there is no such thing as being outside. Another way of putting it is that science is 'a story-telling practice'. "Scientific practice and scientific theories produce and are embedded in particular kinds of stories" (Haraway 1989:4). To many feminist scholars, Haraway has been a 'comfort and an answer' to avoid an objective representation of reality and at the same time escape from relativism (Lykke 2009). To explain it further, situated knowledge means that the researcher consciously reflects on her/his situation and research field. It is then possible to reach a partial insight about the reality from the perspective of her/his localisation in time, space, body and historical power (Haraway 2008). Haraway aims not only to dismiss the positivistic way of thinking, but to redefine a perspective which cannot be sepa-

rated from the bodily context. In this way the researcher is able to say something about the partial reality that we can see and place ourselves within. In so doing we can also avoid objectivity from above and at the same time sidestep postmodern relativism. Haraway (1991;2008) argues that it is time to change metaphors, where bodily objectivity is combined with paradoxical feminist science – this is situated knowledge. Haraway proclaims a theory of knowledge for locality, positioning and situation and therefore ‘an epistemology of partial perspectives’ (1991;2008) that is mobile and not settled beforehand. Or another way of putting it:

Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subjects and objects. In this way we might become answerable for what we learn how to see (Haraway 1991:190).

The material (and, more specifically, the body) is also fundamental to understanding the world. The body and the material should here be seen as a dynamic process where there exists an intimate relationship between the specific material body and all the variations of the body, hence social and cultural differences (Lykke 2009).

In this work it has been important to place myself in the middle of the thesis, since I am one of the main actors in it. I have chosen the specific research questions, the research field and the geographical location. At the same time I have chosen the words written, based on the analysis of my fieldwork in HatNyao village. However, the choices made in fieldwork and the results I obtained are based not only on my interpretations. I would argue that there exists a world outside myself, in the same way as men’s and women’s material bodies are there without our social constructions about them. What I mean is that some things are part of a common reality, for example that most people see the difference between a man and a woman, due to their material bodies. Using this perspective it is also possible to grasp gendered everyday life in HatNyao and reach situated knowledge of these phenomena. The rubber phenomenon in HatNyao and the gendered everyday life there can be understood in some ways as a common reality that is not only an interpretation made by myself.

Another scholar important to mention in this context is Karen Barad, as she wants to stress the importance of erasing the borders between subject-object or culture-nature, in the same way as other problematic dichotomies (Barad 1996), also a development of Haraway’s concept situated knowledge. Barad claims that scientific subject/object relations are material-discursive and intra-act with a world constituted of ‘phenomenon’, by referring to Niels Bohr (Barad 1996:170ff). A phenomenon is in Barad’s reading of Bohr something that is both a constructive and objective reality. In this way there is a ‘partial and localised objectivity’. Barad argues for a localised subjective

position of both the research-subject and equipment/research-technology/language as united and part of the world being researched.

The title of this thesis is: *Where Gendered Spaces Bend - the Rubber Phenomenon in Northern Laos*, where the word phenomenon demonstrates a partial and localised objectivity regarding gendered everyday life in HatNyao. The relations with the informants and the environment, as well as my own interpretations, have enhanced the analysis and writing. However, someone else performing the same kind of study would probably *not* end up with a completely different story, since there exists a partial and localised objectivity. In this sense, there is also a materialistic-constructed reality of the gendered everyday life in the rubber village of HatNyao.

The research process

Methodology is the rules, principles and procedures for knowledge production, proposed by (Lykke 2009), which should not be treated as separate from epistemology nor methods. The methodological aspects presented here are those that have been most important and written about in my fieldnotes. I have to a certain extent been influenced by the work by Alvesson and Sköldb-berg (2008), where two concepts are central: reflection and reflexion. In their book the authors want to:

Take seriously in what way different linguistic, social, political and theoretical elements all are intertwined in the development process of knowledge wherein empiric material is constructed and interpreted (my own translation) (2008:19-20).

The term *reflexive* has here a double meaning: that besides being *reflective*, the different levels of analysis can be reflected in each other, as one level of analysis is embedded in one or several of the others (Alvesson and Sköldb-berg 2008). An inductive-deductive approach³², or rather *abduction* (Alvesson and Kärreman 2007:1269), is therefore a central term in the reflexive methodology, where the research process is neither purely inductive (grounded theory) nor deductive (Alvesson and Sköldb-berg 2008). Instead there is a flow between one's pre-understandings, the theoretical considerations and the actual fieldwork, or other sections of the thesis. This implies that a certain set of decided theories affect the analysis that is carried out later on. Different sets of theoretical considerations will instead lead to greater openness for diverse interpretations, creating creativity in the borderlands between empirics and theory. It will also help to question the obvious 'data' that the researcher has at hand, as well as develop alternatives in the

³² Termed *abduktion* in Swedish.

way of thinking of the empirics and how to precede and thereby influence the interpretations. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2008) argue to move back and forth in the research process, as well as in writing. This way of approaching the research process has been very helpful in writing this thesis and during the whole research process. At times, when feeling somewhat stressed by the fact that my theoretical framework has not been settled, or during fieldwork when things did not work out as planned, it has been a comfort to think about it as several stages in a knowledge production process. I also think that this has made the research process more fun and creative, as it has opened up for new research questions and ways of analysing my empirical 'data'.

Haraway and Barad are also focusing on the research process and the possibility to find the way methodologically where objects and subjects are parts of the same thing (Barad 2007; Haraway 1997). The concept of *diffraction* can here be used to open up analytical fields to new angles and alternative ways of understanding. Furthermore, diffraction is a more dynamic and complex process as it creates new patterns of difference continuously. According to Lykke (2009), diffraction is useful in analysing change and dynamics, important for gender research and its transformation processes involved and consequently of relevance in this thesis. A similar approach to the research process proposed so far is expressed by Crang and Cook (2007) as they suggest to:

Dismantle the three-stage read-then-do-then-write model for academic research. [...] The way that the data has been constructed is far from 'raw'. It has already been partly analysed, made sense of, ordered in the research process. [...] Casting your net widely in the early stage of an ethnography, then, is vital. This process may be more influential in determining the shape of your research than any theoretical minutiae pored over in academy (Crang and Cook 2007:2, 132, 19).

Saying this, Crang and Cook (2007) argue that the writing and analysis can never be made separately, which is interconnected with the ethnographic approach and methods used in this thesis, where the research process and its openness to that practice is highly relevant. Crang and Cook (2007:17) express it as like "mixing up reading, doing and writing from the very beginning of a project". I will soon return to the ethnographic approach and how it helped me in performing my fieldwork in Laos and in HatNyao village. But first I will discuss social relations and ethics.

Social relations and ethics

Reflection, the other concept proposed by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2008), pays attention to the researcher herself and her political, ideological, theoretical and linguistic context. In what way does the researcher interact with

the environment where the research is taking place? The fieldnote reflections have been a way of dealing with these aspects, but also the frustration that I in different ways felt during fieldwork. The aspects that I will be dealing with now is my own relation and position towards the people I have met and talked to in Laos and how my thoughts, ideas and what I represent has affected these people, fieldwork, myself and my research.

Several scholars (Mohanty 1999; Spivak 2002; Landström 2001) are also arguing that the relations between the researcher and the informants are of significant importance when it comes to conducting research in a so-called 'developing country'. This is particularly the case if the researcher is a representative from the Western world (Limb and Dwyer 2001). In this context, post-colonial perspectives from the very beginning of my fieldwork have been apparent, especially in the relationship between me, my interpreters and the respondents in the village. In several situations it also became clear to me what I represented to them:

In the beginning I got mixed-up with an aid-worker, and one comment from an older man was that he thought it was good that I carried out research, as I could then take them out of poverty. During the group interview with women I also got all sorts of questions spanning from how to cure medical diseases to how they should behave in a relationship.

One comment in a picture discussion from auto-photography can also be put into this context. One of the pictures showed me and the household members where the man comments on the photo: *it symbolises the expert coming from another country to my home*. I was also faced with several situations and comments about our differences in income:

We sit down with an older man, who reminds my interpreter that he would like to have some money from me (which he has asked before, but my interpreter did not want to tell me). I have to explain to him why I do not hand out any money, even though it made me feel ungenerous, since I have more money than him.

These kinds of relations were, however, integrated with sex, body and age. As a female Western researcher, still quite uncommon in this context, I felt I was caught in between categories. I therefore have to return to theories of intersectionality, body-materialism and situated knowledge to explain these relations. It is not only one's place of origin that matters in this context, but one's material body and its social constructions in terms of age and ethnicity. This can be illustrated by a situation where I attained access to a space the local women did not, so in this sense I was treated as a man in a female body. But in another situation I was treated as a typical woman in a woman's body.

During the celebrations of Hmong New Year January 2009 I was invited to a household for dinner, together with my male interpreter. When we all sat down at the big table I found myself having dinner with only men, which, as I later discovered, is normal in Hmong society.

On other occasions I was treated from a typical female perspective and/or as an outsider: for instance, when we were going into field and my interpreter asked me if I really could manage walking all the way to the rubber plantations. Another time I was asked if I really had the strength to carry the rubber liquid all the way back to the village.

The awareness of gender relations in fieldwork is something others have discussed and experienced as well (Silverman 2000), where female researchers sometimes get access to certain fields that males do not. One example from Kenya (Oboler 1986, cited in Silverman 2000) showed how the researcher got a deeper contact with her informants when she was pregnant. Warren and Hackney (2000) point out that the role given by the local villagers to the researcher can also vary from spy to adoptive child, a role that can change over time. Several families in HatNyao also said they regarded me as their own daughter. Furthermore, I felt that my status ranked higher when I got married before my second round of fieldwork in 2009 and then increased even further when I had a baby son.

Another thing that could be mentioned regarding social relations and issues of power are the responsibilities a researcher has to her respondents. I always made a point of asking if they had time to talk to me, which sometimes annoyed the interpreters, but to me it was crucial. I also tried to bring some food, fruit or snacks to the households participating. Furthermore, I let some household members decide what pictures they wanted to have, which were duly given to them, some of them enlarged and framed. One of the methods in my study is also auto-photography, where I have handed out single cameras to the households, who were later allowed to keep them. This was one way of showing my gratitude for letting me talk to them and be part of their everyday life. I also handed out other small gifts to the households, normally when arriving and leaving the village. However, I always had a feeling I did not give enough.

Working in a communist dictatorship like Laos also posed additional ethical concerns. The government's relationship with the village was rather good in the sense that PAFO (Provincial Agricultural Forestry Office) and DAFO (District Agricultural Forestry Office) could cooperate with HatNyao – something which perhaps did not come naturally to all Hmong villages, for historical reasons. However, working as a researcher in Laos, it was necessary for me to be associated with an organisation, in my case NAFRI (National Agricultural Forestry Research Institute). Secondly, I needed a clearance from the provincial office, given to the village administration, so that the government knew what was going on. I got my permit from PAFO in

Luang Namtha, which was the first thing I had to do when arriving to Luang Namtha, and then brought it to the head of the village in HatNyao. In the permit it was stated that I was going to do research in the village and that they should cooperate with me – so in one way the villagers did not have a choice, which was not an optimal start for my fieldwork. On the other hand, I am sure that if my study had been of no interest to the villagers, or if I had behaved inappropriately, it would not have been possible for me to conduct the study. Therefore, acceptance by the village administration was of crucial importance and was in this way a typical gatekeeper.

Interpreters and language

I have chosen to work with interpreters as it would take me too much time to learn Lao, as well as the local language Hmong, a different language than Lao. Most villagers, however, understand Lao, except for the elderly, in particular women. I have tried to learn a few phrases in both languages, which I feel is an obligation, but due to the time in between fieldwork it was too demanding to learn two languages and carry out fieldwork on my own. Working with an interpreter can be argued as disadvantageous for the study, but at the same time it is something I had been aware of from the very beginning and therefore prepared for. Using ethnographic methods, where the aim is to understand the world from the informants' points of view, of course brings consequences, as I am not using their own language in writing; also pointed out by Crang and Cook (2007). This means that when I am quoting an informant, I am using my interpreter's words, not my informant's (unless I am very lucky). Furthermore, translation is never a straightforward process, since languages are constructed differently as well as words and expressions having different meanings and cultural connotations. Added to that is my and the interpreter's 'assumptions, feelings and values' (Crang and Cook 2007:25). Therefore it has been necessary for me to go over my fieldnotes with my interpreter afterwards to check if I have understood things correctly from his point of view. I have also used different methods as complements to oral information, such as observation and auto-photography. Most of my interpreters have in different ways acted as informants themselves, as they have provided me with important information and knowledge. In particular this is significant for Mr LeeBee, also being Hmong himself and contributing with understandings of Hmong society.

During the time I spent in Laos from November 2008 to February 2009, I was working with four different interpreters. The problem was to find an interpreter who spoke Hmong *and* English. During this time I was working mainly with a man from the Agriculture Research Centre in Luang Namtha. He spoke good English but only Lao. However, a woman from HatNyao who knew English assisted with the translations into Hmong, especially in the group interviews with women. For my second fieldwork in the autumn of

2009, Nathan Badenoch, working as a socio-economic expert at NAFRI, came in contact with an interpreter, a Hmong from Vientiane. Overall this round of fieldwork worked much better than the last one, both because I had a native Hmong interpreter who was really respected among the villagers, but also because it was just to continue what I had started the last time. As we became good friends and got to know one another rather well, I would say this likewise affected the research in a positive way. We were further assisted by a young man from the village who spoke Chinese, when interviewing the Chinese traders. Returning to Laos for some updates in January 2012, I once again had the same interpreter as in autumn 2009, which worked as smoothly as it had back then.

The relationship with my interpreters also came to be a big deal when facing and dealing with issues of power and post-colonial perspectives. This maybe was most apparent in situations where I was assigned the unpredicted role of employer, when I had to deal with personal ethics and when issues of power between me and the interpreters became obvious. Another aspect was the fact that for most of the time I was working with a male interpreter. This was occasionally difficult as I sometimes got a bit ignored, but on the other hand in some ways I had more power as a Western researcher. I therefore found myself once again as a hybrid and in between categories of sex, age and geographic belonging. In this sense the theoretical considerations of this thesis were strengthened, together with the fact that knowledge is situated. How gender is constructed between different situations and contexts is also pointed out by Temple and Edwards (2008), who express it like this:

We have both come to see the concept of 'borders' as a useful way of approaching the complex question of identity, perspective and who can represent others when translating or interpreting. Differences of 'race'/ethnicity, gender, class and so on are gathered around borders, and the concept allows us to acknowledge the cultural space in which 'difference' becomes the point at which identity and knowledge constructions and contentions surface and shift around language. [...] The interpretation or translation of the research interview is revealed as a site of interface between different identity and knowledge claims. There is no simple or distinct separation between 'us' and 'them' — negotiations and disputes occur to manage contradictions of identity and knowledge. There is a multiplicity of borders and border-crossings (ibid:8-9).

The arguments by Temple and Edwards in the quote are recognisable to me from the fieldwork in Laos and how the relations between me, the interpreters and my informants were affecting the methods and the conversations; furthermore, how these relations were changing with the actual situation and the persons involved.

‘Entering the field’

My perspectives in relation to the research process demonstrate that I consider all parts of the thesis as integrated and intertwined. Therefore one could argue that the word ‘field’ is the whole research process, whether it is my reflections, theory or what the informants in HatNyao said. In this thesis, nevertheless, I use the word ‘field’ or ‘fieldwork’ to relate to my work carried out in Laos, whether I refer to meetings with research institutions, reflections upon what I experience, gathering research reports *or* receiving information from the households in HatNyao village. These statements are also connected to the discussions held in the discipline of geography and the definition of the field, as fieldwork for a long time has been associated only with rural areas in the Global South (DeLyser and Starrs 2001; Driver 2000).

In some aspects the selection of field-site and fieldwork had already begun in 2006 while working on my bachelor thesis in Laos. Back then I also came in contact with people in Laos who would be important for my PhD, one of them being Carl Mossberg. When I started my PhD position I therefore contacted him, being the chief and technical adviser at NAFRI, and asked whether they would be willing to collaborate with me. As this came to be a reality, the association with NAFRI has been crucial for this thesis and for the potential to be able to undertake research in Laos at all. The collaboration with NAFRI and also NAFReC (Northern Agriculture Forestry Research Centre) has, however, been two-sided, where I also shared my experiences from the village with them. In May 2008 I spent one month in Laos, discussing my PhD proposal with people at NAFRI and NAFReC. An interesting area for research, suggested by NAFRI, was in the north-western parts of Laos, in the province of Luang Namtha. During May 2008 I therefore had the chance to visit the province and district of Luang Namtha, as well as the village of HatNyao for the first time. This phase of fieldwork can be expressed thus:

Setting out to take these first, often tentative steps, it is important to note that this is where ‘fieldwork’ starts. The processes through which particular people and/or positions are found make for good ethnographic ‘data’ because they are likely to involve ‘gatekeepers’ assessing aspects of your identity which are considered (in)appropriate for them (Crang and Cook 2007:21).

Rounds of fieldwork

This thesis has included four rounds of fieldwork, where the first (in May 2008, explained above) had a preparatory character. I did not only discuss my research with NAFRI and NAFReC, visiting HatNyao for the first time; during this round of fieldwork I also got hold of different types of reports and documents, valuable for understanding the development of rubber in Northern Laos. Travelling from Luang Prabang to Luang Namtha and within

the Luang Namtha province, I also had the opportunity to travel through the landscape and witness the ‘rubber boom’ with my own eyes. Moreover, the discussions in the car with the team from NAFRI gave me valuable knowledge for my future research. The whole preparatory study in May 2008 and the contacts made then have been essential for the further rounds of fieldwork undertaken.

From the end of November 2008 until the beginning of February 2009, I went back to Laos and Luang Namtha and the village of HatNyao, where we began by paying a visit to PAFO. Later on that day we made our first visit to HatNyao and met the deputy head of the village. The total number of households we talked to during this round of fieldwork was eight. We also talked to persons at PAFO, as they were knowledgeable about the rubber. Since this was the non-tapping season, we followed the villagers to their plantations, mainly to carry out the weeding. We also conducted two group interviews and handed out the first disposable cameras, besides having informal interviews with the households.

To integrate into a local society takes time, but also a great emotional effort on the part of the researcher, demanding a “reorganisation of one’s understandings” in order to properly experience that local setting. As time goes by it becomes easier to understand the local context and establish trust, something that is often apprehended by the locals, as newcomers are often treated warily (Fangen 2005:63). This was apparent in between my two rounds of fieldwork in 2009: the first time had been rather difficult for me in many ways, compared to subsequent occasions, when I was a more ‘familiar face’.

There are many ways to establish trust with people, but the main rule is that trust is created by your honesty and truthfulness and by being yourself, at the same time as you adapt to the field you are about to study (Fangen 2005:66, own translation).

Truthfulness and to be myself has been very important to me, and perhaps a reason why I have got to know the households so well in quite a short time. Moreover, I was fortunate enough to meet several ‘gatekeepers’ on a village level, who have become my friends, and therefore fieldwork has run more smoothly. My main interpreter has also acted as a gatekeeper, opening many doors and with relatives in the village, as well as a friendly approach.

In August-September 2009 I was back in HatNyao for a six-week-long stay, extending the number of households to 14 in total. As this was the time for tapping and marketing of the rubber, we took part in these activities both in the village and at the plantations. Furthermore, we handed out additional disposable cameras, and carried out an oral questionnaire among the households. This time we presented our results to the village and a formal presentation at PAFO. Finally, I went back to Laos in January 2012 for two weeks,

where I spent one week in HatNyao. Out of fourteen households, I had the chance to meet ten of them. We also paid a visit to the PAFO office, informed them we were back again and received important updates about the rubber at a provincial level.

The household and the family

I use the household as the primary level of analysis, mainly because this is where the local gendered practices take place in the village of HatNyao. As this thesis is dealing with gender relations within and outside the household, where the family is of central importance, it will be necessary to define these concepts. But in relation to my research questions, other spatial levels are also relevant and interrelated with the household level. The social institutions in the village, as well as the social organisation of the ethnic Hmong, are here significant in creating gendered everyday life. The theory of intersectionality is important in this context where, for example, gender, age and ethnicity are in constant interaction. The regional, national and global levels are not the focal point of this thesis, but are nonetheless important for the rubber development in the region, as well as for HatNyao village. From my point of view, however, spatial scale levels are interrelated and difficult to distinguish from one another and therefore are both regional as well as global processes found also in the village of HatNyao.

Research carried out on gender, family and the household can be traced back to Oakley's (1974) work in the Seventies, where she studied housework and the division of labour within it (McKie et al. 1999). She thereby also focused on the household concept and gender relations as a form of analysis. Since then the household has been considered in diverse aspects, from psychological to physical to economical perspectives, although the term 'household' can include material structures as well as social activities.

The activities seen as proper to the domestic space of a household vary over space and through time as do the social rules concerning who should carry out those activities and in what form (McKie et al. 1999:5).

There are two different perspectives to the research that has been carried out on households: one track is related to the function and activities within the household and the other to the composition of the household in terms of size and age distribution. These perspectives are, of course, inseparable and, for most researchers committed to this field, everyday living conditions have been a central issue (Flygare 1999). The family is, on the other hand, a social institution that to a large extent has a biological character, though this is not necessarily the case. The composition of a family varies and can be defined in several different ways, in relation to culture, which is the same as with the household definition. The household and the family is the first societal level,

according to Flygare (1999), but within the household there are different power structures and statuses, composed of individuals, also indicated by the following quote:

Households more often than not tend to be comprised of people related by marriage, partnership and kinship and thus the notion of the household is likely to overlap with that of the family (McKie et al. 1999:12).

From an economic perspective (Ott 1992) the unit of the household can be regarded as a place where the basic commodities are produced. At the same time the family can be seen as a space where individuals can advance their turnover by collaborating within the household. Similarly, the family can be viewed as ‘an organisation of exchange which can reduce transaction costs’ (ibid:20). The household definition given by the UN shows the complexity of the concept (UN 2008:100):

1.448. The concept of household is based on the arrangements made by persons, individually or in groups, for providing themselves with food and other essentials for living. [...] The persons in the group may pool their resources and may have a common budget; they may be related or unrelated persons or constitute a combination of persons both related and unrelated. 1.449. The concept of household provided in paragraph 1.448 is known as the ‘house-keeping’ concept. It does not assume that the number of households and housing units are or should be equal. A housing unit, as defined in paragraph 2.418, is a separate and independent place of abode that is intended for habitation by one household, but that may be occupied by more than one household or by a part of a household (for example, two nuclear households that share one housing unit for economic reasons or one household in a polygamous society routinely occupying two or more housing units).

The household definition in rural Laos is as follows:

A household is a group of people who live and eat together and typically engage in joint economic activity. This group is usually based on kinship and in Laos is normally comprised of the nuclear or stems family. Nuclear family is father, mother and children. In Laos, the stem family is nuclear family, as well as surviving members of the grandparental generation (Raintree 2005b:219).

De Vos (1995:32) argues that extended family households are most common in pre-industrial agricultural societies, whereas the nuclear family household is most common in either ‘simple’ (e.g. hunter-gatherer, ‘slash and burn’) or modern societies. I would claim that the extended family household is most common in HatNyao village, regarded as a pre-industrial agricultural society, where different generations and families live in the same household. Nevertheless, the nuclear family (*tsev neeg*) is the basic unit of a Hmong society and comprises the husband, wife and their children (Yuang 1992),

which is also the most common in the whole of Laos. In traditional Hmong societies, fully independent decision-making will not be realised until a person has children. The extended family and cross-generational child-rearing allow this pattern to succeed. The grandparents help out with their grandchildren, while the mother and father take care of most of the workload. In the event that parents die leaving young unmarried children, the eldest son takes his orphaned brothers and sisters into his household. Hmong tradition also requires that the married youngest son takes care of the elderly parents for the rest of their lives. These arguments are also indicated by Symonds (2004) where she argues that the household is the basic economic and ritual unit in the Hmong community. Within the household several generations may live and create one production unit (Symonds 2004). According to the head of the village, the sons are the ones who are the head of the household and therefore care for everything within it.

The general characteristics drawn by Dao and Symonds in relation to the Hmong household are the same patterns I have seen in HatNyao village. Among the fourteen households they generally consist of two or three generations with one nuclear family and the son's parents living with them. In some instances, two brothers and their families live together with their common parents, constituting an extended family. According to Manivong (2007), larger households consist of as many as four generations living together. In HatNyao village the household unit seems to be the most important, even though the family concept is also used. The terms 'clan' and 'kinship' are also relevant in this context and for Hmong society, which may also be referred to as 'family' or 'relatives'. During fieldwork in 2012, I had some discussions on this subject with my interpreter. He said that in the Hmong language there is only one word for 'household and family' (*tsev neeg*). Furthermore, all household members in Laos are listed in a special 'household-book', which is notified to the government. Even so, there are differences between what can be called family or generations in a household in HatNyao, as the labour is separated between them. When we talked about this in the village, one informant said his household was composed of his wife and unmarried children, as well as his son with family, even though this particular son was now living in another house nearby. They did not separate the labour to a large extent; however, they did divide the income from the rubber between the two families. I would therefore say that the meaning of the household and the family or any other similar definition of the household varies in HatNyao. Nonetheless it is salient when talking about divisions of labour and gendered everyday life. The concept of home is in Hmong referred to as (*vaj tse*) or (*tsev*), where the latter also means 'house'. Yet the concept of home was never really mentioned: I am aware that this could be related to interpretation difficulties, but it could also indicate that the concept was not that important. The separation between home and work is thus not as

clear-cut as in industrialised societies, where work takes place outside the home, with due effects on gendered division of labour.

Selection of households and participants

The selection of households was based on an in-depth analysis and appropriate selection of participants in terms of properties such as gender, ethnic belonging and age (Bryman 2002). Since I wanted to capture a broad spectrum of households, I have also chosen to talk to households of different socio-economic groups and clan belonging. The different ethnographic methods have been used both with households in the village of HatNyao that practise rubber cultivation and have been harvesting rubber since 2002 *and* with those which have not yet started to tap rubber. As the study is about the gendered activities, both men and women are included, as well as young and older people, married and unmarried. The youngest persons I had a longer conversation with were teenagers and the oldest were in their seventies or more. On average I have talked to around three persons from each household and only in one case did I talk to the males only.

The study contains 14 households in total, where the first two households I talked to during the initial fieldwork in 2008-2009 were chosen by the deputy head of the village³³ and were tappers. Continually the households were chosen by the same person, but with my specifying the characteristics I wanted for each household. Other households were chosen because they were not tappers and household 4 for the reason that it was a female-headed household. The other households were chosen by the snowball method, where I considered how these households would 'fit' with the others. By then I had been in the village for quite some time and it felt okay talking to just anyone; additionally, the deputy head of the village said he did not mind whom I talked to. Returning to HatNyao in autumn 2009, additional households were to a large extent 'selected' according to the snowball method. Two households were chosen according to their clan belonging, since they were minor clans in the village. The fourteen households are referred to numerically in the order I met them, hence household 1 was the first household I met, household 2 the second, etc.

Regarding anonymity of the informants, I am not using their real names but refer to the different households in the text and to their clan-name. For anyone who knows the village it would probably be possible to trace several of these households, as some clans compose quite a few households. I have tried to be sensitive to that in the text whilst, of course, including all information that could cause problems by its omission but, obviously, to a certain extent this can be difficult to discern. I have notified the households about

³³ In the beginning, before I got to know the village and they got to know me, this was the way it was done and I just had to accept that.

this and the fact that participation is voluntary, and that they should let me know if they felt something was wrong or they did not have the time to talk to me. Regarding their photos taken by the method of auto-photography, they have given their consent for me to use them in the thesis, even though I have tried to use photos where the identities of the persons in the photos are hidden. Furthermore, I will send copies of the thesis to the village administration and to those households interested. The conclusions of this thesis are also translated into both Hmong and Lao to be comprehensible to my informants, as well as to those institutions I have collaborated with.

Ethnographic methods

Aspers (2007) argues that the everyday is the foundation for scientific explanation in ethnographic methods and for actually participating in events. As the aim of this thesis is to understand gendered everyday life, an ethnographic approach and methods have been essential. Ethnographic research attempts to study groups of people in their everyday life, and this approach involves two different activities. The researcher normally enters a specific setting and gets to know the people in it and takes part in the daily routines going on. Secondly, the ethnographer writes down what he/she observes and experiences through the daily lives in which he/she participates (Emerson et al. 1995). An ethnographic approach in the thesis is chosen additionally to capture the context and patterns of a studied field (Fife 2005), that in my case is the gendered everyday life. The open-ended perspective concomitant with ethnographic methods is also necessary in dealing with those contextual differences that a researcher faces in fieldwork.

The basic purpose in using these methods is to understand parts of the world more or less as they are experienced and understood in the everyday lives of people who 'live them out' (Crang and Cook: 2007:1).

The ethnographic methods most often have certain thematic choices, such as, in my case, the everyday of men and women. At the same time it is important to question the obvious and be open for the un-normal, which means that one needs to be critical towards findings from the methods (Fangen 2005). The epistemological and methodological considerations also affect the concrete methods, where it is common to talk about method pluralism in feminist and gender research (Lykke 2009). Gender research in general has also been very open to diverse methods and to being experimental. This is not only something that signifies gender research but is related to the way gender research is interdisciplinary, as well as a critique to the traditional ways of implementing, theorising and analysing gender. Furthermore, as there are so many ways of performing research in relation to feminist stud-

ies, this has also meant openness to many different methods, as stated by Lykke (2009). Various methods are also common in ethnographic research (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2008).

Ethnographic approach in practice

During all my fieldwork I have written fieldnotes about events in the everyday life in HatNyao, but also other reflections of a different kind. One of the themes that often came up during fieldwork was in relation to the research process and what sometimes has been really frustrating and difficult. My experience from 'fieldwork' and the research approach that comes with ethnography and its methods is that one needs plenty of patience and not to rush into something just because one wants it done. This is not always easy in a country like Laos, where it is really difficult to work within time limits. This was made apparent several times, most especially in relation to the Bangkok demonstrations in November 2008. These are situations one has to be prepared for, but at the same time they are hard to foresee. Therefore, one must always be open to what happens, because it is then, I think, that one will have the most interesting stories. However, this is valid not for practical fieldwork; it can be applied to the whole research process. Another thing that happened when I arrived in HatNyao village later in December 2008:

I arrived in HatNyao and had my first meeting with the deputy head of the village, where I explained my study and what I wanted to do. He replied that my study was not possible since the tapping season had just finished and would not start again until I had left.

This was not exactly the best way of starting out. However, afterwards it was evident that the non-tapping season also offers interesting perspectives to gendered everyday life. Meanwhile the villagers were in their less-intensive labour season, so they actually had the time to talk to me, especially important for the first round of fieldwork. Furthermore, I had the opportunity of taking part in their biggest festival of the year – Hmong New Year: which was not only interesting in itself, but key for understanding the Hmong culture and its gender relations within it. During all the time spent in fieldwork, especially the first two rounds when everything and every situation was new to me, it has been necessary to spare time for writing fieldnotes of a reflective nature and upon the time spent in field, which I found invaluable. Here I would like to present a glimpse from these fieldnotes, important in illustrating how circumstances affect the results, as well as the difficulties of carrying out fieldwork:

When I first arrived in Luang Namtha in late autumn 2008 with my interpreter, he was having trouble with the English language. Therefore it was only possible to go to the village during the morning, as we needed the after-

noon to slowly go through what we had experienced together and whether we had understood each other correctly.

I will now move on to demonstrate in more detail the different methods used and how I implemented them. However, working with ethnographic methods it is difficult to differentiate the methods from one another, as they are inter-related and sometimes carried out the same time. Generally, the first time we visited a household we sat down and talked rather informally. After some time I explained who I was and why I was in the village, as well as the general aim of my thesis. Thereafter I asked if they would be interested in talking to me and if they had the time. After the first visit to the house, we usually set a date when it would be possible to join them at the plantations. Continuously, we came back to every household on several occasions and talked to additional household members, handing out disposable cameras, or returned into field with them.

Oral stories in field, observation and participant observation

Oral stories in field have been used, inspired by Setten (2004), where she started her research by having a tour on the farmers' land, asking them about the landscape, their relations to it and landscape changes. The second part of the field study consisted of in-depth interviews. This seemed like a reasonable way of organising the methods for my own fieldwork. Starting to follow the informants to their plantations gave information that later could be used in the interviews and further discussions. However, opening the fieldwork with stories and discussions in field did not mean that I did not return to this method; rather I went back and forth between the different methods used. Having interviews and discussions in the field gives understanding to landscape transformations by the people experiencing these particular changes (Setten 2004). Setten argues for a call "to understand the production of a landscape from within, or how the landscape is the result of local customary practices" (ibid:392). One important dimension of using oral life stories is also the potential of speaking to villagers 'in the field' while walking around in the landscape. For example, during the walks to the plantations I would ask about the surrounding landscape, and the questions thereby were raised from what I saw and perceived, or what the informants spontaneously told me.

A similar method to oral stories in field is observations and participant observation, to a great extent made in relation to conversations with the informants. Carrying out observations, I have tried to be open to what was happening but at the same time to keep my general themes in mind, thereby to a certain degree limiting myself. Participant observation was used when I, together with my interpreter, followed the households to their plantations, working with them mainly on the weeding or tapping and at the same time

asking questions. Participant observation was also undertaken to a certain extent during the village's festival of Hmong New Year, when I was invited to some ceremonies. Another activity in relation to participant observation was helping the household members drag the rubber lumps from the plantation for marketing. It was also about simply 'hanging out' and participating in whatever the villagers did.

In the method of observation there are different roles that can be performed, from a full participator and 'going native', to an observer without any cooperation with the persons in the environment (Bryman 2002). Accordingly I have in some situations been a full participator, but also just observing what was happening in the everyday. The latter was carried out during the market days, but of course we also talked with the villagers during these days. At the same time, on certain occasions I was observing gendered duties within the household in a more passive way during the conversation itself or at times just 'hanging out' or having a meal together. Noting the difference between what informants actually say and what they do in practice is another form of observation, which also gives the whole picture of what a person wants to express (Fangen 2005). In fieldwork this was significant regarding representations of men's and women's work and what they later performed with their bodies and how they were working.

The fieldnotes taken in relation to observations and oral stories in field were handled differently according to the situation. Sometimes I had the time to write them up right away, but on other occasions it did not feel right or it was not possible to write, so I had to wait until we got back to the village from the plantations or back to the guesthouse in town. Occasionally I also had my tape-recorder with me and I could just step aside and dictate notes. Remembering details sometimes proved difficult, but my interpreters could assist me with recalling details, which was a comfort and of course helpful.

Serial interviews/conversations

The interview process is quite flexible and focuses on explanations and understandings of events, patterns and behaviour. According to Dunn (2005:80), "interviews are an excellent method of gaining access to information about events, opinions and experiences". Crang and Cook (2007) argue that interviewing cannot be separated from other ethnographic methods, since most of them involve learning through conversation, where the result of the interview is constructed in the actual situation and conversation. Or as Fife puts it:

In its simplest form, unstructured interviewing occurs every time a researcher participates in a conversation and, upon hearing a subject come up that inter-

ests her/him, decides to try to keep that particular conversation alive for a period of time (Fife 2005:101).

According to Fife (2005), these conversations can help point the researcher's attention to matters that had not been considered before and that could also be of value in further discussions and in more structured interviews. The interviews (or, in most cases, informal conversations, as I would rather call them) were semi-structured to quite unstructured and of serial character, for which I returned to every household several times. This is also a common way of interviewing for those carrying out participant observation (Hangen 2005). However, since the interviews were semi-structured to unstructured and characterised by personal experiences, each interview was unique. It is therefore not paramount to have an interview-guide prepared, since the questions asked are more dependent on the responses coming from the informant (Hay 2005). Even so, I had certain themes in mind for the interviews, often starting with what the informants did from the moment they got up until they went to bed, which was a good starting point for upcoming questions. The information received at the plantations also acted as guidance for themes in the interviews and conversations with the households. This is also highlighted by (Crang and Cook 2007), who says that:

Both as a non-threatening start to a series and as a way of getting an impression of how a person's everyday life may be rooted in and routed through various places, times and social relations, it is often a good idea to begin with a general discussion of her/his life stories (ibid:77).

The number of times I went back to every household varied. I visited some households more than others, according to how busy they were and how it got along. Apart from interviews and conversations with the 14 households, I also talked to many other villagers, who supplied me with information about the village organisation and the Hmong culture, as well as the marketing procedure. These were often villagers who held certain positions such as the head of the village and the deputies, the head of the Lao Women's Union or members from the marketing group. One household that I got to know very well was the former deputy's, from whom I received a lot of information about the institutional aspects in the village and the Hmong culture. I also carried out shorter, informal interviews with a couple of the Chinese traders coming to HatNyao, as well as with PAFO representatives about the rubber on a district and provincial level.

The informal interviews with the households were generally done just outside the houses, where it was rarely only one person participating, even if one or two persons were the main talkers. As men are the head of the household, they were generally more talkative in the first conversation, though that depended as well. Sometimes I therefore had to ask a certain question directly to the woman, showing I wanted her answer. After getting to know the

households better, this was less of a problem. To reduce the power relations between the informants and myself, as well as a way to build up a trustful relationship, I always encouraged my informants to ask me some questions, which they often did. The impression was that this also made the conversation ease up a little bit and then we could move on.

I did not tape-record any of the interviews, because it did not feel the right thing to do as the interviews were of more informal character. Fieldnotes were taken during the interviews, and finding the time to write them up properly was not really a problem as I could do it during the translations between the informant and the interpreter.

Group interviews

Group interviews, or focus groups, are similar, but can also have certain differences (Bryman 2002). A focus group has a specific theme and tends to focus on the interaction of the participants; a group interview, on the other hand, tends instead to cover many issues and slightly more structured. According to these definitions, I would say I have carried out group interviews, because of how it finally worked out. The aim with the group interviews was rather to let men and women talk separately, as compared with the household interviews, and see if they talked about gender relations differently in this context.

I conducted two group interviews in the beginning of 2009, one with only women and the other only men, with ten and five participants respectively in each interview. The experience from the first interview taught me that ten was a bit too many and five was a better option. The aim with the group interviews was to capture gendered activities and representations of men and women more specifically and that the group dynamics could bring out subjects not possible individually or as a household. The selection of participants was made in cooperation with a woman who knew almost all the households in the village. The first group interview lasted for about two and a half hours, while the second was far shorter. I gave some guidance to my female assistant before the selection of participants took place in terms of socio-economic background, clan, age, tappers and non-tappers. Furthermore, I wanted to interview men and women whom I had not talked to earlier. During the first interview with only women I had two interpreters – a woman from the village who understands Hmong, Lao and English and my ‘ordinary’ interpreter at that time, who understands Lao and English. It was more important to have a Hmong interpreter with the women, since they more often do not understand Lao. In the group interview with men I had only the male interpreter.

The group interview with women was not as successful, for different reasons. First of all, it was too difficult working with two interpreters because of the time it took before the answer got back to me again. It also affected

the interpretation between me, two interpreters and all the women. Secondly, the women were way too many and were therefore answering and talking at the same time, making it challenging for the interpreters. This also made it problematic to ask follow-up questions. Furthermore, I made the mistake of tape-recording and *not* taking fieldnotes. As the room was rather big, the microphone could not reach the whole group and the female interpreter was too far away, so it was really difficult to hear what they had said when listening to the tape afterwards. I even got some assistance from my interpreter afterwards in listening to the tape, but even so it was difficult. However, it was a nice and fun experience which also helped me for the upcoming group interview with men. This group interview also worked out much better, as I had just one interpreter, fewer participants and I only took fieldnotes. Looking back on my experience, it worked out better with rather structured questions or themes, compared to a looser strategy. My impression was also that the women expected me to be a ‘stronger’ moderator, which also affected the result from the interview.

Photography

Using photography is a complement to the other methods used, especially when it comes to catching the daily lives from the participants’ own points of view and also capturing moments when I as a researcher am not there (even though my intention has been to be there at different hours of the day). Furthermore, photography as a visual method is a way of supplementing the language and translation difficulties. Auto-photography can be used in order for participants to take pictures of their environment and activities. This is a way of learning more about how participants understand and interpret their own world and themselves in it (Crag and Cook 2007).

Although there are problematic inheritances with specific modes of visualisation, this does not mean we should ignore the potential of using visual methods in new ethnographic research (Crag and Cook: 2007:106).

However, photographs are no “neutral evidence of the ways things looked”; furthermore, Rose (Rose 2000:556) argues that “photographs entail complex practices of observation, production, reproduction and display”. A study of the urban environment in Kingston, Jamaica, using auto-photography as a method, indicated differences in the content of the photographs regarding economic belonging and also gender aspects and who had access to certain locations (Dodman 2003). In addition there are studies conducted in relation to children and their everyday life (Cele 2006; Young and Barrett 2001). I did not specify any recommendations that children should take pictures, but it was shown that quite a few of the children had. The eleven-year-old girl in

one household, for example, tried out the camera when given the instructions.³⁴

During my first fieldwork in the village in 2008-2009, seven single cameras were handed out to the same households that earlier had been participating in the interviews, observations and oral stories in field.³⁵ All the households were happy about receiving a camera, even though one household member told me it was difficult finding time for it because of certain family circumstances. At first, some of the participants were a bit nervous about how it might work out and worried that they would break the camera, but after a while of practising they grew less worried. The instructions given were quite loose, but in general terms they were asked to take photos of their everyday life and activities, especially in relation to the cultivation of rubber. The camera was given to the entire household with the intention that both men and women, young and old should use it. After the households had shot all their pictures in the disposable cameras, the films were developed at a photo-shop in Luang Namtha town. The pictures were thereafter handed out to the households, while I kept the negatives, later developed again in Sweden. I meticulously asked each household whether they would mind some of the pictures being used in the thesis. At the same time as I handed out the photos to the different households, the pictures taken were discussed with the households, explaining them and hearing their views of the pictures taken. Looking at the pictures together made it easy for me to ask questions both in relation to what the informants had said as well as questions related to what actually was in the pictures or what was *not*.

Since rubber cultivation is divided into seasons, some cameras were left in the village between the beginning of 2009 and when I returned later that year. These were handed out in early tapping season by my interpreter, then living in Luang Namtha. During autumn 2009 another ten cameras were handed out to five of the seven new households. This time I handed out two to every household: one to the men and one to the women, with the aim of more clearly grasping gendered differences. This did not always work out as there were several occasions when the men in the house also used the women's camera. In another household the older woman did not take many pictures and they had to a certain extent mixed the cameras between men and women. Later I decided not to use the picture discussions in a comparable way, but to examine each picture discussion individually and to analyse the discussions in the same way as the other written information in themes.

³⁴ I would like to clarify from an ethical point of view that I was rarely alone with the children and the picture discussions were always together with an adult.

³⁵ All households except one were given a camera, due to time constraints. However, this household received a camera from my interpreter during the 2009 tapping season.

Structured questionnaire

A questionnaire is a flexible tool that can easily be combined with intensive forms of qualitative research of more in-depth character. Therefore a questionnaire can be a powerful and practical research method (McGuirk and O'Neill 2005). During fieldwork in autumn 2009 I realised that I needed to complement the qualitative methods with one of more general character, based on figures. In relation to my research questions, the questionnaire gave me further information about inter-household relations and social networks within Hmong and the village. Therefore I decided to construct a simple questionnaire with a set of very structured questions related to hectares, 'yes' or 'no' answers, clan-structures and other types of figure-related questions. This information was important for the household background, as well as for the analysis where the answers from the questionnaires were combined with the other methods. The questionnaire was carried out orally and was done at the end of the fieldwork in autumn 2009, performed by my interpreter only. After some weeks in field, by that time he knew the households and where they lived, so it was not a problem for him. Twelve households participated, as two of them did not take part in it for diverse reasons.

Fieldnotes

During all of my fieldwork, except for the short update round in January 2012, I have been very careful in writing-up fieldnotes almost daily. This has functioned like a diary of what has happened and my own reflections in relation to that and should be regarded as a method in itself. The reflections I made from the fieldtrips were of a different nature, being more personal notes about how I felt that day or if something special had happened. Other fieldnotes embraced progress of the research process, how it all went along and what I was struggling with or issues related to the methods used, as well as dealing with ethical considerations. Finally, some of the fieldnotes were also theoretical reflections on their relation to empirics. However, it was not my intention to separate the more personal fieldnotes from the others, for the most part written in the field and relating to the diverse methods, since they are not really possible to detach. Neither was this my purpose when analysing the fieldnotes and when writing this thesis. The fieldnotes I had written in May 2008 were also used for the fieldtrip which started later in November.

During fieldwork I tried to rewrite all kinds of fieldnotes, putting them into whole sentences electronically, and read them through, and checked with my interpreter whether there were any misunderstandings. By doing this I also wished to reduce the risk of losing my material, as I only had it in my notebook. Some days I was too tired to write-up the fieldnotes, so instead I dictated them onto a voice-recorder and transcribed them into a Word

document later on. During around two months of fieldwork in 2008-2009 I went away from the field twice, just to have some rest and a change of environment for a few days. It was during this time spent in other milieus that I really could reflect on what I had done and the most interesting thoughts emerged. According to Emerson et al. (1995), the actual *writing* of fieldnotes can bring on additional thoughts and impressions, which will create a re-experience of that day's events. They continue:

The fieldworker not only interacts and responds to people in the setting from that orientation but also writes his fieldnotes by seeing and framing events accordingly. [...] In these aspects, writing fieldnotes is more than a process of remembering and getting it down. Rather, writing fieldnotes promotes learning and deepens understanding about what has been seen and heard in the field (Emerson et al. 1995:42, 63).

That said, the practice of writing is a process of learning what happened in the field, not only the events but also what happened to oneself in this interaction, as well as reflections upon it in the research process. In the same way, the writing of a thesis, as well as fieldnotes, can be part of the analysis and also part of the method, something the following section will deal with further.

Analysis and the writing process

Writing an ethnographic thesis means in some ways writing tales or stories from the field, based on the fieldnotes, which should not be regarded as fictions (Emerson et al. 1995). The tales construct specific analysis into a story, based upon analytic themes.

That is, thematic narratives use fieldnotes not as illustrations and examples of points that have already been made, but as building blocks for constructing and telling the story in the first place. In this sense, the main idea grows out of the process of coding and selecting excerpts, rather than prefiguring the choice of fieldnotes to include. The excerpts in an ethnographic story are not so much evidence for analytical points as they are the core of the story (ibid:171).

All the information from the various methods, including the types of fieldnotes just mentioned, was treated in the same way, since they all were fieldnotes, which were collected in and written in my field-book. Coming home from Laos again after the different rounds of fieldwork, I began by transferring all the notes that as yet were only in the book into a Word document. This process generated further reflections which I could then add, as well as some additional comments to earlier written notes. Going over these notes, some themes started to evolve. Sometimes a certain phrase or sentence had

several themes, marked at the side, and I tried to stay open as to how the themes were developed. In other cases the themes did not come back or could not fit in under a certain category, but were brought to the analysis anyway. The subjects and themes were then changing and developing after each round of fieldwork. I did not use any program to analyse my material, only the Windows system with folders, which for me worked quite smoothly. Once the themes were fairly settled, where I tried to have an open mind, these could be put into broader subjects, where finally a preliminary structure of the chapters of the thesis started to take shape. This has, however, changed a lot during the process of writing it all together and also in deep interrelation with my theoretical framework.

However, as Crang and Cook (2007:132) mentions, the analysis does not begin at the stage I have just presented and is not 'raw'. From the very beginning the analysis starts by focusing on the research aims and questions, methods used, the people around affecting the research, and in fieldnotes and its reflections. The analysis just described is, though, more precise, detailed and structured. The practice of writing has made me really think about the research process, an important matter in this work. Lykke (2009) also prefers to see the writing process as integrated with the whole research process. To me this is essential, especially since I have an ethnographic approach and methods, where in fact everything is carried out at the same time. I do think the writing process is an integrated part of research for most scientists and not something that is done at the end. The writing process is also a method, according to Richardson (2000), where most researchers think and analyse while they are writing. The difficulty of separating analysis from writing is that the interpretation does not stop as we begin to write up, expressed by Crang and Cook (2007):

Producing a finished chapter, report, dissertation, thesis or journal paper is just one of many levels of textualisation through which we make sense from our materials, and is one where the discipline of piecing material together into a textual account often reveals the flaws and contradictions buried in our materials, forcing us to look again and rethink our ideas (ibid:152).

The writing process from an ethnographic point of view means to go back and forth between fieldnotes and the more precise analysis (Emerson et al. 1995). In the writing process therefore new experiences of the 'data' can take place, as well as new analytical understandings. Richardson (2000) follows this argument and argues that writing is a *method of inquiry*. Writing is also 'a way of knowing' and 'a method of discovery and analysis' (Richardson 2000:923).

Writing as a method does not take writing for granted, but offers multiple ways to learn to do it and to nurture the writer. [...] I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know be-

fore I wrote it. I was taught, however, as perhaps you were, too, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, until my points were organised and outlined (ibid:924).

The aspects brought about by Richardson (2000) in the quote have been very apparent in my own writing, since many of the conclusions and understandings of what is actually going on in the village of HatNyao become clearer during the final writing. Writing the story all together, it was easier to also see the whole picture and the way the different chapters and research questions were integrated.

Concluding comments

The epistemological points of departures lean on Haraway's concept of situated knowledge and that production of science is local and situated. Furthermore, that the researcher can never detach her/himself from what is being studied and so can reach only a partial reality. I have also been influenced by Karen Barad and her material-discursive perspective and its interaction with certain phenomenon, a partial and localised objectivity. Haraway and Barad are both important influences in how I perceive scientific knowledge, where the gendered everyday life in HatNyao must be understood as local and situated where I as a researcher am a part of the story.

In relation to these statements it has been critical to reflect upon my own position 'in the field' and with my informants and the way knowledge is produced, by writing fieldnotes. The research process has been another theme in my fieldnotes, also interrelated with the ethnographic approach and methods I am using. In relation to Alvesson and Sköldbberg, Haraway, Lykke and Barad's statements (2008; 1991; 2009; 1996), it is important to be open in the research process, creating greater creativity and openness to alternative analyses. My approach to the research process has made fieldwork easier and widened my understandings of changes, as well as to take things as they arise. The ethnographic methods used have been applied in relation to me and my informants and in this way have shone greater light on the informants' perspectives, using my themes and aims as guidance. The analysis has been integrated into the whole research process and throughout fieldwork and was not initiated when all the fieldwork had finished. The writing process, also regarded as a method, was moreover a phase where a high degree of the analysis of this thesis took place.

Situated knowledge has also meant that post-colonial theories have been crucial as a way of dealing with different local power relations, and specifically my relation with the people in the village and how I as a white, well-educated woman from part of the Western world was interacting with people from a poorer background with less education than myself. These relations

are not the only ones I experienced, as they were interacting with class, gender and age. The intersectional approach presented in chapter 2 is, as a result, significant in this context. However, the partial and localised objectivity put forward by Barad (1996) is both a constructive and objective reality and constitutes certain phenomena. Gendered everyday life in HatNyao must therefore be understood as material-discursive phenomena. The material (bodies) and their constructions both affect the gendered division of labour. Similarly, the results from the ethnographic fieldwork are not only open to interpretation, but are a materialistic-constructed reality.

4. De-bordering HatNyao

HatNyao village in Luang Namtha Province is located at the meeting-point of the borders of Burma (Myanmar), Laos, Thailand and Southern China. This mountainous region can be placed in the North-South economic corridor of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) (Chen 2005), where the Chinese Yunnan Province and its trade with the GMS countries plays a particularly important role in the border landscape. “Today the region is being recast as a new landscape of opportunity or the golden economic Quadrangle” (Fox 2009:2). Travelling on the road north from Luang Prabang to Luang Namtha for the first time, in May 2008, I had a good opportunity to see how the landscape was changing, as the rubber plantations were becoming increasingly apparent the further north we travelled, and were soon taking over the whole landscape. This chapter will introduce the border region and the study area Luang Namtha Province and Namtha District, where HatNyao village is situated, as well as the background of rubber in this area. I then continue by introducing the village of HatNyao and its rubber story and the general characteristics of the households in this study. The most relevant research question for this chapter is therefore: how do the relations between and inside the households and their management of rubber production interrelate with gendered everyday life?

Rubber production and trade in the borderlands of Luang Namtha is not a new phenomenon in the region. One of the world’s major opium-cultivation and heroin-producing areas used to be placed here – in the Golden Triangle area (Chin 2009). This is highlighted by Forsyth and Michaud (2011):

It is now also widely acknowledged that subsistence agriculture has been supplemented for years through trading or bartering products, or by paid labour. Labour has been an income source from the post-feudal era (that is, roughly from the mid-nineteenth century) until the collectivisation of the economies in China, Vietnam and Laos in the mid-twentieth century. During that period, trade in agricultural products such as opium and home-brewed alcohol was complemented by trading livestock, timber and a mind-boggling variety of non-timber forest products, including live and dead animals, or part of animals employment (Forsyth and Michaud 2011:12).

The Chinese influence has therefore, both historically and to the present day, been important, in terms of their economic expansion, as touched on in chapter 1, but also their regional geographical proximity to the study area in

Northern Laos. The Chinese influence has thus additionally been key to the development of rubber in the area. One reason that Chinese rubber companies started to invest in Northern Laos was the 'Go Out' strategy in China with the encouragement to invest abroad. Incorporated in the strategy was the program in Laos and Myanmar to replace opium with rubber, financially supported by the government (Mann 2009). The influence from Southern China has also been highlighted by Alton et al. (2005):

An understanding of the rubber situation in Yunnan is vital as it has direct bearing on how the rubber system is driven in Luang Namtha. Every factor related to rubber from technical advice, seed supply, bud wood, equipment and other inputs, and, most importantly, rubber markets comes from or is found in China (Alton et al. 2005:17).

The cross-border relations between China and Laos have, in addition, been important for rubber cultivation in the northern regions of Laos. Shi (2008) pays attention to cross-border networks, market chains and investment typology in relation to the 'rubber boom' in Luang Namtha. Hmong in HatNyao is just one example of strong ethnic connections in other locations and in other countries, mainly because of their patrilineal kinship structure. HatNyao found out about the rubber industry in Southern China and learnt their rubber skills from there. Hmong have, in addition, strong connections with China, historically and at present. Some of the HatNyao villagers had previously lived in China and brought the rubber settlement techniques to Laos. Furthermore, villagers with social networks in HatNyao have, for example, obtained land in external villages by virtue of their networks.

The cross-border influence can be illustrated by the formal investors in Laos, originating from China. In the same way, small informal investors in Luang Namtha, such as HatNyao, have communicated with Chinese settlers or those Chinese living across the border in Xishuangbanna District in Yunnan Province about rubber. Most often these relations are bound by long-lasting social, ethnic and economic ties (Shi 2008). This has also been highlighted by Diana (Diana 2006;2007) showing how cross-border inter-ethnic social links have been essential for introducing rubber in the villages studied. Rubber development in the border region between Laos and China is an expression of border negotiation between inhabitants. The ethnic minority groups Akha and Dai in Southern China have also managed to expand rubber cultivation into Laos and are operating in the borderlands between China and Laos.

The ethnic minorities in this border region are therefore an additional significant factor regarding the rubber development in the border region of Luang Namtha. The role of cultural and ethnic networks is, nevertheless, an under-acknowledged factor, especially for countries such as China, Vietnam and Laos, countries which have opened up for marketisation and political

reforms (Forsyth and Michaud 2011). Relevant in this context is that ethnic minorities in this region use their own agency to determine their lives and livelihoods, based on a combination of external processes (ibid). It is furthermore crucial not to look at ethnic minorities in this region as just stateless or as all sharing the same political, cultural and economic characteristics (ibid:15). The different flows of people and trade across these borders and their links to national states and policies are, according to van Schendel, most visible in border regions (van Schendel 2002). State and area are not enough in analysing flows across borders, as it is rather a question of 'process geographies'. Chen (2005) applies the concepts of *de-bordering* and *re-bordering* to explain borders as changing spaces instead of fixed positions. People's own actions are here considered more valuable than the national state trying to act from a unifying perspective. Countries' higher extent of involvement in the global economy also increases the borders' interaction with processes which are beyond the state's control. But even if borders have become more integrated with the global, the activities occurring in the transnational space are local. Chen (2005) therefore emphasises the importance of intersecting global, regional and local forces in border regions, and as forces behind the construction of transborder subregions.

In relation to the statements by Chen, van Schendel and Forsyth and Michaud, it is no coincidence that it is in the border region and in the province of Luang Namtha where the rubber plantations are most prevalent in Laos. Not only is China's economic development and its increasing need for rubber pushing the rubber development into Northern Laos in nearby areas across the borders. Groups of people with ethnic connections in the borderlands between Laos and China have been crucial for the increase of rubber, often characterised by smallholders, an important alternative to larger company-based plantations. HatNyao has come to be a famous village and a successful example of introducing rubber cultivation, on both a regional and national level. HatNyao has also proved to politicians and policymakers that rubber belongs to the future, creating a rubber boom in the region as well as in the whole country. In this way HatNyao village has brought several important experiences to other villages, as also commented on by others (NAFReC 2009; Alton et al. 2005). Many Hmong from other nearby provinces in Laos and because of the social networks within Hmong have moved to Luang Namtha to start planting rubber, since they know about the success in the village. This is corroborated by Shi (2008), who claims that villages with connections across the border to China have been more successful in their transition to rubber cultivation. Clearly, this has been significant for HatNyao and in relation to their ethnic belonging, social networks and structures. Hmong and the many other ethnic minorities in the border region have thus been crucial for the rubber development in this region.

Rubber in Luang Namtha

Luang Namtha Province is divided into five Districts: Sing, Long, Viengphouka, Nalae and Namtha Districts, seen in figure 3. The climate in the province is humid tropical with two seasons of the year. The dry season lasts from November to April, with a cool period and a hot period. The wet season is from May until October. The province of Luang Namtha is characterised by a diverse number of ethnic minorities, the highest number in the country. Some of the largest ethnic groups in the province are Hmong, Akha, Mien, Samtao, Thai Daeng, Thai Lu, Thai Neua, Thai Khao, Thai Kalom, Khamu, Lamet, Lao Loum, Shan and Yunnanese (Yamada et al. 2004).

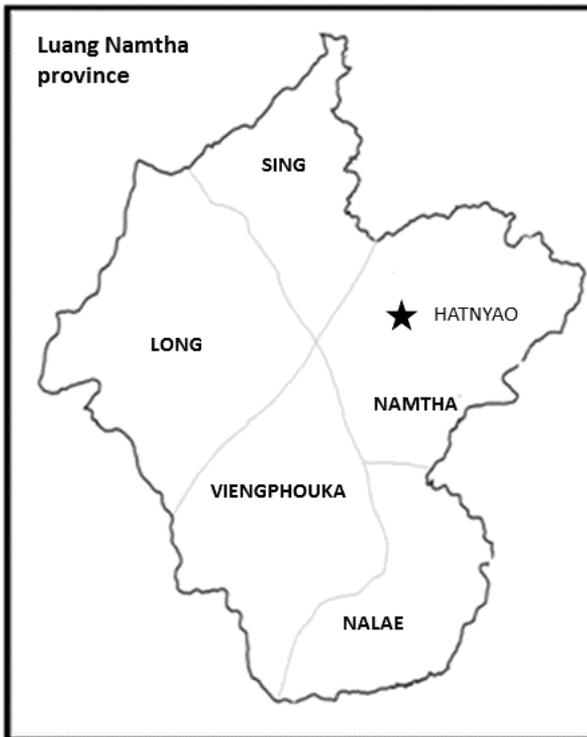


Figure 3. Luang Namtha Province and Districts. (Source: GIS unit NAFRI).

Rubber plantations in Luang Namtha Province have existed since 1994, but it was not until 2005 that they could be found on a larger scale. There are different reasons for the emergence of the so-called ‘rubber boom’ in Luang Namtha, which relate to policies both on the national level and on a global scale, as described in the introductory chapter. One of the reasons on the Lao

government's side was and still is to reduce the agricultural form of shifting cultivation in the area and to alleviate poverty. Luang Namtha Province at their 5th Party Congress in 1991 therefore acknowledged rubber as a strategy to alleviate poverty, as well as to decrease shifting cultivation (Shi 2008). Related to the Forestry Strategy and the reduction of shifting cultivation is the national Land and Forest Allocation (LFA) process, with consequences for the rubber plantations. In this process, farmers have to find alternatives to cultivating swidden fields, otherwise they risk their land being passed on to others. Because of this, the rubber plantations were a good option for many households. In 2006, Luang Namtha Provincial Committee Party decided that 20,000 hectares of rubber should be established by 2010 to reduce poverty among the uplands (Douangsavanh et al. 2008). Various development aid agencies have played a major role in the introduction of rubber plantations in Luang Namtha in conciliating conflicts, improving governance and also empowering local communities (Shi 2008). The market-driven forces, mainly across the border from China and the cross-border ethnic relations mentioned above, are also major contributors to the rubber development in Luang Namtha. Another key reason why the rubber production was extended in Luang Namtha was HatNyao's success in cultivating rubber. In the past the government of Luang Namtha had not considered natural rubber a viable option, but because of the agricultural input from China and other countries, the government changed their policy regarding rubber and gave HatNyao their support. HatNyao village was not, however, the only village embarking on rubber in 1994: five other villages were at the same time encouraged by the provincial government to do it too (Shi 2008). Supported by the provincial administration in Luang Namtha, farmers started to grow rubber trees, as compared to other crops, the income from rubber was seen as an opportunity to decrease poverty. These villages all received subsidised loans and technical assistance but, as many others, including HatNyao, they lost most of their rubber trees in the frost of 1999. A large number have, however, been re-encouraged by the success in HatNyao, as well as by their connections with relatives across the border in China (Alton et al. 2005). Initially the government supported the rubber industry with their policy of not levying tax on rubber cultivation (Shi 2008).



Figure 4. Rubber plantations in Luang Namtha. Photo: Author

At a provincial level, planting rubber was allowed until 2010, whereby the total area of the rubber plantations should not extend 20,000 hectares. This can be compared to the total planted area of rubber in 2004, which at that time was only 4,581 hectares, and the province then planned to increase the rubber area by 2,000 hectares over the next five years (PAFO 2005, cited in Manivong 2007). By the beginning of 2009, it was still only HatNyao that had started to tap rubber on a larger scale (Alton et al. 2005): Luang Namtha Province had the largest areas of production in Laos in 2007, followed by Champasak and Oudomxai (Douangsavanh et al. 2009).

Table 4. Total hectares of rubber and hectares of tapping in Luang Namtha

	2004	2006	2012
Total HA	4,581	12,585	28,000
HA of tapping	NA	NA	2,139

Source: PAFO Luang Namtha, Shi (2008).

As can be seen from table 4, the increase in rubber plantations in Luang Namtha has been massive between 2004 and 2012. In the beginning of 2012 it still accounted for only around eight percent of the total area that had reached tapping stage. These figures are becoming highly salient for the management of labour in the province. According to an article in *Vientiane Times* (Syvongxay 2012), about 10,000 hectares are becoming ready for harvest in 2012, while the rest will be mature between 2015 and 2020. The

rubber plantations of almost 29,000 hectares will require a workforce of 50,000 in the future, an enormous challenge for Luang Namtha. Those workers will also need to undergo training in order to acquire the necessary skills in tapping rubber.

Rubber models

In this section I shall briefly present the different types of arrangement relevant in understanding the importance of smallholders in Luang Namtha that are similar to those in HatNyao village. In chapter 1 these aspects were demonstrated for the whole country, where in addition socio-economic considerations and environmental risks were described, which therefore will not be mentioned here. In the beginning of 2012, 30 percent were small-scale plantations while 70 percent were company-based in Luang Namtha Province, according to PAFO. There are, nevertheless, several different variations both between company-based rubber plantations as well as between contracts made among smallholders and private investors, presented below. In January 2012 there were additionally three rubber factories operating in Luang Namtha Province: one in Luang Namtha town, one in Vieng Pouka and one in Muang Sing. In these factories the rubber lumps were transformed into rubber sheets. Many villagers in Luang Namtha nevertheless chose to conduct market activities in their own villages: even though it was suggested by PAFO that they should all carry out the marketing in one place, this was not preferred by the villagers.

Company-based rubber plantations

In 2000 there were three Chinese companies operating in Luang Namtha, later forming the Sino-Laos Rubber Co., and the same year a rubber-processing factory started to operate in Luang Namtha (Sino-Laos Rubber Co 2004, cited in Douangsavanh et al. 2008). By the beginning of 2012, the number of companies had increased to 18, mainly Chinese companies, holding a total of 24,629 hectares of rubber plantations. The real numbers, according to PAFO, are nevertheless maybe only 15,000 hectare, as the larger number represents the outlook to 2015. In 2005 Luang Namtha, together with Bokeo and Oudomxai Provinces, constructed an official consensus avoiding land concessions³⁶ (Shi 2008), offering the ‘2+3’ contract as an alternative, presented below. When an arrangement is made between a company and local government, PAFO states that local villagers should be assisted by the government to get new land for their agricultural activities.

³⁶ Land concessions can be granted to an individual or juridical entity by granting the right to use the land for a specific purpose based on the conditions and term specified in the legal contract. The land concession-holder pays the concession fee, natural resources royalty and other fees specified by the law (Article 2, definition of land 2008).

There has, however, been concern at instances where companies have made such a contract with the government, but later, without permission from the government, extended the land. In the beginning of 2012, this was not too big a problem, according to PAFO, as the government made regular checks, reporting back to PAFO. Furthermore, PAFO had stopped giving permission to Chinese companies in the province to continue with the expansion of rubber plantations, as they have to save the protected areas. However, for Vieng Pouka and NaLae Districts it is up to the locals and their labour capacity. The tax rates in relation to rubber are based on hectares, where those with a greater number of hectares pay more in taxes (PG No.7 2006, cited in Shi 2008). According to Shi (2008), there is therefore a risk that villagers underestimate their areas of rubber plantations.

In early 2012, PAFO in Luang Namtha were worried about the labour situation, because of the number of hectares in the province and the expected future labour shortages in the area. In times of labour shortage, the companies import labour from other locations, whilst rubber smallholders would instead hire workers from other villages. Since the figures show that Luang Namtha will need a high amount of labour in the coming years, PAFO argues that it is possible many will need to import labour from China. HatNyao village administration, however, thought otherwise and will not import any labour from China.

2+3 and 1+4 contracts

The negative impacts brought about by the rubber concessions made the government take certain actions and become more selective regarding land concessions. The government therefore supported the contract of farming by '2+3', limiting concessions of more than 100 hectares (Dwyer 2007), also promoted by the government in Luang Namtha (Shi 2008). The arrangement of '2+3' generally means that farmers contribute with two components: the labour and the land while the investors add capital inputs (seedlings, fertilisers, and equipment), technical support and markets (Baird 2009; Shi 2008). When the rubber is ready for tapping, the income is shared upon the 70-30 (owner-locals) percentage system, but similar arrangements are also common, such as the 40-60 system or 35-65. Contracts can be made with villagers as well as with Lao authorities, and there are different examples of how the contracts are constructed, but generally they have a top-down approach. They are often not clearly defined and are followed in haphazard fashion. Furthermore, the contracts are "often made before full agreements and commitments are reached with villagers, opening doors to village-level disputes and implementation difficulties later on" (Shi 2008:34). The contracts are signed for 30 to 35 years, which therefore affects the land and the people for a long time ahead. The problem with this arrangement is in addition that the villagers do not know how much money they will receive until the tapping starts. Shi (2008) argues that for the '2+3' system to be successful there

needs to be mutual trust between villagers and investor. Moreover, “the villagers are ready and motivated to integrate rubber into their existing livelihood systems, have sufficient labour supply, and possess alternative income sources during the waiting period before rubber taps” (Shi 2008:38). Finally, it is important that the investor is flexible to the farmers’ needs and maybe propose several options. “It is difficult for villagers to find faith to work for a company for years without pay, all for an uncertain future return” (ibid:37) and therefore it seems that several of the ‘2+3’ contracts are transformed into ‘1+4’ models.

The arrangement of ‘1+4’, where ‘1’ refers to land or labour, is where companies invest in everything, including the labour, and after a certain time there will be a split of the land whereby, for example, 30 percent belongs to the farmers and 70 percent to the company (Baird 2009). According to Shi (2008), there is a marginal difference between ‘2-3’ and ‘1+4’, since in the ‘1+4’ system “villagers retain access to a minority portion of land in addition to wages” (ibid:38). Furthermore, companies are eager for the ‘1+4’ model, to have control over the plantations and get a better share of the land, proportionate to the rather small wages for the labourers in a period of seven to eight years. Villagers are also keen to be paid for their labour during the non-tapping phase, where 30,000 to 40,000 kip per day is normal.³⁷ Shi (2008) also argues that the ‘1+4’ system is common for villagers with limited alternative income sources, who need the income during the non-tapping phase. Although ‘informal concessions’ may be made by governmental officials and their powerful companions, these offer villagers only modest compensation, if at all, and it is not really possible for the villagers to negotiate. However, there are many different variations of both the ‘2+3’ and ‘1+4’ systems in Laos (Baird 2009).

Smallholders

Besides the models presented where there are companies involved, there are contracts drawn up between villagers and private investors. Contracts can also be made between villagers within the same village or between villagers and an external ‘owner’, where the 70-30 agreement is common. For a private person there is no need for permit from the government to use land in other villages for rubber plantations, which is quite common in Luang Namtha. It is, for example, possible to get access to two hectares of land for rubber plantations, where the land rights are rented.³⁸ Even so, the government can always revoke the land rights. The most common model, according to Shi (2008), is the ‘1+4’ contract with a 30 to 50 percent share for the villagers.

³⁷ Equal to around US \$5 per day or less than €5. Kip is the national currency in Laos.

³⁸ The permanent land use rights can be leased to an organisation, individual or juridical entity based on a legal contractual agreement (Article 2, definition of land 2008).

One private investor in Luang Namtha gave the information that he supported farmers to plant rubber as they did not have the capability to invest. After one year the land was split into 50-50, where the private investor paid the villagers for the weeding on his share. When the tapping procedure started, the profit was split into 70-30 on the investor's land. The weeding at this plantation is done by the villagers for a wage of 1,000 kip per tree, carried out once a year. The Chinese traders come to the village to carry out the marketing procedure on the farmer's own plantations.

It is hence routine for local villagers to construct formal or informal contracts with relatives, friends and small investors (Shi 2008). In these cases the parties involved more often have a mutual understanding and a trustful relationship. There are also many other ways for small investors to play a part in the rubber production, such as with rubber nurseries or selling rubber seedlings. Less formal arrangements between relatives and peers (*phi-nong*) among the smallholders are also common between the Lao-China borders, and these are "supported by mutual understanding, trust and ethnic solidarity" (ibid:44).

Compared to other villages, those with transnational connections often are better off to start with and continue to thrive in the rubber boom, enjoying greater access to market information, informal credit, and technical support (Shi 2008:45).

There are also many small-scale rubber plantations in Luang Namtha, like the HatNyao case, where the villagers plant their rubber on their own land and are responsible for the whole investment and production. However, smallholders have a problem in covering all the costs with high-yield planting material or less labour-demanding harvesting methods (Douangsavanh et al. 2009). Most of the farmers in Laos do not have the resources to invest in rubber, and the financial institutions as well as the banks are at the same time unable to support them. This makes foreign investors crucial to the expansion of rubber in Laos (Douangsavanh et al. 2009). Hence the development of rubber in Laos is dependent on other companies in the region, illustrating how Laos still is a poor and 'underdeveloped' country that has to rely on forces outside it.

The different models presented are important in understanding the rubber development in Luang Namtha and the fact that HatNyao village is quite unique in their successful methods of rubber cultivation. The rubber phenomena in HatNyao and the gendered everyday life are also local and situated, which is why it is not unproblematic to transfer their results to other villages where rubber has been introduced, especially if they have another type of arrangement for rubber. The diverse ethnic minorities in Luang Namtha and in the border region in addition make it difficult to compare villages and their experience of rubber cultivation, as well as gendered everyday life.

I now move on to present HatNyao, the village where this study has been undertaken.

HatNyao village

In 2010 the poor households in HatNyao will also be tapping and by 2015 there will no longer be any poor households in the village. In the future, all households will be rich and everyone will have a car. The labour in rubber production will in the future be coming from other places than HatNyao. Life will be good in the future!

This is what the deputy head of the village said during my first round of fieldwork in 2008, and it reflects HatNyao village's view upon the future and upon rubber. I visited HatNyao village for the first time in May 2008 when I was there with a team from NAFRI. I remember it was really hot that particular day and we sat inside one of the houses. But I did not have enough to drink that morning, so after a while I started to feel dizzy. After another few minutes I felt I had to get out of there, otherwise I would faint, so I left. But I can still remember how wrong it felt to leave the conversation so abruptly, and that I had made a bad impression. Since that hot day in May 2008, I have kept returning to the village of HatNyao for several rounds of additional fieldwork. At first, my relationship with the village was quite fumbling, but over time has grown, and HatNyao has become a place I esteem and where I feel at home. The village of (Baan) HatNyao³⁹ is located in Luang Namtha Province and Luang Namtha District, where the District and Province centre and town are also situated. HatNyao is located around two kilometres north of the town, close to the main road between Laos and China, seen in figure 5. This road is also of certain importance for commercial activities between Northern Laos, China and Thailand. The central part of HatNyao is positioned on a peninsula very near the road that leads to Muang Sing, previously a centre for opium trade. On the way up to HatNyao from Namtha town there are several houses belonging to HatNyao, but not actually geographically placed within the village borders, as they argue: "We are Hmong and belong to Baan HatNyao." There are also Hmong households on the other side of the bridge belonging to HatNyao. In this sense ethnicity is actually more important for village borders than geographical boundary. The outline hereafter is to begin with a short history of HatNyao village, how the cultivation of rubber was first introduced and the different types of land in the village. Thereafter I describe the social organisation of the village, followed by socio-economic structures and household characteristics where also rubber features are portrayed.

³⁹ Baan means 'village' in Lao, which is why I write 'HatNyao' only.

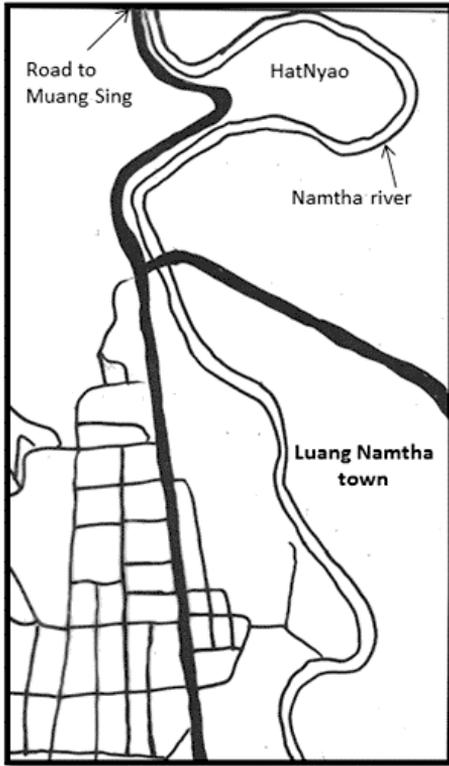


Figure 5. Luang Namtha town and HatNyao North of town.

On my return to HatNyao in January 2012, the roads in the village have been improved and there is a new road leading to the school. Furthermore, there are many new houses in the village: traditional Hmong dwellings have been replaced by brick houses. There is, however, not yet a new bridge as I had expected, crossing the river from the village to the rubber plantations, though they have made a request to the local government for funding.



Figure 6. HatNyao village surrounded by Namtha River and the rubber plantations.
Photo: Author

Before Lao PDR was founded in 1975, many households living in HatNyao left the village, probably due to the war. A male Hmong and member of clan Lee, who knew many government officials at that time, asked for consent to take over the abandoned farms in HatNyao and was given permission to do so. The first Hmong household that came to live in HatNyao was therefore a Lee household. The man who received the initial permission was leader of the 36 households that moved with him to HatNyao and also of the additional households coming later. HatNyao village was (re-)established in 1975 and the first Hmong residents were from Oudomxai⁴⁰(Manivong 2007). At that time the Hmong inhabitants were settled in the mountains above the village, practising shifting and opium cultivation. After a couple of years they moved down to the present village to search for lowland paddy areas. During the first years there were 55 households living in HatNyao, which amounted to 587 people. From 1975 to 1980 almost 150 habitants, many of them children, died from malaria in the difficulties of adapting to the lowland. Therefore many villagers moved back to the mountains, leaving only 17 households in the village, but in 1985 they moved back to HatNyao again with encouragement from district authorities (Manivong 2007).

⁴⁰ Belongs to Bokeo Province today.

Introducing rubber cultivation

HatNyao first started to plant rubber in 1994, in part due to the ethnic Hmong from China moving into the village at that time.⁴¹ The 17 households that moved into HatNyao had earlier been cultivating rubber in Yunnan, China. They argued that if they started with rubber, then in seven to eight years they would have a good income for at least 30 years. The alternative was not to plant rubber and by so to remain poor. In 1994, several Hmong households from other provinces also moved back to Luang Namtha to start planting rubber. Another reason why rubber was introduced in HatNyao was because they had no farms, no rice fields or animals and they could not feed the livestock due to a crop disease. In the 1980s, HatNyao had been unsuccessful in trying to earn a livestock-based livelihood. It was then decided by the elders to search for new possibilities in cash crops by using their kinship network in the region (NAFReC 2009). One of the places where the elders went was Southern China, which brought them into contact with rubber. After discussions regarding markets, investment needs, labour requirements and technical skills, the elders proposed the rubber cultivation system to the village (*ibid*). The village decided to apply for a loan from the bank and, after being granted the loan, the government gave them permission and a meeting was arranged with all households in HatNyao to discuss who could start planting and to what extent. The head of the village signed a document with the government which incorporated the government's desire to cooperate with PAFO. Those households that started to plant rubber in 1994 were initially given 1,000 trees by the government and the next year they took out a mortgage for another 1,000 trees. According to Manivong (2007), financial support was crucial to HatNyao villagers as they had little income at that time. The first loan was therefore taken to fund rubber seedlings and fencing. Over the following two years the village also gained financial support from PAFO and the Agricultural Promotion Bank (APB) (Manivong 2007).

In 1994 there were 60 households that started to plant rubber, by 2005 they had increased to 89 (Manivong 2007) and by the end of 2008 all the households in the village were involved in rubber. The households themselves gave several reasons as to why they started cultivating rubber. One major reason was poverty and their desire for a future income, as they need money every day. Others said they started because other households had done it and several households had also moved to HatNyao to start planting rubber. A slightly different reason why some villagers started to plant rubber was because in the past they used to grow poppy, which was later forbidden by the government, so they started cultivating rubber trees instead.

The head of the village and the elders set up a group to help the households prepare the land, dig the holes and carry out the weeding. If the house-

⁴¹ Previous to being residents in China, these households had been living in Laos, but in 1994 they received a certificate from the Laos government allowing them to move back to Laos.

holds did not have enough labour, this group would assist them. The rubber plantations were initially divided by the head of the village and households not caring for the rubber had to hand over their plantation to other households. The first and second years after planting, the villagers could plant rice in between the rubber plantations. The second to the fifth years after planting, however, were very challenging, since they had nothing to do except to weed at the plantations. The households were very poor and had no rice or other food; moreover, it would take seven to eight years before they could earn an income from the rubber.

HatNyao was not affected to the same extent by the frost in 1999, unlike many other villages, even though they lost 34,000 rubber trees (Manivong 2007). In 2002, the Hmong moving in from China started to train the villagers in the cutting technique. In the beginning they did not have the tools for carrying out the tapping, such as cutter, flashlights, cups or pipes to lead the liquid into the cups. Some Chinese traders were selling the required tools and it was decided that the villagers should get those they needed and pay later. One of the households told me that initially when they did not have money to buy the cups they used to split a bottle of mineral water to pour the liquid into. When the first trees were tapped in 2002, the head of the village, the grouping of elders and members of the village founded the marketing group with the purpose that every household should get the same price. When HatNyao started to tap the rubber for the first time, 21 households were ‘tappers’ and produced a total of 22 tons of rubber lumps, which were sold to China (Manivong 2007). This can be compared with six years later, when the total amount was 323.4 tonnes. Additional details concerning the income distribution and amounts of rubber are presented in chapter 6.

Types of land

In 2005 the total area of land belonging to HatNyao was 4,604 hectares, divided into conservation forest, protection forest, agricultural land (both upland area and lowland area), production forest, grazing area, and residential area (Manivong 2007). Regarding natural forest, there was in 2008 no exact number of hectares, but according to the deputy head of the village there was still natural forest within the village borders. The Land Use Planning and Land Allocation process was carried out in HatNyao village in 1997 (Manivong 2007). In relation to rubber, its objective was that those interested in planting and who had the labour available could get access to land (NAFReC 2009). Villagers who planted and managed their trees well could also get additional land. The village leadership distributed all the agricultural and common land in the village, decided upon by the village board. According to the NAFReC report (2009:6), “the annual re-allocation discussion is a remarkably transparent accountability mechanism, such as not often seen in the land planning process in Laos”.

The rubber plantations are normally placed in agricultural land and therefore compete with other upland crops, such as rice (Manivong 2007). According to Manivong (2007), there were 562 hectares of rubber plantations in 2005, including both trees currently being tapped and those still too young to be tapped. The amount of rubber plantations corresponded to 12 percent of all land in the village and 33 percent of the agricultural land. In 2005, there were no plans to expand the plantations of rubber: instead the village leaders were worried about how to manage the workload due to all the tapping (Manivong 2007). Comparing these data with my own fieldwork in 2008-2009, there were then 916 hectares of rubber plantations, an average increase of 40 percent since 2005. A number of 146,953 trees were ‘tapping trees’, 35 percent of a total number of 419,482 trees. HatNyao had planted rubber trees between 2007 and 2009 and would continue to plant every year until reaching 1,000 hectares. When this amount was realised, the planting would stop: otherwise they would not have any land left for rice fields. They would then re-evaluate the situation and ask the government if they could continue to plant rubber. When I returned to the village at the beginning of 2012, HatNyao had 1,000 hectares of rubber plantations and had stopped planting in 2010. The 1,000 hectares corresponded to 70 percent of all the agricultural land in the village, and 40 percent of all the rubber plantations were in the tapping stage. The figures presented in the table below are the amount of rubber trees and hectares planted each year. The numbers for 2009 and 2012 are, however, the total number of trees and hectares in the whole village at that time.

Table 5. The number of trees planted and hectares per year in HatNyao⁴²

Planting year	Number of Trees	HA
1994-96	-	334
2003	-	184
2005	-	169
2006	-	229
Total (2009)	419,482	916
Total (2012)	-	1,000

Since 2002 there has been an increased interest in planting rubber in the village and many households want additional land. However, the remaining

⁴² These figures do not fully correspond to the figures in Manivong’s thesis, but I have chosen to use the numbers I received in fieldwork. The figures marked - were not at hand.

land of shifting cultivation is located far away from the village, one to two hours' walk, so few villagers are interested in that land. Villagers with kinship connections in other communities, located near HatNyao by road, have therefore obtained land there. Some of these plantations are situated along the road to Muang Sing and an example of cooperation with the locals is to share the labour and distribute the profit to 50-50. At the time Manivong carried out his fieldwork, 5.6 percent had land plots outside the village that were either borrowed or rented (Manivong 2007). There was a tendency for poorer households in HatNyao to have less access to land, as well as having a smaller labour force.

Where there is a need for land outside the village, land rights are being rented. Some households owning rice paddies, for example, lease their land. Plantations near the airport that are 'owned' by households from HatNyao are rented and used only for rubber nurseries, although some no longer own this kind of plantation as there is a scarcity of land. Others have rubber plantations in external provinces such as Oudomxai. Therefore it is quite common for villagers who want to extend their plantations to rent land rights outside villages. In 2009, some villagers in Luang Namtha sold their rubber trees, due to the low price of rubber, to HatNyao villagers, for 100,000 kip per 1,000 trees ready for tapping. In one case, a Lao villager sold his already-planted rubber trees, since he needed the money to build a new house and he also had some problems with the bank. A household in HatNyao bought the planted rubber trees for 26,000,000 kip.⁴³ This is quite a common occurrence for villagers in HatNyao who want to extend their plantations. The process, however, needs to be witnessed by the head of the village where the land is rented and a contract must be signed. In 2012, one household bought a plantation comprising 1,200 trees which will be given to the wife's younger sister and her family, for which they paid a total of 18,000,000 kip. In the same year several other households also extended their number of plantations, compared to 2009, often located outside HatNyao village. Some of these were already planted and soon ready for tapping. Villagers in HatNyao should therefore be regarded as private investors, as demonstrated earlier, expanding their land in other villages.

In 2004, 86 percent of all households in HatNyao had rice fields, including both upland and lowland rice, as is the case in several other Hmong villages (Ovesen 1995). But the land for rice was already decreasing in 2004, due to the rubber plantations, though some villagers had upland fields in other villages. Of those households that cultivated rice, 45 percent grew it in an external village (Manivong 2007). The number of those who intercropped rice with rubber was 39 percent in 2004. In 2012 the head of the village said there are still households practising rice cultivation, but that it is difficult to find land for rice, especially for those just moved into the village. The

⁴³ Equal to around US \$3,714 or €2,600.

amount of rice fields in the village was 30 percent of all land at the beginning of 2012: my guess is that the numbers are overestimated, since the rubber plantations comprise 70 percent of the land.

According to Alton et al. (2005), the villagers of HatNyao had incorporated rubber with other livelihoods, as they did not tap rubber every day. If they were to tap every single day, the households would not have any time for other activities, which would also result in a monocultural agricultural system. It is important to have different types of land in the village, as the rubber plantations are eroding the amount of land available for previous livelihoods such as rice. In 2005, when the rubber trees were younger, almost all households in HatNyao were intercropping with rice, maize or pineapple (Manivong 2007). The decreasing land available for rice is illustrated by one household:

We no longer have any rice fields because we have used the fields for rubber plantations. This has made the soil dry and, due to the lack of rain, we cannot plant rice any longer, only rubber.

The cultivation of rice today is, nevertheless, still part of HatNyao villagers' everyday life, which cannot be separated from the rubber cultivation practices or from the other spheres of the everyday. Therefore rice cultivation is also important to consider when analysing gendered everyday life, and it is a dimension to which I will return in chapter 7.

Village organisation

Social organisation and decision-making processes are important dimensions in understanding gendered everyday life as well as how the rubber cultivation is organised in the village. In the next chapter the organisation of the Hmong community in the village will be portrayed, which cannot be excluded from village organisation as a whole, or from gender relations. I will therefore to a certain extent discuss social structures among Hmong here as well. These aspects are essential and cannot be ignored; as the report by NAFReC (2009:1) puts it: "A crucial message of this study is that success of the rubber activities in the village is indeed largely a result of the far-sighted and adaptive process of creating institutions to manage the agricultural transition." Women's representation and decision-making on a village level and within the household is further discussed in the next chapter, in relation to the ethnic Hmong.

To some degree, HatNyao village is organised in much the same way as many other villages in Laos. The organisational structure consists of one person being the head of the village and two deputies, who all were men in 2009 as well as in 2012. During fieldwork in 2008-2009, one man from the Lee clan was the head of the village, the head of the rubber unit, and the

leader over all the clans at the same time. The two deputies were from clans Tor and Xiong. In 2012, a new head of the village and two deputies had been selected. The head of the village was now a younger man, but also belonging to the Lee clan and in the past he had been head of a (*nuai*), a village unit presented below.⁴⁴ In 2012, the first deputy is a member of the Xiong clan and the second deputy is associated with the Hang clan. The former head of the village continues to be a member of the marketing group. Since the new head of the village is rather young, he consults on issues with the elders. HatNyao also has a village committee consisting of three men: the first (head of committee) and two deputies, selected by the village for a six-year period. There are furthermore five different organisations in the village: the elder people's organisation, the women's union, the youth union, army union and a union for sports. In the youth union there are both men and women from 15 years of age, but in the army union there are only men between the ages of 20 and 30. When a particular issue needs to be discussed, it is generally debated between the two deputies and the head of the village at the first stage, together with the elders. Thereafter the rest of the village is called to a meeting to know about this issue and to open up the discussion.

The village is in addition divided into subgroups (*nuai*), with one leader for each group. There are 14 of these subgroups, which consist of around 11 households where each *nuai* has one leader, a position held by men only, including the deputies.⁴⁵ Each household within the different *nuai* selects the head of the *nuai*, who retains the position until the households want otherwise. In the past, the leader of a *nuai* was selected by the group of elders, together with the head of the village. Now, however, it is possible to select a different person if the households are not satisfied with the present leader. The *nuai* is an administrative unit and owes its existence to a governmental decision, according to one of the villagers. The households within the *nuai* are mixed regarding clan, and the *nuai* are composed of households living nearby. The socio-economic team at NAFReC (2009), however, received the information that one *nuai* included only clan Lee households. Over the last two years there has been a meeting every month within the *nuai*, where both men and women can attend. The households seem to be somewhat independent of the *nuai* regarding the labour that is carried out at the plantations. As chapter 6 will demonstrate, there are other ways of cooperating and sharing the labour between the households in HatNyao.

The *nuai* is on the other hand more important regarding land distribution. In HatNyao the land is first given to the head of a *nuai*, who then allocates it to all the households within the unit. Should a household wish to extend their given land or plant additional trees, they must first discuss it with the *nuai* leader, who then confers with the head of the village. However, if a house-

⁴⁴ A position not possible to hold at the same time as being the head of the village.

⁴⁵ This information did, however, vary between different rounds of fieldwork.

hold has been allocated a large plantation from the beginning, it is difficult to receive extended land. Normally a problem or dispute about the land borders is discussed with the relatives first and later assisted by the *nuai*. If the problem is still not solved, the head of the village has to deal with it. Another task for the *nuai* is to oversee the labour situation and ascertain which households are able to increase their labour capacity and which ones are not. There is also a sort of police in each subgroup which keeps a certain order. Since the labour shortage is going to be a great challenge for HatNyao in the upcoming future, the *nuai* and its leaders will need to coordinate and assist the households with these issues.

The elders

In Hmong society, elders play an important role in decision-making at the village level (NAFReC 2009). The elders from the local clans provide advice to the village administration and maintain communication between the leadership and the villagers. In HatNyao, there are four people in the elders group: two from the dominant clan of Lee and one each from the Vue and Tor clans. There were also indications that the group of elders should expand to twenty. The information given from my own fieldwork in 2012 was, slightly different as there were seven elders in HatNyao: two from both clan Lee and clan Xiong, and one each from Hang, Tor and the Vue clans. Two of the elders were also women: one from the Lee clan and the other from Xiong. As earlier mentioned, in the 1980s the elders went on a tour to explore the possibility of cash crops when they first came into contact with rubber. Since then the elders have an important role in general decision-making in the village. But they have had a particularly important role in the development of rubber, because the village had committed to making rubber the main livelihood component (NAFReC 2009). The elders have in this way great power within the village. In Hmong society, which is further discussed in the next chapter, elders are seen as more knowledgeable and are given great respect and honour (Symonds 2004). Elders are often referred to as ‘respected elders’ (*cov txwj laus*) noteworthy for both men and women, even though women generally have less power than men, according to Symonds (2004). Age, ethnicity and gender thus intersect and are difficult to separate.

Rubber cultivation institutions

HatNyao village has one marketing group and one institution that discuss other types of rubber-related issues of a more technical nature. The rubber management institution structure has been described in more detail in the report carried out by NAFReC (2009). The villagers who participate in rubber-related issues are chosen by the head of the village and the deputies, but sometimes all the villagers join the rubber meetings. The marketing group and the technical unit are in an organisational structure placed under the

rubber production group, which is led by the head of the village and the deputies. They argue for the importance of consulting various sectors of the village in making essential decisions: the elders, the marketing group, the leaders from the *nuai* groups and the villagers (NAFReC 2009). This was also confirmed from my own fieldwork concerning the marketing process. On these occasions the marketing group together with the head of the village and the deputies, the group of elders, the *nuai* leaders and their deputies as well as the marketing organisation meet to discuss and negotiate with the Chinese traders. The information is later given to the households, even though the households can also attend these meetings if they are not too busy. In this way the social structures within Hmong are integrated with the Lao administrative system, as also indicated by NAFReC (2009:3): “The overlap between the general village administration institutions and the rubber-specific arrangements are one of the main strengths of the village’s approach.”

The information given by the head of the village in 2012 was that there are six men in the marketing group: three from clan Lee and one person each from clan Hang, Hue and Xiong.⁴⁶ A member of the group must have commercial experience, be trusted by the community as well as speak Chinese (NAFReC 2009). The head of the marketing group is associated with clan Lee, the former head of the village and the adviser of the marketing group. The reason why there are no women in the marketing group was due to the fact that it is ‘heavy work’ to follow the Chinese traders all the way to the border. Furthermore, the members of the marketing group must be knowledgeable about the price of rubber regionally and internationally and report this information to the village. These assignments are not deemed appropriate for women. In this way it seems that the Hmong view of men and women integrates with the traditional sex/gender divide. In Hmong culture men are more associated with worldly knowledge (Symonds 2004) and at the same time men and women are bound to spatial representations of public and private spheres (Schough 2001). This separation is interrelated with the separation between production and reproduction, where men to a larger extent are associated with the outside paid labour, whilst women are bound to the private reproductive sphere.

The activities carried out by the marketing group are sponsored by taxes on the households’ sale of the latex, which covers some compensation to the group members, marketing trips and communications. The taxes can also be used for improvements in the village. The rubber-tappers also have to pay taxes to the government on their income and the marketing group has to report to DAFO regularly about the marketing. The creation of the marketing group has been critical for the rubber operations in the village. There are,

⁴⁶ According to NAFReC (2009), the marketing group is composed of four members, all men initially chosen by the rubber producers when the rubber was established in HatNyao.

moreover, other institutions in the village essential for the rubber success, interacting with the marketing group: the village administration, the elders, the monitoring unit and the comprehensive system (NAFReC 2009).

Under the rubber production group there is also a technical unit. This group consists of five male village agricultural volunteers and monitors the technical activities of the rubber cultivation (NAFReC 2009). Members of the technical unit are chosen by the village administration for a three-year period. The technical unit was responsible for the land allocation process in the village and is also in charge of the planting and tapping activities. Furthermore, the technical unit deals with land management problems together with the *nuai*.

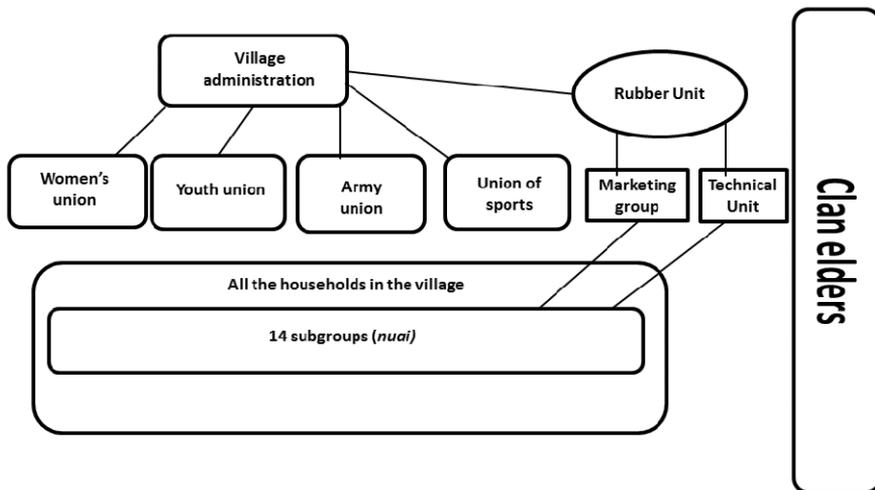


Figure 7. Village organisation in HatNyao.

The households

In 2005 there were 102 households living in the village, with a total number of 964 people, 500 men and 464 women (Manivong 2007). In 2009 the number of households had increased to 154 and out of these 102 households had started to tap rubber, around 60 percent of all the households in the village. The total number of people at that time was 1,070, 514 women and 556 men, and the number of families 182. The reason why there are more men than women in the village could be related to the fact that women leave the household upon marriage and in some cases move to another village. Smaller households are those with young parents or a single parent. In 2012 the information given was that the total number of inhabitants in HatNyao

was 1,706. The reason for this increase is that relatives from other provinces, such as Oudomxai or Luang Prabang, move into HatNyao because they want to start cultivating rubber. Table 6 demonstrates clan membership among the households in the study and the number of families in every household, as well as the number of household members. Furthermore I have included the number of children living in each household, important for the labour force in the everyday and often seen as a secondary labour force working part-time, together with elders (Manivong 2007).

Table 6. Household, family, clan composition and amount of children 2012⁴⁷

	Nr of fam.	Members in HH	Clan	Children
HH1	2	10	Lee	6
HH2	3	13	Lor	7
HH3	3	15	Xiong	9
HH4	1	3	Lee	2
HH5	1	8	Yar	6
HH6	1	2	Yar	-
HH7	3	12	Lee	6
HH8	2	10	Lee	6
HH9	2	15	Tor	11
HH10	2	8	Vue	4
HH11	1	5	Xiong	3
HH12	1	5	Her	3
HH13	2	9	Hang	5
HH14	1	7	Var	5

Socio-economic characteristics

According to Manivong (2007), the socio-economic pointers HatNyao village highlights are the number of trees tapped, land area, rice self-sufficiency, livestock, labour force and permanency of house. Another indication from Manivong was that poor households had more limited access to land. I have also added education, since that can be an important indicator.

⁴⁷ The figures were updated in 2012, except for households 1, 3, 13 and 15. The number of household members and especially the number of children in each household is an average, as it shifted between rounds of fieldwork and whom I asked. Several older children got married during these years, and the daughters moved out from the household. Others had left to study. Children in the table therefore refer to those who are unmarried, and range from babies to children in their twenties. The nephews and nieces living in the households are not included in these statistics.

From fieldwork undertaken during 2008-2009, there were 22 households that were considered poor by the village administration, and they had recently moved to HatNyao village. These households had planted rubber trees, but not yet started to tap. A total number of 30 households in the village were considered wealthy, who had planted numerous trees and enjoyed an income from the rubber. The intermediate group consisted of 70 households and had fewer trees in the tapping stage. Comparing these numbers with the results from Manivong (2007), based upon 95 households, there were in 2005 only 22 households that were considered wealthy, 52 as average and 21 as poor. The comparison is not exact since the number of households had increased in 2009 and Manivong did not include all the households in his survey. However, the intermediate group has increased from 52 to 70, a marker of at least some measure. This is also indicated by Manivong (2007): that in the past almost all the households in the village were classified as average or poor, only a few as wealthy. In 2012 the households that had not yet started to tap were also households that had recently moved to the village. They were considered poor and corresponded to around 20 percent of all households in the village. Households in the intermediate group were about 70 percent and 10 percent were those who were wealthy.⁴⁸

After the start of rubber-tapping in 2002, nearly one-third of the total households in the village were classified as wealthy and over half of them were categorised as average. This itself indicates the dramatic change that the adoption of rubber-planting has brought about (Manivong 2007:79).

Manivong's statement has become even more significant over the years, as a higher amount of households have become wealthier. Nonetheless, the socio-economic inequalities between households in the village are rather high and have increased since the rubber was introduced in HatNyao village. The responses to the questionnaire in this thesis also demonstrate the socio-economic structures in the village among the households in the study. The 14 households consist of both wealthy and poor households. Most of the households, however, are in the intermediate group and thereby the socio-economic composition among the 14 households is similar to the whole village. But even though the rubber plantations seem to be a success story for HatNyao village, they have exacerbated inequalities between wealthy and poor households in various ways (Manivong 2007). Furthermore, Manivong (2007) argues that sizeable labour force in a household has been essential to the change in wealth status. Households in a better socio-economic position also "produced more rice, were self-sufficient for a longer time, less depend-

⁴⁸ The figures given by the head of the village was only in percentages and he did not mention the total amount of households in the whole village in 2012.

ent on upland rice and village land than average or poor households” (Manivong 2007:94). Furthermore:

Wealthier households, with more rubber trees and labour force, also appeared to have better access to lowlands and land outside the village, hence the positive relationship between rice area and number of rubber trees and household labour force (Manivong 2007:95).

In the following two tables, the households included are presented according to some of the socio-economic markers pointed out by the village: access to rice, livestock, housing, number of trees, as well as whether they are tapping or not. Most of the households have access to rice, except for three of them, but it seems to vary as to whether households are totally self-sufficient in rice. Some households even have the possibility to market their surplus of rice. As Manivong (2007) pointed out, livestock is a marker for socio-economic belonging. The table below shows the distribution of livestock among the 14 households, although there is data missing for some of the households. It is interesting to note that the households who own cows⁴⁹ have all started to tap their rubber: one can therefore assume that they have a higher income than those who do not.

Permanency of house is also an indicator of socio-economic status (Messerli et al. 2008). Several of the households did not have brick houses during my fieldwork in 2008-2009, as compared to 2012, when this had changed remarkably, with several having new brick houses. Most of the households also had a TV and some of them good furniture and a computer. Households with brick houses generally had started to tap their rubber and had a higher income. With respect to number of trees and number of plantations, it is difficult to draw any certain conclusion in relation to socio-economic position, apart from the fact that some of the households in the study had a large number of trees compared to others. These households were, though, often in a fairly good situation in relation to other socio-economic markers, also indicated by Manivong (2007).

⁴⁹ Ownership of cattle is a measure of wealth among the Hmong (as well as in Lao in general) and is an economic security, as well as cattle being important spiritually. Pigs are kept not only for their meat, but also for sacrificial ceremonies (Ovesen 1995), as also was witnessed in HatNyao. Chickens are used for this purpose too, and almost every household holds chickens.

Table 7. Households' socio-economic status in terms of rice, livestock and housing⁵⁰

	Rice ⁵¹	Livestock	Housing
HH1	Y	-	-
HH2	Y	7 cows	Brick
HH3	Y	2 cows	-
HH4	Y	5 cows, chickens	Brick
HH5	Y	chickens	-
HH6	Y	-	Brick
HH7	Y	chickens, pigs, ducks	Brick
HH8	Y	chickens, ducks, 2 cows, pig	-
HH9	Y	5 cows	Brick
HH10	N	chickens, pigs	Brick
HH11	N	pigs, chickens	Brick
HH12	Y	chickens, ducks	Brick
HH13	N	-	Brick
HH14	Y	chickens, pig	-

The information in table 8 was based upon the same questionnaire with parameters such as: the number of plantations, the location of the plantations and how they are divided among household members, the distance to the plantations, etc. Some of these statistics are demonstrated below and others in chapter 6.

⁵⁰ Information marked - was not at hand.

⁵¹ Yes and No on the question if they have access to rice.

Table 8. The households' rubber characteristics in terms of number of trees, amount of plantations and tapping in 2009 and 2012.⁵²

	Tapping	Trees	Plantations/tapping 2009	Plantations/tapping 2012 ⁵³
HH1	Y	-	-	-
HH2	Y	7,500	8/1	8/2
HH3	N	2,000	2/0	-
HH4	Y	1,300	2/1	-
HH5	Y	3,000	2/1	2/1
HH6	Y	4,000	3/0	5/1
HH7	Y	3,400	4/1	4/1
HH8	Y	4,200	3/1	3/1
HH9	Y	-	3/2	6/3 ⁵⁴
HH10	Y	4,500	4/1	4/2
HH11	Y	2,030	2/0	2/1
HH12	Y	1,600	3/1	-
HH13	Y	1,300	2/1 ⁵⁵	3/2
HH14	Y	2,340	3/0	3/1 ⁵⁶

According to the figures in table 8, all of the 14 households have rubber plantations, as do all the households in HatNyao village. Regarding tapping status, there were five households in early 2009 that had not begun to tap, but in 2012 this was reduced to only one. Nine households had started to plant rubber trees from the start, that is in 1994 or 1995, and were usually better off than the others. The survey included questions on both how many hectares of land and how many different rubber plantations the household had, but a better measurement seems to be how many trees they have. Many were uncertain of the exact hectares and the size of the plantations varied. However, there are usually around 450 trees per hectare.

⁵² Information marked – was not at hand.

⁵³ Households 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 14 lost some of their rubber trees in the fire of 2010. Households 6 and 8 would otherwise have been able to start tapping in 2012, but household 8 lost two whole plantations.

⁵⁴ It could be more than six plantations, since it depends on how they are counted. Two of those in tapping were located in two external villages, one of them Hmong. One of the plantations in the non-tapping stage is within the village and an additional two are in Namo District, near the husband's house. In one additional plantation, where they have younger trees planted, they are planning to extend. They have also bought the land rights to a rubber plantation with trees already planted, where they can start to tap in 2013.

⁵⁵ They have no intentions of expanding their rubber. However, in 2010 they bought one plantation that was already planted and ready to be tapped in three or four years' time.

⁵⁶ HH14 were, according to fieldwork in 2009, supposed to start tapping in 2010, but this was still not confirmed by 2012.

When I revisited the village in January 2012, several households had lost some of their plantations due to a fire in 2010, and were therefore afraid that the rubber plantations could get burnt again. In total, around 4.6 billion kip⁵⁷ was lost in the entire village from the plantations burning. Almost all households in HatNyao lost some rubber trees in the fire and four to five households in the village lost all their plantations. The village submitted a report to the government on the subject and they received assistance to remove the burnt trees, since the village administration itself could not support the households. No one could be held responsible for the burnt plantations, so the households got nothing back. Most plantations have nevertheless been replanted, even though some of the trees have died. Many households are, of course, really miserable about what happened, and one woman said that because of the fire they still have nothing and, on top of that, they also have liabilities to the Chinese traders for the tapping equipment they had needed. Furthermore, several households were not able to build new houses as planned.

Education

Another aspect salient to socio-economic status is education. Even though all children in HatNyao attend school, there have been cases where the school has not operated as well as might be hoped. One daughter in a household said that there are so many pupils in her class the number has to split into two: one half in the morning and the other in the afternoon. There also seems to be a problem for several children or teenagers in both attending school and helping out with the rubber cultivation. Many school kids who help their families with the rubber get very tired in school and fall asleep, especially those working at night-time, as their teachers well know.

There is a critical level during secondary to upper-secondary school, at the age of 15 to 18, when it seems more common for girls to marry or the family no longer can support a daughter's education, as compared with their ability to provide for a son's. However, both girls and boys have the same right to education. In Laos, it costs around 100,000 kip⁵⁸ for a student to attend secondary and upper-secondary school, but then there are additional expenses such as the uniform, documents, books, etc. Higher education is therefore possible only for families with a better income. Many households in the village want to send their children to schools and university, but bribery by government officials sometimes hinders that: comments like *'If you don't give me money, I'll give the scholarship to another person'* could well be the response. Furthermore, scholarships can only be given to those students with top scores. Nonetheless, several households in HatNyao had children studying for higher education outside Luang Namtha, in Vientiane as

⁵⁷ Equal to around US \$575,000 or €456,077.

⁵⁸ Equal to around US \$13 or €10.

well as in Luang Prabang, or in China, both boys and girls. The pictures taken during auto-photography included photos of younger girls and boys visiting home over the traditional Hmong New Year, while studying at other locations.

One of the sons in one household has just finished high school and wants to go to Vientiane to study medicine. However, his father is worried about finances. The son has good grades but does not know if he will receive the scholarship, and he is leaving for Vientiane quite soon. A girl from another household has not yet decided about university. She really wants to go, but her family does not know if they have the money to support her.

I was surprised that many students I met in HatNyao or heard of were attending higher education. However, boys by and large continue to study at other locations, which may be a contributory factor to more girls staying in the village and perhaps inheriting land from their parents, especially with the present labour shortage. I did not analyse differences among the households' educational degrees, but the rubber has meant a lot in the sense that households can now afford to send their children to university. According to Manivong (2007), the general level of education in the village varies from primary school to technical college, but most of the villagers have passed only primary school or have not even attended school. Furthermore, whilst most of the villagers are farmers, there are also some with occupations such as government officials, teachers, village traders, non-agricultural labourers as well as lawyers (*ibid*). This will certainly change, because the number of people with higher education is increasing in HatNyao. These students will in the future probably have other kinds of jobs than their parents' farming and hence not return to HatNyao village to work at the rubber plantations. In addition, the fact that children in HatNyao are attending higher education at other locations has an impact on the extent to which they can help out with the labour in the household. For example, the siblings in one of the Lee households can help with clearing weeds and tapping the rubber trees, as well as helping out in the rice field, only when they are home from university and on holiday. The present and upcoming labour shortage thus poses an even bigger problem, since many youth in the village are not available to work on the plantations.

Concluding comments

Luang Namtha, the province and district where HatNyao village is located, is part of the border region with strong connections to China not only in economic terms but also because of its diverse ethnic minorities. Past and present cross-border relations have been important in this region and also for

the rubber cultivation in Luang Namtha, as well as for HatNyao village itself. Rubber smallholdings having ethnic connections across the border with experience in rubber cultivation have been crucial to these villages. There are, however, many variations and models in the way rubber is cultivated, which is why local experience is important, as well as ethnicity, in understanding gendered everyday life and rubber cultivation. Rubber plantations have existed in Luang Namtha since 1994, resulting in a 'rubber boom' in the region, upon which the success of HatNyao village has made a big impact. At the moment there are nearly 30,000 hectares of rubber plantations in the province, which presents a present and future challenge for the province, due to labour shortage. Even though concession-based rubber plantations have been de-limited in Luang Namtha, there are several problems especially with company-based rubber plantations, since the contracts often adopt a top-down approach where villagers are left with limited choices (Shi 2008). As a result, smallholders such as in HatNyao or less formal cooperatives with trustful relationships are important alternatives for rubber development in Northern Laos.

The village of HatNyao has in many ways been successful in transforming its everyday life into rubber cultivation. Villagers in HatNyao nevertheless lack land in order to expand their rubber plantations, as well as for rice fields, since the village has reached its limit of expansion. Therefore many households today rent land in external villages to enlarge their rubber industry or for cultivating rice, where kinship connections have been key. Still, this is more the case where households are better-off. Households with lower income do not have this opportunity and sometimes lack the land for cultivating rice. The socio-economic structures in HatNyao are in this way undergoing a change, where an extended number of households have become wealthier from the rubber. The probability is, however, that these households had already been better-off and with the right connections even before the rubber was introduced. Many of the Lee households, for example, started with the rubber at an early stage and also have an important say in the village administration and a high status. Nonetheless, most households in HatNyao have improved their material standard and their way of living.

5. Gender, social organisation and the Hmong

This chapter is devoted to gender and social organisation in HatNyao in relation to the ethnic group of Hmong, important for understanding the gendered everyday life in HatNyao. The Hmong way of organising is relevant for the rubber cultivation in HatNyao. Moreover, some claim it to be no coincidence that the residents of HatNyao have been so successful in transforming from self-sufficiency into rubber production, by the very fact that they are Hmong (NAFRc 2010). The related research question is therefore: in what way are the ethnic Hmong in HatNyao, their social organisation and decision-making processes interconnected with gendered everyday life and with rubber cultivation? One of the themes of this chapter is the social networks within Hmong, both the patrilineal structures, as well as the relationships on the woman's side, a matter rarely highlighted (Symonds 2004). The social networks or ties within Hmong are both naturally interrelated with gender, but also with rubber cultivation and with inheritance of land. Before discussing these matters I will continue with the institutional aspects in HatNyao, demonstrated in the previous chapter, but here particularly focusing on women's representation on a village level, as well as in the household.

Ethnicity has in the past referred to kinship, group solidarity, common culture and shared strategy only (Forsyth and Michaud 2011:8). Ethnicity, however, is not an essential, fixed or unchanging form of identity grounded in biology and location (Melucci et al. 1989, cited in Forsyth and Michaud 2011). Furthermore, Forsyth and Michaud (2011) argue that we have to be careful in bringing concepts from modern industrial societies to the Southeast Asian Massif. From their point of view ethnicity is rather referred to as "blood ties, cultural variety, local agency, and the political agendas of highland peoples dealing with opportunities and constraints" (ibid:10). Transferring these arguments to Hmong, I would say that their ethnic background, history and strong social network relations is part of everyday life in HatNyao. This is something I will demonstrate in this chapter. However, this does not mean that ethnicity or gender relations within Hmong not are *situated* and locally specific; further, as the conditions for the everyday are changing for the Hmong in HatNyao, so are the gendered practices. My argument is therefore that gender relations among Hmong in HatNyao village are in transition, where gendered spaces bend.

Women's representation

Having explained the social organisation and rubber institutions in HatNyao village in the previous chapter, it is clear that women are strongly underrepresented at all levels. Men occupy all the major positions in HatNyao: being the head of the village, represented on the village committee and being head of all the *nuai*. Men are also in the majority in the elders group as well as in the rubber institutions. This is where the major decisions in HatNyao village is taken, and brings several consequences. To exclude women from leading positions and major decision-making is not an effective strategy, as women's voices are not heard and cannot be considered. Certain issues are in this way overlooked. In the HatNyao case, women's opinions and knowledge about rubber cultivation can thus vanish. Women could, on the other hand, be the head of the dancing committee or head of Lao Women's Union. Whilst these positions are, of course, important, they are not where the major decisions in the village take place and are rather associated with pleasure and the reproductive sphere. It is therefore separating the private and public world.

In 2012, when witnessing the children practise for the dance performance in the village, my interpreter and I meet a woman who today is the head of the dance group in the village and the former head of the Lao Women's Union in the village, with whom I also talked three years ago. Another woman in the village is the deputy head of the dance group.

However, there are examples from HatNyao village where women do have formal power. The oldest woman in one of the households was, for example, deputy head of the village between 1999 and 2003 and the village occasionally invites both men and women to a big meeting where everyone in the village is welcome. This is, nevertheless, dependent on whom in the household is available and not busy with other labour. Men's formal power in HatNyao was additionally several times indicated by the fact that it was the men from the households who attended the village meetings. An example of a big village meeting is the one taking place in relation to the Hmong New Year's celebrations. Both men and women participate in these meetings, occasionally both of them, and everyone has the possibility of taking decisions. According to one of the deputies of the village, everybody joins these big meetings, but at the same time one of the elders claimed it is mostly men who participate, since they are the head of the household. Women therefore often say to their men: *You know about this, you go!* Another, interconnected, reason that was given is that men make the decisions in the households. Men want women to be a part of the decision-making process, but the male informants argue that Hmong women lack the relevant knowledge. At the same time women have to take care of the children, so it is difficult for women to take part in these discussions. Several women also think that they do not have the capability to participate. Women's roles in HatNyao and

their decision-making processes are also illustrated in the following examples:

Before I left Laos in 2009, I wanted to present my results for the village. My intention was to let them know what I have been doing, where the persons representing the village were two males: one of the deputies and one of the elders.

On one occasion in 2009, I asked one of my female informants how it would be possible for me to contribute with a scholarship to the village. I wanted her to be in charge of the scholarship. She asked me if she should discuss it with the deputies and the elders in the village. As far as I was concerned, she could decide who should receive the scholarship; but she wanted to discuss it with her brother, who also happens to be the head of the village.

This illustrates several aspects regarding decision-making in HatNyao. Firstly, how essential the leadership of the village headmen and elders is in this village. Secondly, that it is possible for a woman, at least of a certain status, actually to be in charge and decide about certain things on a village level. Thirdly, she did nonetheless want to confirm and discuss these issues with her biological brother; besides, he was head of the village. Women's decision-making processes in HatNyao in this way intersect with the ethnic Hmong, where men are generally the ones with the worldly knowledge and making the formal decisions. Women, on the other hand, should listen, behave politely and have respect for themselves as well as for their families (Symonds 2004). Women also think men have better judgement being more intelligent and capable. Therefore, men generally have greater power in formal decision-making. Women can, on the other hand, have power over other women, especially those of lower ranked, which is often younger women. A specific relationship, however, is the one between biological brothers and sisters, even if the sister has married outside of the household. Although sisters generally do not have any formal power, they are often asked for advice and assistance in problematic situations related to their brothers and their families. In this sense, they still have a connection to their natal lineage and have an influence. This is, nevertheless, a subject randomly discussed in literature (Symonds 2004).

Intersectionality in this context is important, since gender, ethnicity and age are relevant for both intra-household and inter-household relations. Socio-economic position was particularly important in the quote above, since the woman could make the decision due to her position in the village, in spite of being a woman. Women's power in Hmong societies is also illustrated by Symonds (2004):

Although final decisions rest firmly with the husband, wives do appear to exercise some influence over their husbands. [...] As we have seen, in these arenas – reproduction, sexual freedom, during courtship, the role of the sister,

protest within marriage, divorce, bride-price, flower cloth, funeral rites, and cosmological beliefs – Hmong women do have power and even some freedom in an otherwise male-dominated society. But power does not always translate into status, and even when it does, a wife's status will be less than her husband's until both are dead (Symonds 2004:165, 173).

A woman's power is in this sense connected with the sphere of reproduction (Symonds 2004) or the private. This re-creates the separation of production and reproduction and public/private, also relevant for gender and decision-making. When women are to a higher extent bound to the reproductive sphere, they are in the same way less connected to the public and productive sphere and hence decision-making on a community level. As Domosh and Seager (2001) point out, the public/private dualism also re-creates patriarchal structures as well as it increases the power of men. Reproduction is furthermore connected to home-based activities, while production is to a greater degree related to practices outside the home. The decision-making in HatNyao village on a community level takes place outside the home, which could explain the lack of women in these processes.

Representation within the household

In relation to gendered representations in HatNyao village and the fact that women are often absent in the major decision-making, gendered relations within the households are important to consider. Women's representation in HatNyao village says something about intra-household relations in the same way as gendered roles within the household affect the inter-household level. To put it another way:

The daily activities of household members link its internal activities and social organization to external places and activities. These external activities are often undertaken *with* other members of the household, *for* other members of the household or in order to *escape* other members of the household (McKie et al. 1999:8-9).

Analysing public and private roles within the households in HatNyao, of significance for most of the households is the person representing the household. Generally this is a man and the first person one meets visiting a house, at least for the first time. In Hmong culture it is also normally a man who is the head of the household and acts as the public face. The husband also makes the major decisions regarding family lifestyle, economic activities and community involvement (Yuang 1992). Hmong societies have a patrilineal structure, where spiritual rituals and public life are dominated by men (Symonds 2004). However, a woman who is a widow or divorced can also be the head of the household, until the oldest son is of an age to take over the

role as the head of the household (Manivong 2007). There are several examples of males having public roles within the households of HatNyao village.

The oldest woman in a household is from the beginning rather quiet, but after a while she starts talking quite a lot. If we want to have extended information about the rubber, she says we should talk with her husband, even though she knows a lot about these things. He says that I can ask any questions of him, which is quite a normal phrase for men in the village. Visiting another household, only the woman is at home and she does not want to talk with us because we are unfamiliar to her and her husband is not at home.

These somewhat similar situations from different households indicate how the man has the formal and public power. He is also seen as the one with greater knowledge and is to a greater extent more talkative. A similar pattern was shown when visiting a household for the first time.

The oldest woman in the household at first goes looking for her husband, but, as he does not feel so good, we talk to her instead. On revisiting the same household, another woman comes to the house and asks the husband if it would be possible to borrow some money from the marketing group. He answers by saying it is ok, on the condition that she brings her husband the next time to sign a document.

This fieldnote excerpt is also a good illustration of men's power within the households. It is especially clear when a woman visits the household and actually needs her husband's signature to be able to borrow the money. Her signature is not important enough. Gender relations within the household can likewise be illustrated by situations such as having a meal, an activity often separated between men and women. This is, however, not always the case.

Joining a household for dinner, we all eat together, except for the daughter and daughter-in-law eating later together with the son's mother. Those eating together with us are mostly men, but also some of the women. However, sharing a meal with another household, we eat together with the sons, mother, father and little sister. The other sisters, though, aside from the sisters not living in the house, are eating later.

These aspects can be related to Hmong traditions and ceremonies where men are the ones eating first, while women have to wait and eat later. This was experienced by myself on several occasions and confirmed by the villagers. I also think it says something about the public power and gender relations in Hmong society. In addition, women are generally responsible for the cooking, which is why they sometimes are absent. However, this was not always the case, even in the same household, as seen above, so it rather seems to be situated-bound and possibly dependent on how official the meal is.

The results from auto-photography also say something about gendered roles within the households, particularly who in the households took the

pictures. My pre-understanding of this matter was that to a larger extent the men should take the pictures, which was not really true. These assumptions came from my first impressions in the village, where men were more active and the public face of the household and also the household member I was first introduced to. Who took most pictures in the household rather related to whom I had given the camera instructions. When I asked a man in one household why his wife did not take any photos, he replied that she did not know how to do it. The gendered spheres here are situated rather than bound to the public/private sphere and as a result it varied who in the household who had taken the pictures.

Charging over the funds

One important and interesting dimension of gendered roles within the households in HatNyao is related to the income from rubber and who manages the income. These issues came up in the group interview with men, where one of the men said that the money is generally held by the younger married women in the households, who have financial credit. When the man has to pay for something, he therefore has to go to his wife to get money. The man performs the actual payment, but it is the woman who keeps the money – *she is like a bank*. Most of the men in the group interview agreed upon these facts. One of the men in the households said that the expenses are decided by his wife and he just gives his salary to her and then she takes care of the payments. However, on occasions when a woman wants to give money to a relative, she has to ask her husband for permission. It was a similar pattern among the 14 households, though there were some exceptions. One household gave the information that the income is distributed between everyone in the household, but the boys get a little bit more. The explanation for this is that the family will need this money when they arrange their sons' marriages. When one of their daughters gets married and moves out from the household, she nevertheless receives some money to bring to her new family. Another slightly different example of decision-making in relation to the income is the following:

In one household the older woman is in charge of the finances and hands out money to her son and son-in-law when needed. The three of them discuss together and decide what to do with the money, for example to purchase food or to buy cement or other things needed for their new house. If all three of them are in agreement they can purchase, but not otherwise.

In this household the oldest woman seemed to have more power than her son and son-in-law, which is why age in this context is probably more important than gender. In another household the younger married man made most of the decisions and, if someone in the house needed money, they therefore had

to refer to him. The woman, however, said she held the money. Furthermore, all work matters relating to production and the rubber were decided by the married man, while his wife made the decisions relating to children and household consumption. Occasionally decisions were made by the couple together. In another household the ‘big things’, like buying tools or a car, were decided by the husband. Material purchases, such as a TV or furniture, were agreed by the husband and wife together. One of these women also said: *I am a woman. If my husband says something, I should agree.* And so she agreed with what her husband had said about the decision-making in their household. In additional households the elderly couple was generally in charge of the money, but it also depended on the situation.

It is interesting to see how women generally keep charge of the money in the households and *are the bank*. The disposal of the income is nevertheless another matter. Here there seems to be a division between men’s and women’s decision-making, where they generally decide about different things within the household. Women determine how funds are used in relation to food or the children, while men to a high degree make decisions concerning things outside the house or with the rubber. This reinforces the relation between men, production and economic activities. In some cases these decisions were also made between the couples together. This separation, however, goes back to the traditional division between production and reproduction, where women are more associated with activities within the home and men with activities outside it. There is thus a clear separation between the public and the private world.

Spiritual life and ceremonies

Spiritual life and ceremonies in Hmong societies is not a theme I have focused on, even though we participated in several such ceremonies during fieldwork. I will, however, just give a brief glimpse of some of them, as they say something general about Hmong and are part of gendered everyday life. Hmong are animists and believe in a world of good and evil spirits, as well as the existence of many souls (Yuang1992). According to Symonds (2004), the human body is where various life essences or souls are located, and the house where the ancestral and domestic spirits live. “These spirits reside in every quarter of the house; they are honoured with ritual offerings and in return give protection from wild spirits of the outside” (ibid:11-12). The house is also where most rituals and sacrifices to ancestors take place, as illustrated in the cases below.

We participate in a *Basi*⁵⁹ ceremony, celebrating the birth of a baby boy. The ceremony takes place near the bridge, where we witness a relative on the grandmother's side carrying the baby to the other side of the bridge and back again – a ritual intended to drive out the spirits. The person carrying the child must be a male over thirty years of age, though the grandmother is also a key actor in the ceremony. Then we all affix some money to white threads to tie around the baby's forearms. This ritual will call the baby's spirits home to his parents, bringing good luck, health and a happy life. The boy's grandfather says some spiritual words and thereafter the ceremony continues at the house. The grandfather is in charge of this ceremony together with his son and father of the baby, the mother and two of the other children.

On another occasion we are invited to a house where they have prepared a *Basi* ceremony for the three of us, since we are leaving the village. We sit down on the bench and the father starts the ceremony by holding up some white strips of linen in front of us and saying some spiritual words. Then they tie white strips around our forearms and wish us good luck, and express the hope that we shall bring them good luck too. The daughter and daughter-in-law do not participate in the ceremony; however, an uncle to the household (the father's younger brother) is present. We remain there and continue by having breakfast with them, with the exception of the daughter and daughter-in-law, who eat outside with the children.

These ceremonies, which are part of Hmong everyday life, demonstrate how women are to a certain extent left out and that the one responsible for the ceremonies is the oldest man in the household. Other male relatives on the man's side were invited too. This is also indicated by Symonds (2004), when she argues that women are excluded from the most holy and highly valued aspects of rituals associated with the male lineage. Men sacrifice animals to their ancestors, as well as prepare and cook these animals. Whilst women can become shamans, they cannot participate in patriline rituals (Symonds 2004). Another gender aspect of ceremonies is the fact that men generally take care of the animal meat and cut it up for the women. Men thereafter wait and socialise, while women prepare the rest of the food and eat later. This is especially the case at ceremonial occasions: even though the routine seems latterly to have changed, it has hitherto been the rule and still pertains with the elderly, and for that reason the tradition continues to a certain extent.

Witnessing another ceremony, the oldest woman seems to carry out most of the preparations of the food. Slaughtering the pig, however, is a man's duty. The son was supposed to kill the pig with his knife, but he did not manage to do it. Instead the son-in-law has to help out, which makes the women laugh!

⁵⁹ A *Basi* ceremony is a Lao ceremony, and means 'spirit-enhancing' or 'spirit-calling'. The ceremony involves tying white cotton strings around a person's wrists and saying a prayer of benediction for the person that the ceremony is held for.

To conclude, the Hmong way of living, spiritual life and ceremonies are important in everyday life. The ceremonies demonstrate in what way men and women are represented and how the status of women in these spheres is generally lower compared to men's. It also strengthens the separation of men and women between public and private spheres. These aspects are inter-linked with the patrilineal structures within Hmong, a matter on which I shall now focus.

Patrilineal structures and social networks in HatNyao

In the following section I shall outline the patrilineal structures by first giving a general background of Hmong societies in general, before demonstrating these structures in HatNyao. I will also present the marriage as one main component retaining the social networks within Hmong. Finally, I shall return to the exceptions to the patrilineal structures in HatNyao in relation to rubber cultivation and inheritance of land, which is of particular importance for gendered everyday life.

Hmong societies are generally structured according to groups rather than individuals, where the family, the clan and the lineage group are the fundamental pillars (Yuang 1992). This also means that the Hmong is a group-oriented community, and the interest of a group thereby becomes the interest of the individual. In the Hmong society the family names follows the clan system (*xeem*), which is patrilineal (Liamputtong Rice 2000). Among Hmong, identity is very much associated with clan, and one can therefore count on other clan members in times of economic need or occasions of absence from home and family (Symonds 2004). The total number of original clans is 20 to 25 (Duffy et al. 2004), but the figure varies in the literature. Membership of a clan is obtained by birth or in some cases by adoption, while women later change their clan at marriage. Conferring with one older man in the village, I learnt that giving birth to a son is the only way to continue the patrilineal clan system, but that it is also possible to 'adopt' a son from a brother on the father's side to come to live with them. In this way the patrilineal system can continue. Children are members of their father's clan and take his name (Dao 1992). The clan is made up of a male ancestor, his sons and unmarried daughters, and the children of the sons, presumably going back 160 generations or more. Within a clan, there is also a lineage system, a 'cluster of brothers' (*ib cuab kwv tij*). This group of people can trace their descent through a male line from a common ancestor (Lee 1981, cited in Symonds 2004). The father or the oldest male of the lineage is the spiritual leader who organises rituals or other important occasions. The lineage is therefore one ceremonial household. People related to one another through an unbroken male line of descent are patrilineal relatives (*kwv tij*) and are extended members of the same clan (Yuang 1992).

In HatNyao village in early 2012 there were ten different clans⁶⁰. The largest is clan Lee, embracing around 40 households in the village. The Tor/Thao⁶¹ clan is also quite large, comprising 24 households, which is the same number as for clan Xiong. The other clans in the village are Hang, Lor/Lao, Var/Vang, Moa, Vue, Her and Yar/Yang. The households in this study include nine different clans, therefore only missing one: clan Moa.

Table 9. The wife's original clan (surname) and clan affiliation⁶²

	Wife	Clan	In Hmong
HH1	-	Lee	<i>Lis</i>
HH2	Vue	Lor	<i>Lauj</i>
HH3	Lee	Xiong	<i>Xyooj</i>
HH4	Lor	Lee	<i>Lis</i>
HH5	Tor	Yar	<i>Yaaj</i>
HH6	Lee	Yar	<i>Yaaj</i>
HH7	Xiong	Lee	<i>Lis</i>
HH8	Yar	Lee	<i>Lis</i>
HH9	Lee	Tor	<i>Thoj</i>
HH10	Her	Vue	<i>Vwj</i>
HH11	Var	Xiong	<i>Xyooj</i>
HH12	Var	Her	<i>Hawj</i>
HH13	Vue	Hang	<i>Haam</i>
HH14	-	Var	<i>Vaaj</i>

In table 9, the different households in the study and their clan affiliations are listed. The table includes the original clan of the oldest woman in the house, which also equals her surname. Of those women's original clan listed, all of them can be found in HatNyao, though that is no guarantee that the woman originates from HatNyao. Nevertheless, it demonstrates the wide spread of clans existing in the village. Hmong can also be separated into different sub-groups: White Hmong (*Kao*) and, most numerous in HatNyao, Black Hmong (*Dam*) and Pattern Hmong (*Lai*). Clan Lee, for example, belongs to White Hmong, as do the Tor, Var and Xiong clans, while the Hang clan is Pattern. Clan Vue, however, seems to be both Pattern and White. The differences are

⁶⁰ However, this varied between the rounds of talking about these issues, as some of the smaller clans had moved in to and out from the village.

⁶¹ The clan names sometimes have more than one spelling; in these cases I include both.

⁶² Information marked - was not at hand.

related to their traditional clothing as well as to diverse dialects (Liamputtong Rice 2000). In HatNyao the differences between the sub-groups were hardly noticed or a matter widely discussed and therefore not something I will discuss in greater depth. There seemed, however, to be some sort of power relations involved between these groups, but it could also be related to power relations between the clans. According to one elder in the village, clan Lee is more important than the others, since the head of the clans in the village is Lee. This man holds these positions due to his age, personal skills, his capabilities in reflecting upon matters, his knowledge and the fact that he is of good moral character. In 2009, he was the head of the village and had also been living there for a long time. Clan Lee was also the clan that first moved into HatNyao. All the households belonging to clan Lee, among the households in this study, have started to tap their rubber. One additional household also has strong ties to Lee, as the wife was born into this clan. The Lee clan is the largest in the village and seems to be a powerful voice in the village community. It is therefore maybe not a coincidence that most of the Lee households in the village already have started to tap their rubber.

Several pictures taken from the single-use cameras were of family members, where the whole clan is considered as family. One girl referred to the persons in the pictures as ‘sister’ or ‘brother’, not actually being her biological brothers or sisters, but belonging to the same clan. The pictures of the family members thereby indicate the strong ties that exist among the Hmong within the same clan. The oldest man in one of the Lee households in the study had six cross-cousins in the village. They all helped each other: with the weeding at the plantations or in the rice fields, and those in a better economic situation help those who are not. The following quotes are all examples of social networks within and outside HatNyao, but in the Hmong community.

One woman who was born into the Var clan, which is also still her last name, is now a member of clan Her. We sit down and talk in her sister-in-law’s house, very close to her own house, since theirs is not completely finished. The woman says they are very close to their relatives. When there is a party, the relatives are always invited, and if you have any problems, you always contact the relatives.

A woman now eighty years old had moved to HatNyao with her parents. Today she lives together with her youngest son and his family. Her brothers and sisters related to her husband, all her children, brothers’ and sisters’ children and other relatives are living in HatNyao. All her daughters are married into Lee and she argues there is a special relationship between Xiong and Lee in HatNyao. These clans are relatives and help each other and it is therefore also common that they get married. Even though her husband has passed away, she still keeps the Xiong clan, but calls herself Lee as her last name.

There are therefore special relationships between selected clans in HatNyao village. Another indicator of the strong patrilineal structures is house proximity. The oldest man in one household has at least two sons living close to him, besides the two sons living in the same house. The law of proximity also seems to exist between the rubber plantations, where relatives have plantations close to one another. Clan is in this sense therefore more important than closer biological ties. The sons belonging to the same patrilineal clan are closer to their parents, both geographically and in spheres of the everyday. This has also been indicated by Symonds (2004), where the lineage most often lives in close proximity, as they honour the ancestral spirits as a group.

Hmong New Year is another illustration of the strong networks and patrilineal structures in HatNyao, as it is a specific occasion to meet relatives. To celebrate it, Hmong come from many other locations, not only from other provinces, but sometimes also from other nearby countries. Informal conversations/interviews with the villagers in HatNyao during the Hmong New Year resulted in discussions about marriage and the relation between men and women among Hmong.

In one household the woman's family lived quite far away in another province. Their traditional clothes were therefore of special importance in remembrance of her background. Nevertheless, the husband's traditional clothing was also a way of honouring his.

Several pictures from different households showed the so-called 'ball ceremony', which took place only during the Hmong New Year. This ceremony is a preparation for marriage and a way for unmarried boys and girls to get to know one another. Several of the married couples in the village had met during this ceremony at Hmong New Year. The ball ceremony was also a game for children as well as for married couples, and one did not always have to throw the ball between a girl and a boy. Nonetheless, marriage is a fundamental pillar of Hmong society, important to continue the lineage and establish necessary networks between clans. Be that as it may, the foundation for marriage is unequal between men and women, since women are 'bought' with the bride price which ties a woman to her husband's family and lineage (Tapp 1989). Discussing marriage with an older woman in HatNyao, she remembered receiving one cow and some jewellery from her parents upon her marriage, which was shared with her brothers and sisters. At the marriage, the boy's parents paid for the wedding ceremony and gifts were given by the boy's parents to the girl's parents: *we buy your daughter for our son*. Divorce is rare in the Hmong community, though it does happen, and there were also some cases in HatNyao. In the women's group interview, they discussed the possibility of getting a divorce and that it is more acceptable for a man to leave his present wife and find another one, than it is

for a woman. One of the youngest married girls I came across in HatNyao was thirteen years old and she had already quit school, but generally my impression was that girls are usually older at the time of marriage in HatNyao, than among Hmong in general.

Patrilineal structures are important in the village of HatNyao, where the man's relatives are essential. This has been demonstrated for several of the households mentioned above, interacting with their patrilineal clan relatives. These relatives help one another in different ways and often live close to each other, even within the same village. Villagers with social networks in other communities, located near HatNyao, have obtained land in these villages due to their networks. The fact that women quite often have their relatives in another village is of course also relevant in this context, as for practical reasons it is more difficult to keep in such close contact with them. Another aspect of the patrilineal structures within Hmong and the strong networks existing between them in regard to rubber cultivation is labour exchange, further discussed in the next chapter. This has also been, *inter alia*, demonstrated by Badenoch (2006) as he argues these relations are especially important to consider in processes of transformation:

However, it is helpful to examine the functioning of local networks in everyday activities to understand how kinship structures and cultural norms are reproduced or adapted. Especially in this time of economic development and landscape transformation, the practice of social interaction reflects the patterns of change in Hmong village life (Badenoch 2006:90).

Exceptions to the patrilineal structures

In contrast to the traditional patrilineal social networks in HatNyao, there were also tendencies where these relations were of less importance. It is, for example, not always the case that a married couple would come to live with the man's parents. The practice of polygamy, a phenomenon within Hmong societies, was almost, at least to my knowledge, non-existent in HatNyao. There were only a couple of cases that I heard of.⁶³ Women's biological relatives and their social networks are important too, a subject randomly noticed or written about (Symonds 2004). Living in proximity to relatives on the woman's side also occurs in HatNyao.

One married woman still lives in the same village as her parents and biological brothers; in fact, she lives so near her parents' house that she can see it from her doorstep. Visiting her house one day, we meet two girls, both of them her biological nieces, helping their aunt to look after the house. One of the girls lives with her grandparents on her father's side, since her parents

⁶³ Polygamy could, however, exist to a greater extent than I am aware of, since it is forbidden by law and rarely something I heard anyone talk about.

live in the same village as her mother's parents, who needed help with the rice fields and to take care of their cows.

These examples indicate that there are exceptions to the rule that clan and lineage belonging are the strongest ties in a Hmong village. The woman, a widow, has first of all not remarried, but is capable of looking after her own house and her two children, as well as managing the rubber production. She still lives very close to her biological parents and brothers and she also has assistance, at least from her biological nieces. The last sentence in the citation above highlights the fact that the wives' biological relatives are still important; in this case the married couple actually moved back to the village where the wife's parents live. In HatNyao there are additionally many married women who grew up in the village. This is possibly because there are so many clans, making it easier to get married with a man within the same village. One woman has her eighty-year-old mother living very close to the house, as well as some of her both male and female siblings.

A daughter who grew up in one of the households is now married and moved out from the household, but still living in HatNyao. The daughter and her husband used to live in Luang Prabang, as her husband was born there, but have moved back to HatNyao again. The couple still sends money to the husband's parents, and currently they have his brothers and sisters from Luang Prabang staying with them. In 2012 the married couple has moved even closer to the woman's parents in the village.

Again, we can see that there are exceptions to the traditional Hmong rule, as the couple are now living in the woman's home village, even while they are still supporting her parents-in-law. A tendency is therefore for some couples, where the wife grew up in HatNyao, to move back to her village of origin to start cultivating rubber. Several other examples indicated this trend. This means the patrilineal clan structures could get weakened as they are no longer living in the same place as their ancestors. In turn this might have an effect on gender relations and improve women's status. There were also several households who had nieces and nephews living with them, not only on the man's side, but the woman's relatives as well. The strong connections between biological siblings, born into the same clan but no longer belonging to the same clan after marriage, were also apparent. Another example in 2012 was the biological parents to one married daughter, originally from another village, were moving to the village to get access to rubber plantations. The daughter's new family would therefore help the biological parents to start cultivating rubber. One possible explanation for this shift may in fact be the successful outcome of transforming everyday life into rubber cultivation, which many households find attractive and therefore move back again. Another explanation is the existing labour shortages in HatNyao, where households use their social networks on the woman's side. Certain arrange-

ments are established between the relatives to take over the plantations and in this way cope with the shortage of labour. I shall now move on to discuss the patrilineal structures and their effect on land inheritance.

Patrilineal structures and inheritance of plantations

Several of the plantations in the village of HatNyao are divided between the sons in the family, which are regarded as a symbol for the patrilineal system, where the son stays within the household at marriage, while the daughter leaves. This is not something unique, but has been and still is the practice in agriculture at other places (Grubbström and Sooväli Sepping 2012; Price and Evans 2009). One plantation, for example, was divided between two of the sons and their families living with their parents in HatNyao. Two additional sons, each with his own household, had also received land from this particular plantation. However, the son no longer living in the village, but with his parents-in-law, had to hand over the plantation to his brothers. In the household below, however, the situation is a little bit different.

The woman leases the land rights where they have the plantations, but she also received land from her biological brother when she got married. This is the land where they now have rubber trees. On the land she leases she bought already-planted two-year-old rubber trees. Her brother has more land than she does and has already started to tap.

This woman did not inherit any plantations, but ‘bought’ the land rights on her own, as well as having received some from her biological brother, which are regarded as some kind of inheritance and thus would make her an exception to the rule. Yet it is not only a matter of gender when it comes to land inheritance; education is another relevant aspect. Children who are going through higher education generally do not inherit plantations. In the following example, an emerging trend can be seen that is starting to erode the traditional rules of inheritance.

One of the younger daughters who had grown up in a household is married and lives in another house close to her parents, but helps her parents with the rubber. Her mother says that they have given the plantation to the daughter and her husband, since they have no land of their own. She continues by saying that they have already given the land to one of the sons, so their plantation is actually also owned by him and his family. The mother argues that they have many daughters and therefore cannot include them in the division of the land, but they are helping their children until the stage where they can take care of themselves, which is the case with the younger married daughter. They do not divide land between the children that are still in education, since they are expected to manage for themselves and to earn more money than their parents. The sons in this household are given equal shares in the land while the daughters occasionally get a little piece of land.

These practices were also evident among other households, where the land is divided between the sons. However, if the daughter's parents-in-law are poor, the daughter's parents can give some land to the married couple, so that they can build a house. They will therefore live next to the daughter's parent's house, but, in cases where they move somewhere else, they have to return the land to her parents. Daughters inheriting land became more widespread in 2012, and this trend seemed to be increasing. One household argues that in the future all the plantations in the same household will be owned by the children together, both son and daughters. In this way the social networks are strong between the parents-in-law on both sides, but it is also a social change within the ethnic Hmong. The number of families of course also affects whether the plantations are divided in the household or not, likewise if the children are married and the number of sons and daughters in the household. According to what has been demonstrated, gender relations in HatNyao are in transition, where daughters start to get access to land and the married women's biological relatives are becoming more important. The gender relations are hence in constant transformation and reshaped by men's and women's actions.

Concluding comments

This chapter has shown that Hmong as a group have specific characteristics, crucial to understanding the rubber phenomenon in HatNyao and the gendered everyday life. But an intersectional approach is also needed, where ethnic belonging *intra-acts* with gender, age and also with place, which is why gender relations and the ethnic Hmong are *situated*. From a gender perspective, women are often absent both in the traditional organisation of HatNyao village, as well as in relation to rubber. Thereby they are also left out of formal decision-making processes, which cannot be separated from gendered roles within the households or from the Hmong society. In HatNyao village it is generally men who wield the formal power and act as the 'face-out' within the households. The separation of the public and the private in this sense still remains, but it is also a matter related to the Hmong society and the rules of how men and women should act and behave. As a consequence, men are generally the ones who attend village meetings and participate in village decision-making, but on the other hand women generally are those who hold the household purse. Spiritual life and ceremonies are an essential part of life for the Hmong and demonstrate how men and women are bound to different spheres and have access to different spaces, indicated from HatNyao. Men are in this sense more connected to the public world and women to the private.

The traditional patrilineal networks among the households are still very important in HatNyao. There are, however, also exceptions to these struc-

tures, where women's relatives and networks are important. This could be a sign of a continuous change in the village and possibly a breaking of the patriarchal structures as well. Furthermore, the patrilineal patterns in the village are interrelated with the inheritance of land and rubber plantations. Sons are given land by their parents, whereas daughters are often left with none, because upon marriage they transfer their loyalties to their husband's family. The trend now, however, is that daughters are also starting to inherit land after marriage in HatNyao and continue to stay close to their parents and families. The increasing amount of rubber plantations, together with plantations reaching the stage of tapping, demands a lot of labour. One solution for the parents can therefore be to let their daughters inherit land too and thereby get assistance with the labour. Cases from HatNyao also show how women from outside provinces, married to men from HatNyao, bring their families with them to HatNyao so they can start to cultivate rubber. At the same time, women who grew up in HatNyao but moved to other locations upon marriage are returning with their families to HatNyao, to help their biological families or to plant rubber on their own. There are, as a result, several indications that gender relations within the Hmong social organisation are in the process of transformation and bending with the rubber production.

6. Labour dimensions and marketing

This chapter aims to describe and analyse the cultivation of rubber and the different fields of labour associated with this industry, together with the gendered practices involved. The main research question examined is therefore: how do the relations between and inside the households and their management of rubber production interrelate with gendered everyday life?

The chapter will start with a description of the different phases of labour in rubber production, which will help the reader to better understand the work related to rubber. It therefore gives an outline of land preparation and planting, continuing with the weeding process and the tapping/cutting, as well as the collecting procedures and the way these phases of labour are integrated into gendered everyday life. Finally there is a section on the accessibility of the rubber plantations. In the second part of the chapter I will present labour dimensions when a labour force is hired, as well as the existing labour exchange amongst the households. The last section of the chapter will demonstrate the marketing activities and the labour involved, as well as income distributions among the households and within HatNyao. My argument is that it is important to understand all the labour associated with rubber, as well as the way that the labour is organised between households and within them. This is especially essential not only in relation to gendered division of labour, but for understanding present labour shortages and predicting future ones.

Rubber cultivation practices

Natural rubber is derived from congealing latex, in particular the Brazilian rubber tree named Pará rubber tree (*Hevea Brasiliensis*), native to the Amazonian region (IISRP 2009), since this plant is able to produce a large amount of rubber and it “remains the only source for commercial natural rubber” (Hayashi 2009:69). The different types of labour in relation to rubber cultivation in Luang Namtha can in general terms be divided into two seasons: the tapping season (March to October) and the non-tapping season (November to February). I will, however, start with describing a different type of labour to seasonal work, which is land preparation and planting. During my fieldwork these activities were not part of the everyday life in the

way that weeding and tapping were. Even so, it is labour that requires technical skills, as well as demanding considerable effort.



Figure 8. At the rubber plantation. Photo: Author

Preparation and planting

Rubber is best suited to humid tropical zones, where soil quality, rainfall patterns, temperature range and altitude are important parameters (Williams 1979). It is recommended that the land should be flat or slightly sloping. There are different types of land preparation that need to be carried out before the planting of the rubber trees can start. According to Manivong (2007), rubber trees in HatNyao are planted on land earlier used for shifting cultivation, to a certain extent reducing this process, although from my own fieldwork that is debatable. The preparation of land for rubber is the same as for upland rice, where the land is first slashed and burned, followed by terracing and lining and thereafter the holes are dug. Paths also need to be made at the plantations, so it will be easier to walk on the land.

After the preparation of land, the planting procedure can start, which begins with the collection of rubber seeds, followed by a planting process in three different stages. During my second field visit in 2009, several households during August and September went to the rubber plantations to collect rubber seeds falling from the mature trees. The villagers were picking these to plant new rubber trees or for retail, seen in figure 9.

In one of the households, the eleven-year-old girl and the nine-year-old boy immediately start picking the rubber seeds falling from the trees, on arrival at the plantation. The children were picking the rubber seeds the whole time we were at the plantation and the following day they returned to the plantation to continue collecting seeds. In another household, the youngest married girl (who actually has moved out from the household) also collects the rubber seeds, soon after arriving at their plantation. She will then sell the seeds to other households in the village for 2,000 kip/kilo.



Figure 9. Rubber seeds. Photo: LeeBee Bouapao

The collection of seeds is therefore generally carried out by children or younger women, which according to Manivong (2007) should be regarded as a second labour force in the household. The seeds are, after being collected, planted and grown for about fifteen days around the houses, which is the first stage of planting. The small plants or rubber seedlings are thereafter taken to a special plantation for small trees, known as a rubber nursery (Manivong 2007). The best time to plant the seedlings at the rubber nursery, the second stage of planting, is when they drop from the big trees – from August until October. One of the households has not yet started to tap their rubber trees but is instead putting a lot of labour and effort into the planting process and selling rubber seedlings, ready to be planted at the ‘real plantation’, to others. Both men and women dig the holes at the rubber nursery and also perform the technique of making a triangular cut at the base of the young trees, known as the budding process (Manivong 2007). Thereafter a sprout from a twig, taken from a rubber tree at the big plantation, which has to be between two to six years old, is applied to the plant. This triangular

'wound' is wrapped with plastic to protect the small plant, demonstrated in figure 10.



Figure 10. Procedure at the rubber nursery. Photo: LeeBee Bouapao

The best time to make the triangular cut is when the plants are still quite small and the weather is not too cold. This process is not always successful and sometimes the small branch applied dies. During one working day a household can make at least 250 triangular cuts and, if they leave early in the morning, they can carry out up to 600. When the new applied branch has grown for three to eight months, the main plant is cut off and thrown away, while the remaining plant along with its root system is moved to the real plantation.

We follow one household to visit their rubber nursery to carry out the triangular procedure. The couple performs this duty together, with assistance from two girls joining them. I once tried to do it, but it is rather technical, so I found it difficult. The household leases the land by paying the rent in rubber plants: 2,000 plants for a lease of two to three years. Last time they received a total of 5,000,000 kip for the plants.

In 2009 between 70-80 percent of the villagers sold seedlings to those who maybe do not have the time or skills to undertake this special planting procedure. Several photographs were taken of the budding process, an activity carried out by both women and men, as indicated from the pictures taken. The rubber seedlings were bought by other Hmong, Akha, Lao and Khmu,

since some of them did not know how to plant the young trees. In 2012, however, additional rubber cultivators have acquired that knowledge, which is why the price has dropped. Those households involved in a rubber nursery in 2009 had ceased their activities by 2012 because the seeds were of bad quality, to a certain extent due to the burnt plantations. To buy the seeds would be too expensive. Another reason was the fact that there were too many people with rubber nurseries, which decreased the amount of customers. The plants left at the rubber nursery were therefore brought to their own plantation and only some of them were sold to others.

In January 2012, one household buys their rubber seedlings from other Hmong in Muang Sing. The price used to be 2,000 to 3,000 kip and now it is 4,000 to 5,000 kip, but if they waited until the planting season the price would rise to 6,000 or 7,000 kip. They will place the plants in buckets and keep them behind the house until planting at the beginning of May.

When the plants are finally strong enough, they are planted at the big rubber plantation, so actually the rubber is planted three times. The stages of planting are necessary because if a rubber seed were planted directly at the big plantation, the tree would produce only small amounts of liquid. The whole plantation process is performed by men and women together as well as making the rows at the plantation, though there were comments that only men dug the holes, which was regarded as hard work. June and July are the months when the third planting normally takes place, in holes that are 50 cm², at the big plantation. From the outset, the villagers planted the trees with four metres in between the rows, later changed to eight metres, since the trees produce less liquid if they stand any closer. The intra-row spacing in HatNyao was two to three metres (Manivong 2007) and the density around 460 trees per hectare. According to Manivong (2007), it was not particularly common to use fertiliser, but many households claimed they would do so in the future.

To sum up, the picking of rubber seeds is foremost a question of age, rather than sex, where children or teenagers are highly involved in this activity, together with young, newly-married women. The theory of intersectionality is in this way significant, integrating gender and age. The preparation and planting process demands a lot of time and labour, even though it is not a part of the everyday life in the same way as weeding and tapping. It has been shown that the process of planting can be a source of income for those who have not yet started to tap. This also makes the planting process easier for some households, generally those that have an income, as they do not have to put so much time and effort into the planting. In 2012, most households had ceased the rubber nurseries, since they did not make any money out of it, but it is probably also an indication of the increasing labour in everyday life. The different stages of planting the rubber trees is a technical

process, in which both men and women participate, although there were comments among the villagers that digging holes is particularly a men's activity, being associated with hard work. Body-materialistic theories are worthy of note here, as digging the holes is a task relating to men's and women's material bodies and their representations. There is reference to the material body in that the work is too hard for a woman's body, but in reality women carry out these duties too and therefore most of the time it is only a representation of the body.

Weeding

The weeding between the rubber trees is generally performed during the non-tapping season, when the families are not kept busy with the tapping. However, some households also did the weeding in September or other times of the year, especially households not yet started with the tapping procedure. Weeding is normally performed once or twice per year, depending on how young the trees are, where younger trees are weeded more often. Weeding is quite an intensive type of labour, though it is generally easier to clear out weeds at the plantations with mature trees. In 2009, some of the households did not bother to do the weeding at their rubber plantations, because they thought they would never get any money for the rubber and the trees on these plantations would therefore eventually die.⁶⁴ Several households also argued that they have no time to weed as they have been too busy, particularly with the tapping. In the summer, when the children are home from school, the households in the village generally have more time and workforce to clear out weeds, as the children help out. The weeding is performed with a scythe, but some households also use insect spray to clear out the bushes between the rubber trees. It is not only the grass between the rubber trees that needs to be cut; the branches on the young rubber trees also need to be cleared. Furthermore, it is also important to take care of the soil around the young rubber trees: this will not only make it easier to tap later, but will also make the tree solidier, meaning that the tapping can start earlier. In comparison with the tapping season, during the non-tapping season the villagers stay at home at night-time. This, according to some villagers, is better as it makes them feel stronger at that time of the year. It is quite common to hire labour within HatNyao or from external villages to perform the weeding. Weeding is something carried out by the younger married couples together, sometimes assisted by their children, but rarely by elders, which is another reason that age is relevant.

To conclude, the weeding procedure demands a high proportion of labour, where some households already find it difficult to have enough time to weed

⁶⁴ One explanation could be that the low prices of rubber in 2009 made it unviable to carry out any labour in relation to rubber.

properly. This is going to be even more problematic in the future, because the tapping will take additional time as the mature plantations extend. This will in turn require additional waged labour and is a phenomenon that will increase, such as it has between 2009 and 2012. The question is how this will affect gendered division of labour in the future, since weeding is a shared labour within the households.

Tapping/cutting/collecting

The tapping season normally lasts from March until October, though some households continue to tap even later. In 2011, many households continued to tap as long as until 21st of December and would not start up again until mid-April 2012. One explanation for this was that the rubber factory was open later in the year. Another explanation was that more liquid is produced by the trees later in the season, when it is colder. However, there is a risk that the trees will die if they are tapped too late. The rubber trees are mature and can be tapped around seven years after planting. After twenty-five to thirty years it is not possible to tap the trees any longer, since the latex increases during the first years, reaches a plateau and then starts to decline (Grist et al. 1998). The very last phase, when rubber trees are tapped for the last time, is called the ‘slaughter-tapping phase’ (Strasser 2009), where a special tapping technique is used to extract as much latex as possible from the trees. ‘Slaughter’ here refers to the fact that the trees are slowly ‘killed’ by these techniques and, when this phase is over, the trees are felled by professional loggers. In this way an income will be derived in the future from the timber sold in HatNyao.

Tapping the rubber includes different kinds of activities: where I refer to tapping or cutting, it relates to the activity of making the actual cut in the tree. This task is performed with a special knife which leads the rubber liquid into a cup placed right under the cut. Since this is a rather technical procedure, everyone involved in tapping/cutting first has to learn the technique. One of the methods involved is to start cutting on one side of the tree and continue all the way down. Not until the following year should cutting start on the other side of the tree. Another skill is related to the skins of the tree, where the third layer should not be cut, as that can result in a disease which causes the flow of liquid to cease. The tapping/cutting takes place from night-time to early morning, because it is too warm in the daytime to produce enough liquid.⁶⁵ Others tap/cut the rubber between eight and eleven in the evening, rather than getting up in the middle of the night, and then go to collect the rubber at about eight to eleven the next morning. The tap-

⁶⁵ Tapping in the early morning provides the highest latex production because the flow of latex is plentiful due to high turgor pressure in the early morning hours (Opeke 1982 in Manivong 2007:18).

ping/cutting procedure is performed only once per day, as tapping more often would damage the trees. One person can tap/cut between 360 to 450 trees per day, but that varies among the households. Not tapping every day gives villagers the chance to carry out other tasks (Manivong 2007), but of course that is becoming more difficult with the increasing number of plantations reaching the tapping stage. Households with additional plantations must tap and collect every day – one day at the new plantation and the second day at the old plantation. In an Indian context, the trees were tapped every second or third day, since it was more economically beneficial, as the labour costs could be reduced (Strasser 2009). Numerous photographs were taken in HatNyao of the diverse tools used for tapping: the headlamp, sharpener and the cutters. The cutters cost around 25,000 kip.⁶⁶ Other tools needed for tapping is a spout, collecting cup, cup-hanger, collecting buckets, churns, collecting tanks and anticoagulants (Opeke 1982), though there are many local variations.

After the tapping/cutting procedure and when the rubber liquid has stopped dripping, the process of collecting the liquid starts. At this stage, each cupful is poured into a bucket, and when the bucket is full it is emptied into a larger container. This can be of different sorts: a plastic bag, a bigger bowl or a pre-made hole in the ground covered with plastic. The process of collecting the rubber continues until every cup on the plantation is empty. After a while, the rubber liquid will congeal and turn into a so-called rubber lump or tub lump.⁶⁷ Some add chemicals to the rubber to stiffen it, which takes about 30 minutes. The rubber lumps, weighing around 30-50 kilos each, are left at the plantation until the day they are to be sold to the Chinese traders. Then they are carried or dragged to the village with help from tractors, motorbikes and by loading it onto the villagers' backs. On average the households produce four rubber lumps per thousand trees, but in 2008 some households produced five to six rubber lumps, so it varies.

At the plantation belonging to one household, there is no river or water available, so the husband has made a construction of his own where the lumps are placed in plastic bags so they will not dry out. One of these plastic bags can carry twenty-five kilos and after six days they have a total of eight of these plastic bags.

Some households leave the rubber lumps on the plantation and add extra chemicals so the quality of the rubber will be better and possibly heavier. An alternative is to put the rubber lumps into water. The water helps to make the lumps heavier: the increased weight of the lump also increases the price.

⁶⁶ Around US \$3.5 or €2.7.

⁶⁷ Rubber latex can, however, be further processed in different ways: rubber sheets, crumbs, crepes, cyclised, superior processing rubber, block rubber, preserved filed latex or latex concentrates (Opeke 1982).



Figure 11. A rubber tree in tapping. Photo: Mats Lindeborg

In 2009 the villagers were kept quite busy with the tapping, which indicated the labour shortage in the tapping season and that this shortage will most likely increase over time. During fieldwork in 2008-2009, most households were tapping at only one of their plantations; but, as most of them have at least two plantations, some even three and up to four plantations, it will be a challenge to handle the labour in the near future. Additional plantations in tapping have also affected the working conditions in 2012, as they were tapping from one to ten in the morning to manage the labour. But due to the fire in 2010, several households had not yet started to tap at their second plantation. Some of the households that had started tapping in 2009 divided the work between the men and women in the household, where the men did the actual cut in the tree during night-time and the women generally came to collect the rubber. This is what I have called ‘divided practices’ in chapter 7. In other households the men and women worked together in both the tapping and the collection of rubber liquid, referred to as ‘shared practices’. These issues are, however, discussed in more detail in the next chapter. In 2012, the trend was that women to a larger extent also made the cut in the tree. Bodily practices as a result have been transformed, since women are now seen better suited for these tasks, as has also been indicated by other studies (Ali and Davies 2003; Gordon 2004; Thanthathep et al. 2008). This can be compared with 2009, where the tapping was associated more with technical skills and with men. The material body is therefore a more apparent representation in

the tapping procedure when women execute these activities. The dualistic divides between men and women, the body and the mind are therefore reinforced.

Transit to the plantations

The transit to the rubber plantations is time-consuming in the everyday life and is therefore important to discuss as a dimension of labour in rubber cultivation and in relation to gendered practices. Some of the plantations are placed quite far away from the village, so several households have to walk for one or two hours each way to access them. As already stated, the tendency has been for many Lee households to have their older plantations closer to the village, since they had already started planting in 1994, which could be an indicator of their status in HatNyao. It is possible to get to some of the plantations by motorbike, though some households cannot yet afford a motorbike. Others go to the plantation by car, and several households seem to be sharing this mode of transport. It takes a longer time to get to the plantation during the rainy season, due to the condition of the tracks. Some households therefore stay at the plantation overnight or for several days, since it is too far away and would take too much time to go back and forth every day. For one household in 2009, it was difficult to get to the rubber plantations, since they had only one motorbike between the four of them and had to travel all on the one vehicle.

Consequently, most often the households walk or ride by motorbike to the plantations, except when picking up the rubber lumps, when they go by truck or, as the trend was in 2012, hire people to go and pick up the rubber lumps. There was a tendency that women more often walked to the rubber plantations than men did. One reason was that women were not considered to be able to ride a motorbike, but sometimes it was also too steep to take a motorbike to the plantation.

The oldest woman took several pictures when they went to the rice field, which takes one hour to walk to as she says she cannot ride a motorbike, but sometimes she travels there with her son. Another household has a tough walk to one of their plantations, but they do not take the motorbikes up there, even though they have three of them. The husband needs one of them for work, her son rides one to his office and the third is also used, but every now and then they go by motorbike to the plantation.

The fact that men more often took a motorbike to the plantation can be related to men's and women's material bodies and representations of what men and women should and can do. Women are restricted from riding a motorbike, and this separation of men and women's bodies becomes significant. It can also be related to the fact that mechanisation of a task is more often as-

sociated with men, as illustrated by others (Schenk Sandbergen and Choulamany Khampoui 1995; Sommestad 1992).

My own experiences of accompanying the households to their plantations offer a further type of contribution to the analysis. It is my own bodily experience of a body tired after a hard day at the plantations and walking there and back. This is a specific experience of a physical body that has been in action; “it is a body-in-situation” (Young 2005:16).

My bodily experience of first walking to the field, then carrying out the weeding at the plantations and later collecting NTFPs together with the women and finally walking back again to the village is leaving memories in my own body of how hard a day in the field can be.⁶⁸

Table 10. Year planted and distance to nearest plantation 2009

Household	Planting year	Min. to nearest plantation
1	~1994-95	15 min walk
2	1994	20 min walk
3	2005	60 min walk ⁶⁹
4	1994	15 min walk
5	2002-03	20 min mb ⁷⁰
6	2003-04	30 min mb
7	1995	15 min walk
8	1995	10 min walk
9	1994-95	40 min walk
10	1994	30 min walk
11	2003	30 min walk
12	~1997	30-40 min walk
13	1994	40 min walk
14	2003	~90 min walk

Referring to table 10, all of the households that started to plant rubber trees at an early stage, during 1994-1995, have their rubber plantations quite close to the village, a fifteen-to-twenty-minute walk. These households, on the other hand, also have plantations further away, but most of them not yet ready to be tapped in 2008-2009. Regarding the time it takes to reach the plantations, for most households in 2008-2009 it was manageable, as it takes only fifteen to twenty minutes to reach the mature rubber plantations. But as

⁶⁸ I should add that my body probably feels tired as I am not used to these activities in the same way as my informants are, but my own physical feeling adds something to the analysis.

⁶⁹ To reach another of their plantation on foot takes as long as four hours, but two hours on the way back, since it is downhill.

⁷⁰ Mb = motorbike.

the number of plantations ready to be tapped increases, the issue of transportation will become more crucial. This is particularly the case as the plantations further away are in a mountainous area, taking longer to get there, especially during the rainy season, which is when the tapping takes place. My predictions for 2012 were that because some households have to spend a lot of time getting to the plantations, they will therefore stay in the field. This was actually not the case, since in the fire many had lost plantations that would soon have been ready for tapping. However, several households had to some extent increased their waged labour, particularly for transporting the rubber lumps. This is an example of how to solve the problem of transits to the plantations, which occupy time for the households in their everyday life. Waged labour will increase as the households start tapping at additional plantations. By the time income also increases, hopefully those households that today walk to the plantations can in the future go by motorbike instead. From a gender perspective, this is not necessarily the case, as it has been demonstrated that men are to a larger extent bound to the motorcycle. The increasing labour might therefore result in a reduction of the number of women working on the plantations. My argument is that the increasing labour at the plantations during both the tapping and non-tapping seasons, as well as the transport to the plantations, will result in an accumulation of waged labour. This will transform everyday life in HatNyao village and cause gendered spaces to bend.

Divisions of labour between families and households

As was shown in the previous section, the separation of labour arises between seasons and according to different types of labour in HatNyao village. Another labour dimension is the division between families in the same household, labour exchange and waged labour in HatNyao, demonstrated in table 11. This is a matter related to inter-household relations in the Hmong village, but also the way HatNyao is organised and the social networks between households. The intra-household relations cannot be isolated when discussing these issues, as there is a tendency for the rubber production to split up the households.

Table 11. Household characteristics in terms of divided plantations and waged labour⁷¹

Household	Number of fam.	Divided ⁷²	Hired labour
1	2	-	-
2	3	X	X
3	3		
4	1		-
5	1		X
6	1		X
7	3	X	X
8	2	X	X
9	1	X	X
10	2	-	X
11	1		X
12	1	X	
13	2	X	X
14	1		

Split-ups within the household

From the questionnaire and discussions with the households, presented in table 11, it was shown how the households have divided the plantations among their members and families living in the household. Those households indicated this to be the case, were all being tappers. Several households instead tend to work as a family on the rubber and the labour is therefore separated between families belonging to the same household. The trend is that rubber plantations are divided between the sons with family in the household and possibly the sons living with their family in external households. According to Symonds (1994), the poppy harvest is also a nuclear family affair, or even in some cases a personal affair. This can be compared with the rice harvest, where there is greater cooperation between families and clans. This was also demonstrated by Cooper (1980), where the son after marriage received his own opium field, even though still working on his parents' field. The organisation of opium production and of rubber production within the household therefore share interesting similarities. In both

⁷¹ All households except 1, 3, 12 and 14 have been updated in 2012, although the indicators have not necessarily changed. Those marked -, in these households the information was not given and in those without an X, they had not divided their plantations nor hired labour.

⁷² In 2009 the two younger families in HH2 had four plantations each. One of the younger families in HH7 had only young rubber trees of their own. Another plantation was divided between the two younger families in the household. HH8 had divided one plantation between the two eldest sons. The third son, however, had been left out as he is studying at university. HH9 had divided their plantations between the son with family and also to some of the married daughters. The plantation in tapping in HH12 had been divided between the sons, though the parents do not live in the same household. HH13 had divided the plantations to both sons living with them, but also to their married daughters.

cases, to a large extent the income causes a division of labour, a trend also indicated by Badenoch (2006) exploring social dynamics evolving among Hmong in Northern Thailand. According to the head of the village in HatNyao, the labour can be divided between the families in the household, for example a three-divided split between the older couples and their two sons with families. In this case the income is also divided, although they still practise labour exchange between the families. It seems that the plantations generally are split up when the rubber trees reach their mature stage and the tapping procedure is initiated. This can also be related to the fact that the plantations will start producing an income and it is therefore easier to separate the labour and the income received between the families in the household. Some households, however, share everything; labour as well as the income. The prospect is that additional households will divide their plantations, as a large number of plantations will soon reach tapping. This has, however, been delayed since several households had lost plantations in the 2010 fire. The inheritance of land is also important in this context, where daughters are now starting to be given land by their biological parents, as discussed in the previous chapter, as a way to deal with labour shortages.

Labour exchange

Another dimension of labour in HatNyao is the organisation of rubber and the inter-household relations, where both labour exchange and waged labour are common ways of dealing with labour shortages. From a Hmong perspective, labour exchange can take place within the same lineage or clan affiliation in times of intensive labour activities (Symonds 2004). According to Badenoch (2006), labour exchange includes a range of farming-related activities such as planting, harvesting and transportation.

One form of labour exchange taking place in HatNyao in 2009 was that several households had relatives living with them, to help out with the labour associated with the cultivation of rubber. In many cases it was nieces and nephews from outside villages living with the households to help out with the labour related with rubber, and in addition they had the chance to attend school. Nephews or nieces within HatNyao also assisted their uncle or aunt with family, living in another household, with the labour.

A nephew on the father's side in one household has now been living in their house for one year. He moved here from Namong District, where his parents live, and came here to study and help his uncle's family with the rubber plantations.

Labour exchange was also common between other members of the households in HatNyao, especially those who were relatives and belonged to the same clan. Households that are biologically related, for example brothers,

generally work separately, but occasionally they help each other when they have finished the work on their own plantation.

In one of the Lee households, they sometimes help other households with the cutting/tapping and weeding, characterised as a kind of labour exchange to help each other with the labour. At the same time, relatives come and ask if they can help them out with labour associated with rubber or rice.

New immigrants recently moved into HatNyao can also get assistance from households already living in the village. However, for households that do not have as many relatives in the village, the labour associated with rubber can be very intensive. This is especially the case during the tapping season if a couple has no parents alive or living in the village to look after the small children. The social networks are therefore important for the households in managing the everyday labour and bring consequences for the gendered division of labour, as seen in the gender contracts in chapter 7. It is not necessarily so the case that labour exchange only happens between relatives or those within the same clan, but also between neighbours, or relatives on the woman's side, illustrated below.

A younger girl and relative to one household came with us to help out with the collection of rubber liquid. Her family has rubber plantations of their own, but she assisted this household anyway, as she was niece to the woman in the household.

In 2009, most households exchanged labour in relation to the weeding, but rarely in relation to tapping. Labour exchange was also common in rice cultivation. There is and there will be a lack of labour in HatNyao village, which is strengthening the need for labour exchange, as well as the need for waged labour coming from HatNyao or from other villages. Women's biological relatives and their networks coming from other provinces as well as from HatNyao will therefore possibly feature more strongly in the future, since HatNyao is going to need all the labour it can get. Furthermore, the trend has been for waged labour to replace labour exchange, with possible consequences for the social networks between patrilineal clan structures. In turn, this could mean that patrilineal structures are getting weaker and affecting gender relations within Hmong, as labour exchange is an indicator for strong patrilineal structures.

Waged labour

According to the deputy head of the village, by 2008-2009 HatNyao had no intentions of expanding the rubber, since they could not on their own manage all the labour related to the cultivation of it. The labour was at that time manageable, but since then many households have increased their waged

labour. This was nevertheless already existent in 2009 in terms of labour exchange between households, but also the fact that labour was hired both within and from external villages. Some of the non-tapping households within HatNyao work as hired labour for other households in the village, both to carry out the tapping and weeding, which can give an income to the household before the tapping procedure starts.

During the tapping season, the older man in household 3, who had not yet started to tap their own rubber, has helped other households in the village with the tapping and weeding, as well as with the preparation of the plantations. Another household has one of their plantations near the plantation belonging to the head of the village in 2009. This is quite a large plantation which is well-weeded by hired workers, as compared with the particular household's plantation, who do not hire external labour.

Most of the households who have waged labour had started to tap their rubber and had an income from the rubber production or had an outside income. The households that hired workers employed ethnic Khmu, Hmong from HatNyao or an outside village and sometimes also Lao people or Akkha. One household declared that they never hire workers within the village, only Khmu workers. Paid labour is not a new phenomenon among Hmong, and has existed especially during times of labour intensity. Furthermore, it has been closely related to opium production, entailing many long and laborious processes (Cooper 1980). On such occasions other ethnic groups have also work as waged labour (Cooper 1984, cited in Symonds 2004; Tapp 1986), as also seen in HatNyao.

Both men and women can work as waged labour, except in the tapping/cutting, which is normally carried out by men, even though this had changed by 2012. In some cases only men or only women worked as waged labour, but the reason for that was unclear. A comment was that if there are some specific duties they cannot take care of by themselves, they hire labour. But that pertained only to work outside the house, whilst the work within the house was carried out by the women, including tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Typical female duties within the private sphere cannot be carried out by waged labour, compared to work outside the private sphere, which is traditionally associated with men.

Normally a document or contract is made between the labourers and the household, and the salary is negotiated. Half of the salary is paid in advance and the rest is given when the work is done. If the hired workers have not done their work on the whole plantation, the employer will not pay the rest of the money. A common agreement for weeding is 500-600 kip or 1,000 kip per tree, received after the marketing procedure. However, if they work hard, they can receive a greater amount of money. An additional agreement is 30-70, similar to contracts made between companies and local farmers. However, one household claims the plantation is weeded faster if they do it by

themselves and that it gets done more properly; they occasionally hire workers anyway, who actually can be one of the other families in the household. Consequently, household members can hire labour within their own household, which signifies a transition to the family as an economic unit, rather than the household. This phenomenon is also related to the split-up of the household between the families when the tapping procedure is introduced.

From fieldwork during 2012 waged labour also seemed much more common during the tapping season, and one household had handed away all their labour, as they did not have any workforce left within the household. Five to six couples from Oudomxai come to work at their plantations with the tapping and they are not related. The arrangement is 70-30 or 60-40, common contracts and an arrangement practised by the rubber company in town. Both men and women worked as waged labour in 2012, as couples working together, which means it cannot be *only* men or *only* women. This transformation, which occurred between 2009 and 2012, will most likely increase with the lack of labour. The couple leaves together for the plantation at two or three in the morning to make the cut in the trees together. Thereafter they have a rest at the plantation before embarking on collecting the rubber liquid together.

There are also cases when close relatives are hired for the tapping procedure, where the 50-50 contract is applied instead, practised when the trees are young and not producing so much liquid. Later, when the rubber trees give more liquid, the arrangement normally changes to 70-30. One of the households that got their plantations burnt, supposedly soon ready for tapping, had lost a large amount of their income. Therefore, the daughter and son-in-law had started to work in another village on the tapping with the 50-50 contract. This household has therefore transformed from one which used to hire workers to actually becoming workers themselves.

One household are about to start tapping their second plantation in 2012, but they will try to manage the labour within the household. In 2014, they will start tapping their third plantation and will therefore need waged labour. They will probably ask someone in the village to work for them with the 50-50 contract in the first years, and later switch to 70-30.

According to the head of the village in 2012, the labour situation is a big problem for every household. One household in the village, for example, cannot tap all their rubber trees for lack of labour and has therefore asked relatives to come and help out as waged labour. As new people move into the village some households that lack labour can give plantations to the newcomers, divide the profit in exchange for labour or practise labour exchange. He does not think, however, that they have to hire labour from other countries such as China or Thailand, since they are not relatives and it would not work out. Furthermore, they have a different tapping technique and they are

not Hmong, so the future external labour in HatNyao will come from other locations in Laos.

Most of the 14 households during fieldwork in 2008-2009 had waged labour, mainly working on the weeding procedure. By 2012, this had increased and included using waged labour in the tapping procedure. This trend will become even more evident in the near future because of the expanding plantations reaching into tapping, but also the ability to hire labour with the increasing income. There were no real gender differences in waged labour in 2009, associated with weeding and tapping, as both men and women were employed. The increased waged labour in tapping in 2012 was carried out by men and women together, often younger couples. As a result, the lack of labour has tended to increase women's involvement in rubber cultivation, as their labour is needed. The labour conditions presented can be compared with findings by Manivong (2007), where the tapping in 2004 was carried out by household members only and the hiring of labour from external villages nearby had just started. The external waged labour can also be related to the different types of rubber arrangements and the contracts made between the rubber company and the local farmers. These also seemed to be reproduced between rubber smallholders in HatNyao and external labour within the village or from other locations. In the work by Strasser (2009) on rubber smallholdings in Southern India, the tapping procedure was carried out by two-thirds of the household members only and in larger holdings tappers were hired. As has been said, the labour shortages in HatNyao are increasing the external and internal waged labour affecting inter-household relations in the village as well as the gendered practices.

Marketing

The marketing process comprises the activities when the rubber lumps are sold to the Chinese traders. They are not, however, performed on an every-day basis such as the labour associated with weeding, tapping or work carried out in the household. It is, however, part of the *every-day* life in HatNyao, meaning that it is an activity done regularly, a process which in the following section is divided into a timeframe, from picking up the rubber lumps at the plantation, followed by the activities at the market centre, continuing when the rubber reaches the Chinese border and until the households receive their money. The whole process lasts for approximately four to five days.

Before the market day arrives, the village marketing group, together with the head of the village, contacts the Chinese traders to negotiate on the price and come to an agreement about the date for marketing. The trader with the best price comes to HatNyao, since negotiation takes place between several traders and therefore the frequency of their visits can vary. Some villagers,

however, argue that because only *one* Chinese company comes there is no competition, which keeps the price low.⁷³ In 2012 the head of the village told us that all the villagers participate in the negotiation process with the Chinese traders, together with the marketing group and village administration. When the price is set, they inform all the households what day the traders will be coming and the settled price. It seemed to be difficult to let all the households know when the traders were coming, since the decisions were sometimes made rather quickly. Women are usually absent in this process, as they are not part of the marketing group and do not hold important positions in the village administration. Furthermore, since they are not the head of the household, they rarely participate in the village meeting concerning these issues. The separation of the public and private, production and reproduction is in this sense apparent.

Visiting a household at the beginning of September 2009, the eldest man let us know that the Chinese traders were coming later that afternoon or the day after. They had negotiated on the price the day before, when three traders came to the village. The last one of them offered RMB 5.8 per kilo, which they accepted.⁷⁴

The traders come only during the tapping season and normally around once a month. Villagers should, however, be prepared as they might arrive one day before or after the set date. Based on predictions, the traders and the village make a deal as to how much rubber will be sold, and the traders will bring the appropriate number of trucks. The *nuai* leader collects the data as to how much each household has tapped and reports back to the marketing group. If there is a smaller amount of rubber than was promised to the Chinese traders, the village has to pay the fuel for the excess trucks and for the time they were used – calculated in fuel. The village also has to pay taxes at the border for these trucks. The traders, however, need to make sure they do come, otherwise the money the village gets in advance will be distributed amongst the villagers, estimated on the number of kilos that each would have sold. This money is later checked with the total sum that is given at the border.

Thai rubber traders used to come to HatNyao to buy the pure rubber liquid and in 2011 they were buying rubber liquid for 5,500-7,000 kip per kilo.⁷⁵ The advertising of rubber liquid to Thai traders was undertaken in November and December, generally after the traditional marketing had stopped. Therefore the villagers continued to tap rubber liquid until 21st December, selling it on a daily basis. One member from the marketing group

⁷³ This was in 2009, when the price of rubber was low, which could be an indication of frustration among the villagers.

⁷⁴ *Renminbi* or *Ren min bi Yuan*, the currency used in China, and in the rubber trade in HatNyao, equal to US \$0.85 or €0.59 in September 2009.

⁷⁵ Equal to around US \$1 or less than €1 in December 2011.

thinks it is difficult to control this type of marketing, which they are not involved in, but some households in the village just want additional money.

In December 2008 the son in one household says that during the non-tapping season the men usually sell the rubber at the market in Luang Namtha town, compared with during the tapping season. This particular day it was not sold because there was no demand for it, but he will try again tomorrow.

This strengthens the separation of the public and private, where men are more associated with the outside world and therefore are the ones doing the marketing in town. Accordingly this labour is associated with capital, performed outside the home (Domosh and Seager 2001).

There used to be a rubber factory in the area, near the new road to the Chinese border, but it was closed down in 2008. In 2011, another factory opened and therefore some households from HatNyao started to retail their rubber directly to this factory, located outside Luang Namtha town. It is also placed close to these households' plantations, which is why they no longer need the notebook⁷⁶, as the households can do the marketing in HatNyao. The rubber prices at the factory in 2011 were about the same as in the village, but they earn a better income since they do not have to pay any percentage to the village. For those with plantations near HatNyao or within the village borders, it would not be possible to sell to the factory, but it is not a problem for households with plantations further away. According to PAFO, villagers who sell their rubber to the rubber factory are not allowed to transport it in their trucks through the town, due to the smell, but instead they have to take another route, as well as needing permit from PAFO. According to one member of the marketing group, there are two reasons why HatNyao still carries out the marketing in the village rather than sell the rubber directly to the factory. All the households in the village pay a certain percentage to the marketing group and to the village budget, which creates an opportunity to borrow money, helping many households in the village. Secondly, without the marketing group in the village, the households would face difficulties with the marketing and price negotiations. HatNyao village gets a better price than others, as they have a lot of rubber and therefore have the power to negotiate on the price with several traders.

Transporting the rubber lumps

The first thing the villagers have to do when they know what day the traders are coming is to transport the rubber lumps from the plantations to the village, around two days before the traders arrive.

⁷⁶ For a description of the notebooks used by the villagers, see the section 'At the market' later in this chapter.

In one household a tractor picks up the rubber lumps at a bigger path near the plantation. However, they have to carry the lumps from the plantation down to the path in plastic bags on their backs or shoulders and over a small river. The daughter thinks this is quite heavy work. When the tractor has transported the lumps to the village, they then sell the rubber there to the traders, who have come to collect it.

The rubber lumps are hence carried from the plantations down the path, and then transported to the village centre on a tractor. This was also observed walking home from the plantation in 2009: the majority were men and boys carrying the rubber lumps on their backs and placing them in a pile where the tractor could reach it. In the run-up to the arrival of the Chinese traders, there is therefore a lot of traffic through the village with a great number of trucks transporting the rubber lumps. One household went by truck to pick up the rubber lumps at their plantation. But first of all they needed to remove the plastics from the lumps, an activity also seen in figure 12, and then drag them down to the other lumps placed down the hill. However, they did not carry the rubber lumps on their backs, due to having an allergic reaction to the rubber.



Figure 12. Recovering the lumps from plastics. Photo: household member

The household members accompanying us to the plantation, in autumn 2009, to pick up the rubber lumps are the son of the house and his wife. Two relatives also come along, one of them on the woman's side. The young married daughter, who had moved out from the household, and her husband also follow. Later another elder daughter, who is unmarried, comes to the plantation on her bike. We stop the truck near the road, about two kilometres from the village, and then walk to the plantation.

Similar to the situation in this household, generally both men and women in HatNyao go to the plantations to transport the rubber lumps. This was also indicated from the pictures taken by the households of these activities, where both men and women were apparent. Pictures were also shot of the rubber lumps lying on the plantations and in the market square within the village.

Although the labour and the activities related to the marketing process, in this case to transport the rubber lumps, are not carried out every single day, they are labour-intensive days. With the amount of extended plantations of mature trees, the labour associated with transporting the rubber lumps will be even more demanding. During fieldwork in 2009 there were households borrowing or renting trucks from other households to transport the rubber to the village, at a cost of around 140,000 kip per hour. In 2012 it was quite a common occurrence also for hired workers to transport the rubber lumps back to the village for the market day, probably due to the lack of labour. A common contract was 100,000 kip for one round of transport; including carrying the rubber lumps from the plantations and transporting them by truck to the village centre. However, that seems to vary since some households carry the lumps down to the tractor by themselves. The hired workers were men from HatNyao, but also men from other places. The trend is therefore that these activities are becoming increasingly male-dominated when the labour is hired, a transition from being a shared labour between men and women. One explanation could be that men are generally those driving the tractors and therefore they have taken over the transportation of rubber lumps, as can also be seen from other studies (Schenk Sandbergen and Choulamany Khampoui 1995). Another explanation to the trend could relate to the representation of this labour as hard work, which is being reinforced by the waged labour.

At the market

On market day, 15th August 2009, we arrive at the village between eight and eight-thirty in the morning. The Chinese trucks are already there, but the marketing has not yet started. During the whole day people keep coming into the village with their rubber lumps, until five-thirty in the afternoon. The second market day, in autumn 2009, takes place on 4th September. This time only three smaller trucks are coming, since it is estimated the villagers will sell less rubber than in August.



Figure 13. At the rubber market. Photo: male household member

Before the traders arrive at the village centre, they normally make a stop near the bridge, close to the former head of the village's house, called Unit One. This household and others living nearby perform the marketing procedure before the traders continue to the village centre. There are also people from other villages coming to HatNyao to sell their rubber. The small trucks transporting the rubber lumps continuously come to the village centre during market days and the whole village smells of rubber, not a very pleasant odour. One household living near the market centre gets the stench inside the house, which makes them feel nauseous. On arrival in HatNyao, the households carry the rubber lumps to the village main square and place them in different piles; some men and women also drag the lumps closer to the square with the aid of metal sticks. Women then generally wait around the village centre and sometimes carry out any labour needed, while the men are usually the ones who put the lumps on the scale and lift them up onto the trucks. Some villagers contend that women cannot carry out these activities: this is bound to representations, since women do occasionally perform them. The men from the different households help other households, who are related in some way, to put the lumps on the scale and then lift them up onto the big Chinese truck. The labour carried out in the market square is therefore male-dominant, albeit with some exceptions.

In one household, the son and the son-in-law are preparing for market day by bringing the lumps to the centre of the village. However, they carry out the marketing and selling with their wives, who also bring the rubber lumps to the village.

Many pictures were taken of the marketing activities, for example when the rubber lumps were delivered to the village. Other pictures were taken of transporting the rubber to the market, putting the lumps on the scale and the lumps lying in the square. There are two places in the village centre where the rubber is weighed. At one table, around 40 households hand in their notebooks and place their rubber on the scale and at the other, another 50 households. Those with their rubber closest to the scale are also the first ones to retail. All the figures are written down in a special notebook, kept by every household selling rubber in HatNyao. This activity is carried out with close attention by the villagers to ensure that everything is correctly weighed and written down. One representative from the village marketing group and one Chinese trader are responsible for writing down the correct numbers in the notebook so the households know how much income they receive. The notebook is most often marked with the husband's name, even though women generally carry the notebook at the market. There is, as a result, a discrepancy between theory and practice, where the man, as the head of the household, represents the household to the outside world by having his name in the notebook. The woman, on the other hand, is responsible for keeping the household money and therefore she needs to keep track of the figures in the notebook and the income. The notebook also holds the signatures of both buyer and seller. The representatives from the village are all men, but in 2009 one Chinese trader was a woman.



Figure 14. Weighing the rubber lumps. Photo: LeeBee Bouapao

There is a tendency for children not to attend school during market days in HatNyao. Since men are more interrelated with the marketing process than women, there is also a greater risk for boys than girls that they will miss school on these days. This was also indicated in some cases where the boys in one household were at the market, while their sister was in school. To conclude, there are diverse spaces of activity during market days, most of them being more associated with men, while others are carried out by men and women together. According to Domosh and Seager (2001), the division between the private and public spheres is not absolutely clear-cut but rather fuzzy, as can be seen in the marketing process. The actual retail is, however, generally the men's sphere, strengthening the separation of private and public.

Crossing the border

Once all the households have carried out the procedure of having their rubber weighed, got back their notebooks and all the rubber lumps are loaded onto the trucks, they leave for the Chinese border. A few representatives from the marketing group follow the Chinese traders to the border and there receive the total income for all the households. Since there are no women represented in the marketing group, they never follow the traders to the Chinese border. The representatives, normally two men, return to the village the

next day. The Chinese traders enter the border near Muang Sing and return via the Boten border. They cannot speak Hmong, though they understand a little bit of Lao; but many villagers in HatNyao also speak Chinese. According to Shi (2008), the marketing group in HatNyao paid taxes to the Luang Namtha Province retailing the rubber to the Chinese traders. The traders, on the other hand, took care of fees and taxes on the Chinese side of the border. The traders normally take the rubber from HatNyao to a factory in China where the rubber is cleaned, cut and dried. Then the rubber is sold from there to produce shoes, tyres or to sell it to other factories or countries. It is also possible to reproduce the rubber again and mix it with other ingredients, to construct, for example, asphalt. In 2012 the rubber lumps sold in HatNyao still go directly to China, but they need permission from the provincial government to be able to pass the border.

Price fluctuation and income distribution

Among the 14 households it varied a lot how many rubber lumps they can produce and therefore how much money they will be given every time they sell. This of course depends on several factors: number of trees, how often they tap, how large the labour force is and of course the kilo price of the rubber. The households receive their income from the rubber after a few days, when the marketing group and the traders have taken the trucks to the border and the marketing group has returned to the village. The marketing group then has a meeting with the head of the village and the head of the marketing group to make sure everything is correct. Subsequently the marketing group invites the households to join them at the village centre, so they can receive their money. Which household members attend depends upon who is available: the older parents or the younger married couple; the wife or the husband. One woman in the village is responsible for handling all the mortgages, as it is possible for the households to borrow money from the village account. This particular woman has a high status in the village, to some extent because her biological relatives also have a high status in the village and she is highly educated. In this way she is an exception to the traditional private/public separation, since she is part of the retail process. There are two tables at the village office during the days the money is handed out to the households: one where they receive the income and another one where the mortgages are handled. The taxes that each household pays to the village amount to around 20 percent.

The 'product' being sold in HatNyao is the rubber lump, each weighing between 30 to 50 kilos. The prices had risen between 2009 and 2011, as demonstrated in the table below, which probably related to the recovery after the economic crises together with the increasing global and Chinese demand. The total income figures for 2011 also include seven other villages coming to HatNyao for the marketing, but do not comprise those households selling

their rubber directly to the rubber factory. The external villages' income figures are, though, less than 10 percent of the total income numbers. Other villages in Luang Namtha, which during 2011 had quite a lot of rubber, did their own marketing. In 2012, the price on rubber was 11, 25 RMB in April; 10,35 in June and 9 RMB in July, and therefore dropped from 2011.

Table 12. Price of rubber lumps from Chinese traders 2011

Market occasion	RMB/kilo
July/August	14.5
September	13.5
October	11.5
November/December	8.4
December 13 th	8.4

Table 13. Income distribution from the rubber production in HatNyao 2002-2011⁷⁷

Tapping year	Income (RMB) ^{78 79}	Kg	Price ⁸⁰
2002	74,038	22,000	3.5
2003	426,923	95,000	4.5
2004	825,000	150,000	5.5
2005	1,769,231	-	-
2006	2,582,308	-	-
2007	4,282,084	-	-
2008	2,874,585	323,453	8.9
2009	4,680,000	600,000	7.8
2010	5,525,000	650,000	8.5
2011	8,712,000	726,000	12

The price of rubber reached its peak in July 2011, at RMB 14.5. Table 12 also demonstrates how the price is higher in the beginning of the season, after a break in the non-tapping season, and then decreases in the ensuing months. Table 13 represents the total rubber production in HatNyao from 2002, the first year they started to tap, until 2011. The income has steadily been increasing since the start, but the global economic downturn can be seen from 2008 and 2009 figures. Over the last couple of years, the income has improved, since global demand, particularly in China, has started to rise again.

Income distribution among the households

In the following section I will demonstrate diverse examples of the income distribution of the households in the study. Rather than present each and every one of them, I will try to present some of them in terms of diversity and change among the households. To get a picture for comparative purposes of a household that has many plantations in HatNyao, I have also included that of the former head of the village. It will also demonstrate how

⁷⁷ Most statistics between 2002 and 2004 are from Manivong (2007). When marked - the information was not at hand.

⁷⁸ Between 2002 and 2007 the rates were given in kip calculated into RMB, based on the exchange rate from 2005, and therefore differ a bit from Manivong's figures (2007).

⁷⁹ 2005: 1 RMB = 1,300 kip, March 2012: 1 RMB = 1,231 kip.

⁸⁰ Price averaged per kilo (in RMB) over the whole year, which was equivalent to around six market days in 2011.

the increasing number of plantations in the tapping stage has a strong impact on household income. I have therefore divided the households presented into the number of plantations in tapping.

One plantation in tapping

Household 5 has one plantation and 600 trees in tapping. They sold their rubber for the first time in June 2009, altogether comprising 10 lumps and over 200 kilos: at that time, only a small quantity of liquid was produced by the trees. At the market day in August, they sold 166 kilos. In September, the same household sold less rubber than in August, but it brought in almost the same amount of money, since the price was higher, giving them 800 RMB, equal to 1.04 million kip. In 2011, they produced a total of 2,700 kilos and earned 44 million kip.⁸¹

Household 7 also has one plantation of one hectare containing over 400 trees in tapping. They receive around three million kip per market, equal to four lumps altogether, but it depends on the price. The older woman went to fetch the money from the August market, which was 1,000 RMB or 1.3 million kip. In 2011, they were still tapping at the same plantation, and their total income was 50 million kip.

Household 8 has one plantation in tapping with over 500 trees. They can receive up to 60 million kip per year or 6 million kip each time they sell. At the six different market days in 2011, they received around 800 kilos, a total of 4,800 kilos over the whole year. Their gross income in 2011 was therefore 60 million kip, but they also have a lot of expenses to meet.

Household 10 has one plantation in tapping with 400 trees. In 2010 and 2011, they retained a total of five tons of rubber per year. However, their income rose from 45,000 RMB or 58.5 million kip in 2010 to 60,000 RMB or 78 million kip in 2011, due to increased prices.

Household 11 started to tap at one of their two plantations in 2010. In 2011, the total number of kilos was 2,000, giving them 25 million kip.

These accounts illustrate how sensitive a household's income is to price fluctuations, negative and positive, especially between 2009 and 2011, when the price rose by more than four RMB per kilo. Household 10, for example, increased their income with quite a lot in only one year, according to the figures. But it also shows how it takes time before a reasonable income can be reached, as the rubber trees do not produce as much liquid in the beginning. The varying household income also shows that the difference in earnings is dependent on the number of trees, which is a better parameter than the number of plantations or hectares. There is also a difference in income

⁸¹ Based on RMB 1 = 1300 kip. 44 million kip are therefore equal to around RMB 33,846, US \$5,325 or €4,259.

according to how often the households tap, which is dependent on the available labour force.

Additional plantations in tapping

Household 13 had in 2009 one plantation in tapping with 650 trees. For the market day in September 2009 they had about 20 lumps, as they produce two rubber lumps every second day they tap. In total this household receives around four to five million kip per person annually from their rubber. In 2011, they divided the income between the two families in the household. The older couple with family received 93.6 million kip and the son with family 23.4 million kip.⁸²

Comparing the households with only one plantation in tapping with this household, there is quite a big difference in income distribution. Furthermore, the households with additional plantations in tapping, which is at least two households, have also divided the income between the families in their household, an indicator of several plantations in tapping.

Several plantations in tapping

At the market day in August 2009, **the head of the village** and his household sold a total of 2,000 kilos of rubber, equal to RMB 10,000 or 13 million kip. Last time he sold, he received even more – 3,500 kilos – but his household also has the largest rubber plantations in the village.⁸³

Household 9 has a total income of four to five million kip per month, but sometimes they receive only one or two million. In 2011, they produced one to two tons per market, giving them a yearly total income of 200 million kip.

These households have several plantations that have reached tapping stage and can therefore be considered as wealthy. Comparing the three different types of households, based on their income and amount of plantations in tapping, it is no surprise that the inequalities in the village are increasing. The decreasing availability of land for rice cultivation and NTFPs is making those households already vulnerable to price fluctuations even more exposed and no longer able to be economically self-sufficient. However, it also demonstrates the great returns possible in rubber smallholdings and the profitability in transforming the everyday life, as indicated by Manivong (2007).

According to Manivong (2007), the average yield for the villagers in HatNyao when they first started to tap was 904 kg/hectare, increasing to

⁸² Equal to a total of RMB 90,000, US \$14,157 or €11,326.

⁸³ If the numbers for the head of village's household were to be calculated with the rubber prices and the six market days in 2011, they would have received a total income of nearly 300 million kip in 2011, based on RMB 1 = 1,300 kip and that they probably had additional plantations in tapping in 2011. This would be equal to US \$36,279 or €29,58.

1,380 in the second year and 1,999 in 2004. The yield can be affected by several factors: tapping skills, weather conditions, soil and topography and the natural increase in latex flow. In my study it is difficult to go by average yield, as I have only 14 households and a different approach. But, just by way of comparison, I have counted on the average yield from one selected household. The estimation is predicated on there being around 450 trees per hectare and around six market days per year, as in 2011. Built on the production from 2009, one particular household had an average yield of around 900 kg/hectare. On the other hand, this was the first year they started to tap. In 2011 the yield for the same household had increased to 2,025, which is high compared to the average yield in neighbouring countries like Northeast Thailand (1,540 yield) and Southern China (around 1,300), but similar to the figures demonstrated by Manivong (Manivong 2007). But, according to a NAFRI representative, it is possible – but highly optimistic – to receive a yield of around 4,000 to 5,000. Without added chemicals or other added products it is possible to attain yields of 1,500 to 2,000. It is, however, difficult to make these calculations since the quantity of trees per hectare varies, and number of trees is a better gauge for HatNyao than number of hectares. Calculating profitability, it should be borne in mind that the productive life of a rubber tree is 35 years and that its yield reaches a peak in Year 22 before it starts to decline. The calculations made by Manivong on profitability from rubber production includes several measurements such as labour, material investments, mortgages as well as the actual price of rubber, which at that time (2005) was rather low compared to that in 2011. The profitability of rubber is therefore higher today. By Year 35, when the trees are ‘slaughtered’, there can again be an income return from retailing the rubber wood. The conclusions by Manivong (2007) are, however, that rubber smallholdings are a valuable investment, despite the risks and uncertainties. Or, as Manivong (2007) claims:

Therefore, rubber can be considered as one of the potential alternatives for poor upland farmers in settings such as HatNyao, in line with the government policy of restricting shifting cultivation and supporting new livelihood options for poverty reduction. However, this analysis had focused on rubber as a single farm enterprise. To decide on the optimal *extent* of rubber planting would require an analysis at the whole-farm and whole-village scale, comparing rubber with other farm enterprises and land uses, including forest conservation, which is beyond the scope of this thesis (Manivong 2007:154).

My interpretation of Manivong’s argument is that an analysis of rubber production alone needs to be integrated with other spheres of the everyday. Although my thesis adopts a different approach to Manivong’s and my aim is not to calculate profitability, I would argue that analysing the whole everyday life in HatNyao adds something else. By analysing gendered everyday life, not only are other segments considered, but also the sphere of reproduc-

tion, an important dimension when discussing profitability and labour used in the everyday. The future prospects for the rubber industry, according to a representative from the marketing group, are dependent on the villagers in HatNyao and how they are able to negotiate on the price. At the same time is it difficult to make predictions about the future for rubber, since that depends on the Chinese market. According to one of the Chinese traders, however, there will continue to be a Chinese demand for rubber; meanwhile, Laos and other countries in the region are developing and therefore they too will require rubber in the future. But my argument is that the greatest challenge for HatNyao is the present and upcoming labour shortages, where it is important to understand and consider all the labour in the everyday. Therefore an analysis of gendered everyday life and the way gendered spaces bend is crucial. Furthermore, my argument is that the involvement of both men and women in the rubber-cultivating process is part of the success story in HatNyao.

Additional multi-functionality income

Some of the households have income not only from the rubber, but also from other sources, as illustrated in this section. Households that in 2009 received an income from retailing seedlings from the rubber nursery could earn around 15 million kip per year. There are nevertheless many things to buy for the rubber nursery: tools and other equipment. One household also sells cloth to Hmong living in the United States, from which they obtain about US \$400 to US \$500 per year, in which they in the past have used to buy a truck. Another household used to sell furniture constructed by the married man in the house, for which they could get around 300,000 kip. Other households also have outside employment as teachers or in governmental positions. Some households have village responsibilities for which they may be paid. These are examples of households having an additional income of a different kind which can render them less vulnerable to price changes in rubber, as they have a stable external income. Some of these are, however, interrelated with rubber production, such as the purchasing of rubber plants as well as the income from the marketing group. The income is also important during the immature phase of rubber trees and before the households start receiving money from the rubber.

Income and change

Households in HatNyao that have started to tap and get an income argue their lives have improved and they are no longer considered poor, as they used to be. These villagers can now afford to buy certain products and have enough food, and some households even buy all their consumables at the market. One non-tapping household believes things will be better once they start to tap so they can buy food, clothes and books for the children. This

particular household was, however, rather poor in comparison to many other households. As has been mentioned, many people in HatNyao have also built new brick houses from the rubber income, a change that was very vivid between fieldwork in 2009 and 2012. However, as many households lost rubber trees and income in the fire of 2010, some have had to postpone the construction of a new house.

Revisiting one household in January 2012, they now have a really nice brick house, which has been constructed since 2009. The house has a nice entrance and comprises three rooms, and they say they are doing well and better than when I last saw them. There are also several other new houses in their neighbourhood.

Pictures taken by some of the households also portrayed their improved situation with, for example, images of their motorbikes. To the households, income therefore means a higher material standard in different ways. In addition, several households are now able to put at least some of their children through higher education and university. Several households also use the money to hire labour for the work on the plantations or to make further investments in rubber. However, the households have to meet a lot of expenses, as they have many children and relatives to take care of, and the Lao government does not assist with these expenses.

Before HatNyao village started cultivating rubber, they normally cultivated just enough rice for consumption and were to a larger extent dependent on the forest. In the past, a household's income could be from selling a cow, a chicken or rice. Others planted chilli and additional vegetables that were sold at the market, but nowadays are generally used for consumption only. Today the amount of rice fields has, nevertheless, decreased due to the rubber plantations and the lack of land. One comment was that their land is used only for rubber, but that this was something positive and equal to an income. Another comment was upon the landscape changes that come with the rubber plantations, where they expressed the opinion that the landscape looks nice with all the rubber plantations: *the landscape looks beautiful if the rubber gives them money.*

Natural resources that could be found in the forest were in the past also sold at the market, and the money was used for household consumption or for school fees. But according to one woman, she got really tired walking to the forest and having to climb the trees to get what she wanted, sometimes falling down. Furthermore, she did not own a pair of shoes, so she had to walk to the forest barefoot. Fuelwood is still gathered from the forest, but some households also have to buy it, and with the rubber plantations it is more difficult to find firewood. Therefore they also have to buy fuelwood, still not possible for every household in the village as they do not yet have an

income. Related to that, one man mentioned that he now has to walk a longer distance to be able to hunt birds, compared with in the past.

Many household members think it is a difficult time before the tapping procedure starts and they can actually get an income. Moreover, many things can happen with the rubber along the way and it is quite common for at least some rubber trees to die. In 2008-2009 the rubber price was also rather low, resulting in some households not wanting to weed their plantations, as it was not worth it. With no income from the rubber, these households cannot buy any rice or food and some of them do not even have any rice fields left. Several households argue they cannot know anything about the future for rubber, which makes them worried, compared to rice, a more reliable crop. The unstable prices of rubber also make things more difficult for poorer households in HatNyao. Therefore, the villagers in HatNyao are dependent on the Chinese market, which is difficult to influence. This last section of the chapter has demonstrated what changes the income has brought to villages in HatNyao and the several positives brought about by an increased income. But it has also shown that not all the households have the same possibility of changing and adapting to the new way of living that come with rubber. As a result, there are, according to the villagers, both positive and negative consequences since the rubber production was introduced, which also vary between households and individuals in HatNyao.

Concluding comments

This chapter has demonstrated different dimensions of labour in relation to rubber cultivation, analysed from a gender perspective, which are crucial understandings because of the upcoming labour shortages. Several households have, because of the lack of labour, stopped running the rubber nurseries existent in 2009, even though they were not-for-profit operations. The collection of seeds, an activity performed by children and occasionally women, is therefore also a labour in the everyday that will probably be reduced. The increasing plantations reaching the tapping stage will demand waged labour both in the tapping and weeding activities, something that had increased between 2009 and 2012. Another labour dimension is the transits to the plantations, which are becoming a greater problem as the labour at the plantations increases. Women take motorbikes to the plantations to a lesser extent than men do, which is important to consider when the number of plantations reaching the tapping stage is expanding.

Within the household the labour and the land is divided between the families, when they start tapping and get an income, indicating that rubber production makes the labour more divided between families within the households. Labour exchange between the households in HatNyao is quite common, especially regarding weeding, although it does not seem to be as com-

mon in the tapping season. Some households also have nieces and/or nephews living with them to help out with the labour, which probably will increase in the future. Waged labour is, nevertheless, starting to replace the labour exchange in HatNyao. Not only is labour hired for weeding, but in 2012 households also had waged labour for the tapping procedure. Men and women were working together with both tapping and cutting, a transition from 2009, and probably a way to go forward with the upcoming labour shortages. A transformation of the gendered division of labour can also be seen in relation to transporting the rubber lumps from the plantation. This used to be a shared activity between men and women, but the trend in 2012 has been that men, working as waged labour, perform this labour. The market activities are in this way becoming a man's sphere since they are also responsible for the actual retail, as well as pulling the lumps onto the scale and big trucks.

Analysing the income distribution and how it has changed over the years, there is a significant difference between those households that have just started to tap or have only one plantation in tapping and those with larger plantations in tapping. However, for those households that have started to get an income, their life has generally changed for the better. Poorer households tend to be in a more difficult situation, since there is a lack of land for rice and forestry resources. Furthermore, the villagers' lives have become more sensitive to price fluctuations, which are not something they can control, and they are therefore dependent on the Chinese market. In this way the villagers in HatNyao are more at the mercy of the global market and have fewer possibilities of exerting control over their everyday life.

7. The everyday's bending

Men's and women's everyday life in HatNyao village concern not only rubber cultivation, but also other activities taking place and duties being performed during a day. In this chapter I will demonstrate how everyday life can look like in the studied households, taking on all the activities on an everyday basis. Furthermore, there are chores not practised on a daily basis, such as the cultivation of rice, the collection of NTFPs and marketing activities, dimensions also analysed in this chapter. These practices are not carried out every single day, but are nonetheless essential and occupy time in the everyday. The chapter thereby addresses the research question as to the way in which men's and women's everyday life are organised in relation to rubber cultivation, intra-household relations and other spheres of the everyday. How men's and women's material bodies interplay with representations of femininity and gendered division of labour is also about to be discussed.

In the analysis, the 14 households have been separated according to four gender contracts organising their labour in relation to gender and rubber cultivation, particularly in the tapping season. In the non-tapping season, which mainly concerns weeding activities, the households work in similar ways to when weeding in the upland rice fields. The gender contracts are relevant since the rubber cultivation is dominating the everyday and it is in the tapping season that the transformation of gendered everyday life is most apparent. Forsberg (1998) argues that gendered practices are integrated with labour market conditions in diverse ways and because of varied economic routes. Tyrkkö (1999) in addition states that the gender contracts are combinations of actions and positions in the organisation of production, reproduction and of the everyday. These aspects additionally motivate the four gender contracts presented. The gender contracts should, however, not be regarded as fixed, but the households' main characteristics are especially those that can be placed into a particular contract. The first gender contract, the *tapping contract with divided gender practices*, is found where households have already starting on the tapping procedure, households with a stricter gender division, in the labour related to rubber. The second gender contract, the *tapping contract with shared gender practices*, includes tappers, but where a gendered division of labour is less important in relation to the tapping procedures. The third gender contract, the *outside employment contract*, comprises households where an outside employment affects the division of labour between men and women and within the household. The *non-tapping gender*

contract is characterised by households who have not yet started to tap their rubber.

As mentioned above, there are still further segments of the everyday relevant in this context, integrated into and existing side by side with the gender contracts. But the main reason for the separation of the four gender contracts lies in the gendered division of labour related to rubber within the household, as this is most important for how the gendered everyday life is organised. The other segments of the everyday are related to rice cultivation, childcare, collection of NTFPs and gardening, diverse household and marketing activities. These gendered practices are similar to all the 14 households, discussed further at the end of the chapter, but significant in each household presented. I am therefore arguing that there are paradoxical spaces of gendered everyday life in the households in HatNyao, which are in constant interaction and adapting to the societal transformations coming with rubber. In this way gendered spaces bend among the households in HatNyao.

Most information about the households in this chapter is from fieldwork carried out in 2008-2009 and the analysis in relation to the gender contracts is therefore made according to how the situation was at that time. In 2012, I did not have the opportunity to meet all the households. Nevertheless, within the households I actually did meet, household composition and the gender contracts had changed, compared to 2009. Between the rounds of fieldwork how many children that were living in every household varied, as some had married or were studying, which is why I have not written down the exact number of children in some of the households. The outline of the chapter is first to present the households separated according to the four gender contracts relating to rubber cultivation. However, the descriptions of every household concern all the spheres of the everyday interacting with rubber cultivation. After each gender contract there is a separate analysis. At the end I will have a separate discussion about the different segments in gendered everyday life among all the households. The everyday's bending is also related to representations of femininity and masculinity and how these interact with men's and women's material bodies. The last pages in this chapter therefore discuss these matters, as well as in what way certain areas of work in the everyday are regarded as labour to a greater extent than others, which have an impact on gendered everyday life in HatNyao.

The tapping contract with divided gender practices

The first contract represents six households that have started to tap and have a somewhat stricter gender division in the activities carried out in relation to rubber production, significant in the tapping season, and as a result have divided gender practices. These households are household 1, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12.

Household 1: Clan Lee
Married couple
Married son with wife
Children

Accompanying the younger married woman and her twenty-year-old son in December 2008 to their plantation, the son cuts/taps the trees, while his mother collects the rubber in a bucket. She thinks it is hard work to collect the rubber liquid. At this time, when it is off-season, the tapping takes about one to two hours, they say, starting at about 4 a.m. But during the tapping season it takes about three to four hours to carry out the tapping, starting at two o'clock in the morning and being back at the house again at around nine o'clock. On the way back from the plantation, I carry the trunk containing the rubber. It is rather heavy to carry it all the way back, even though the plantation is close to the village.

In this household there is a clear division of labour between the son and his mother, as the mother to a higher extent collects the rubber, while the son carries out the tapping/cutting. Some household labour that this family had taken pictures of, such as preparing pig food, were performed by both males and females. The mother and her younger son help each other carrying out this activity in the morning when it is still dark, shown in the photos. Several pictures were taken of boys watching over the buffalo in the field, an activity almost never carried out by females.

We left with the older son for their lowland rice field in December 2008. The son says that normally men plough and women sow and harvest the rice, but in this household men and women carry out all the duties in relation to rice together. Other activities in the rice field are to cut and improve the field, normally done by men, according to the son. In rice season the family works eight hours per day and they both sell and consume the rice they produce. Fuelwood is something that is bought in this household, but sometimes they also find it at the plantations and use this instead. This household does not go to the forest to hunt for meat and they do not have their own natural forest, as some families in HatNyao still have.

In this household they also cultivate rice, which demands a lot of labour in the everyday, together with rubber cultivation. These activities seem to be divided to a certain extent between men and women, even though they do many things together. Forestry resources like fuelwood are occasionally collected near the plantations, while other goods for the household are bought at the market. There are disparate segments of the everyday, therefore, besides rubber cultivation, that have varied gendered practices.

Household 7: Clan Lee
Married couple
Married daughter with husband
4 children
Married son with wife
2 children

One morning in August 2009 we get up before five o'clock and take our bikes to the village, as we are about to tap/cut the rubber trees. After a little while we go to the plantation together with the older woman, who shows us the way, only fifteen minutes from the house. Her son-in-law is already there and has been working since three o'clock in the morning. The woman says that sometimes she also makes the cut in the trees, but her husband almost never comes to work at the rice field or at the plantations, as he normally just stays home and sleeps or smokes. At the plantation the woman finds fuelwood lying on the ground that she takes with her, carried home by the son-in-law. She also collects some mushrooms that can be used to cure medical diseases, she says, as well as some fruit growing near the plantation. In the past, she tells us, they used to have mango trees growing there as well. At about eight o'clock we go back to the house, where we are invited to eat breakfast together with the older woman and some of her grandchildren, as the others have already eaten.

At about ten o'clock we go back to the plantation, together with the daughter, her cousin and the daughter-in-law, to collect the rubber liquid. We each receive a bucket and then pour the liquid from the cup into the bucket. Sometimes the younger men in the house collect as well, if they do not have some other work to do. Occasionally the older woman collects, but generally she stays home and takes care of the grandchildren, she says. Usually it takes between one to one and a half hours to collect all the liquid. Today, however, it takes about an hour for five people to finish, including two beginners, resulting in one rubber lump altogether. Before we go home again the women collect some fuelwood. We are back at the house around noon.

Revisiting this house, the oldest woman takes care of her grandchildren, as the daughter and daughter-in-law are out collecting the rubber liquid and, since she has bad eyes, she cannot join them. Even when the daughter is breastfeeding one of her children it is not a problem to be away, as there are many other women who can breastfeed the baby. The married son in the household and his wife had just had a baby in 2009, only a few days old. Therefore the baby's mother has relinquished all household work to her husband, to cook and do the washing. During this time the husband normally does not go into the field for a whole month; instead he helps his wife and

the other household members with different duties until his wife feels stronger, maybe for a month or two.

In this household there is quite a clear division of labour between men and women in relation to rubber cultivation in the tapping season. The married men, except for the older man, get up early to go to the plantation and tap/cut the rubber, while the younger married women go back later to collect the rubber liquid. The older woman, however, carries out the tapping sometimes too. She is also the one who is responsible for the grandchildren while their mothers are away collecting the rubber, together with their husbands. Even though the younger married women have babies that need to be breast-fed, it is not a problem being away for several hours. This, at least to some extent, revises the traditional separation between production and reproduction. The fact that the son stays home with his wife and their newborn baby is an interesting aspect in terms of responsibilities and division of labour. This is also a custom in Hmong society, where the father to a newborn stays at the house for a longer period of time. In 2012, things have changed: the daughter-in-law and the son still tap at the only plantation at tapping stage, the same as in 2009, while the daughter and the son in law are instead working as waged labour. The trend is therefore that in this household the men and women work together more, compared to 2009.

Spending time with this household during an evening in August 2009, the son and the son-in-law feed the ducks, chickens and pigs and the men also take care of the children and cut the fuelwood. The younger women prepare things in the kitchen and later do the laundry. Later, both the son and the son-in-law prepare the meat and take away the food afterwards. The older man is not seen much during the evening, but he takes care of the grandchildren. I collect water with one of the younger women, and at the well I can see only females. It is quite heavy work carrying the water to the house, especially the big buckets. I also cut some banana trees and prepare maize for the pigs.

With reference to these observations, some of the household work is done only by women, like washing and fetching water. Other chores in this house are not particularly gender-divided, such as feeding the animals or cooking the food. The men also regularly look after the small children and carry them around.

In January 2009 we join the household to go to one of their plantations for a whole day to carry out the weeding. The older woman, her five-months-pregnant daughter and her husband come with us. Together with the two women, I walk to the plantation, nearly one and a half hours away from the village. The son-in-law and my interpreter, on the other hand, ride motor-bikes to the plantation and have to wait half an hour before the rest of us get there. The women carry machetes and food in baskets on their backs and I carry the lunch. It is quite tough for the daughter to walk, because of her pregnancy, so we walk quite slowly and wait for her to catch up, but her

mother says she is very strong. On the way to the plantation, just in the valley below, the women stop to collect water from a small stream. Later we all start to clear the quite high bushes between the rubber trees, which is rather difficult since it is steep and because of the height of the bushes. The women show me some edible herbs, which I taste. The mother also collects some vegetables and searches for pineapples. In the afternoon I follow the women further up the hill, while the men stay in the hut and rest. They once again show me some things they use and eat from the forest, and the older woman cuts down a tall bamboo, which they will use for construction material. The women also cut a lot of grass for room construction, which they tell me many women in HatNyao are doing at this time of the year, as we observe later on the way back. Before we go home, the mother cuts down more papaya and then we start walking, while the men ride back on motorbikes.

Here it is demonstrated how both men and women work together with weeding the rubber plantations. The women also carry out several other things while they are at the plantation: collecting different materials from the forest, fruit and vegetables. This could be a reason why the women walk to the plantation. Different spheres of the everyday are therefore integrated with rubber cultivation and cannot be separated, even when it is a typically female sphere. This household also has upland rice fields, where the work is performed by men and women together, with some exceptions. So even in this household the rubber is combined with rice cultivation, where some duties are sex-bound, while others are not, similar to household 1. In 2012 they do not collect forestry resources near the rubber plantation any longer, since it got burnt, and they do not have any rice field. The rubber trees that got burnt in the fire are, however, felled and used for fuelwood.

For the marketing procedure, men and women together carry the rubber lumps down to the track, as can be seen from the photographs. It is, however, the younger men in the household who actually retail the rubber, and the sons go to the market to pick up the money. This sphere of the everyday is to some extent divided by gender, but it is also an age-related matter, as the older woman seems to have high status in the household and makes many decisions on its behalf.

Household 8: Clan Lee
Married couple
Married son with wife
Children
Unmarried sons and daughters

In August 2009, the seventeen-year-old son says he generally gets up at four o'clock in the morning to go and cut/tap the rubber. Then he comes home for breakfast at seven to seven-thirty and takes a shower. Thereafter he takes a rest for about two to three hours. Later he returns to the plantation again, collecting the rubber liquid, and is back at the house at about eleven-thirty, takes another shower and rests until late afternoon. At four-thirty he attends English lessons in town and returns again at eight o'clock. In the evening he plays the guitar and sings and then goes to bed between about nine and ten.

On another day we come with the older son to their plantation, not too far away from the village, we just cross the bridge and then go straight up for a little bit. His younger brother is already there and has been up early to tap/cut the rubber. Most of the time it is the younger brother who goes to the plantation to both tap/cut, as well as to collect the rubber. The older brother says he helps out with the labour when he has time off from his university studies. For two people it takes about an hour to collect all the rubber, and in total they collect enough to produce two lumps per day.

In this household it is therefore only the younger brothers who work on the rubber during the tapping season. But since one of them studies at university and is away most of the year, it is mainly one son who works at the plantation. The older daughters in the house are all married and are therefore no longer members of the household. Now only one younger daughter, her older mother and a daughter-in-law are the women in this house. Two of the older daughters, however, still live in the village and spend a lot of time in their parents' house. These daughters also help out with this household's labour, such as cooking and fetching the water. The women are not involved in the rubber production except for the weeding, and occasionally they also collect the rubber. The division of labour in rubber production is rather a question of age, and they argue that it is those who are younger, between the ages of 14 to 40, who should carry out the labour. Since there are no young daughters living in the house, this might be why the cultivation of rubber is conducted only by young males.

Several auto-photographs were taken of the rubber plantations in 2009, by the son and his nephew, one of them seen in figure 15, which reinforce the perception of it as a typical male sphere in 2009.



Figure 15. Collecting rubber liquid at the plantation. Photo: male household member

In 2012, the cutting is still carried out by the sons in the house, but when they go to school their mother goes to collect the rubber liquid, and the daughter and daughter-in-law also help out. They have one additional plantation, though if they cannot spare so much time for it. The main labour here is carried out by the son and daughter-in-law, as well as by the older couple. In 2012 the older mother seem to be more involved in the rubber, compared to 2009, probably as a consequence of the lack of labour, as several children have moved or need to attend school. The older couple at the same time argue they do not have the same strength any longer, nor time for all the plantations. The married daughter living next door, however, seems to assist her parents, as they lack the labour, which is becoming an even bigger problem as additional plantations reach the tapping stage. The tendency in this household is therefore for men and women to work together more in relation to rubber, because they lack the labour.

Making some observations in this household, the older sisters prepare the lunch. The older teenage son cares for his young nephew and takes him for rides on the motorbike and bicycle. I observe the father feeding the ducks and chickens, while the older sister takes two big buckets of water to the house from the well. The father says he sometimes goes to the forest to hunt for birds, but first he has to walk for up to two hours. I also observe the father sitting outside constructing a cage to catch fish. When the older man was young, he used to carry fuelwood one hour's walk away back to the house.

So besides the rubber there are many other activities in the everyday in this household, practices that are also to some extent gendered. The oldest woman took several pictures when they went to the rice field, together with

her daughter-in-law and younger daughters, while one of the sons went there later to help out with the weeding. The work that needs to be carried out in the rice field is done by men and women together and they help each other with everything. The cultivation of rice does therefore not seem to be as gendered as the rubber cultivation. In 2012, they still had two rice fields left. On the way back from the plantation, the son also took a picture of children collecting fuelwood, all of them girls, being a typical female activity in HatNyao.

This household hires workers to transport the rubber lumps on a tractor to the village centre and it is the son who holds the notebook during the market day. The older father goes to the marketing group and gets the money, while the older couple together keeps the money and decides what to do with it. In 2011, two of the sons carried out the marketing procedure every month. It is rather a question of age as to who is responsible for the money, but it also varies with the different situations in relation to the market. This household seems to have a more difficult situation in 2012 than in 2009 and they also lack labour for rubber cultivation.

Household 9: Clan Tor
Married couple
Married son with wife
Two children
Unmarried sons and daughters
Nephew (2009)

Visiting the household at about nine o'clock in the morning in August 2009, the twenty-year-old nephew⁸⁴ had just got back from cutting/tapping the rubber. He says that on the days he goes to the plantation he needs to get up very early, around a quarter to four in the morning. Sometimes he goes to the plantation alone and occasionally with one of the sons in the house. They cut/tap the rubber trees until six-thirty in the morning, when they return back home. If he carries out the labour alone, he does not tap/cut all the trees, since he has to prepare for school. Afterwards he comes back home, he says, takes a shower and eats breakfast. He works with the rubber during school holidays too, but takes some extra rest. Sometimes he also gets up early to help out with different duties like: cook the food, clean the house or cut the fuelwood. At eight o'clock in the morning he gets ready and then leaves for school, he

⁸⁴ This twenty-year-old man is staying in this household as the father in the house is his uncle and his parents live in another northern province of Laos. The younger man comes to stay in HatNyao since he studies in Luang Namtha and helps out with the labour related to rubber. His uncle is originally from the same village as the young man's father but moved to HatNyao as his wife was born here. In 2012 the nephew was no longer living in the household, since he was studying at another location.

says. Normally he is back again at four o'clock, if he does not play sports or have work to do at the house. After dinner he does his homework or goes to bed.

In this household they cut/tap the trees every second day, while the collection of rubber liquid is carried out every third day, on the same day as they also cut. On those days they stay in the field the whole time and do not return home in between; however, this is only possible during holidays. It is mostly the nephew and the son in the house⁸⁵ who collects the rubber liquid, but every now and then the older woman and her daughter come with them as well. The son in the house used to tap the rubber, but he got too tired during office hours, so now he only helps out every now and then. Younger men are therefore to a larger extent involved with rubber but, if no men carry out the cutting, the women and girls perform this duty. The nephew living in the house does, however, work more than the biological sons. The nephew also works on the tapping procedure on the same days as he attends school, making him tired. The older man only randomly carries out labour in relation to the rubber, since he is busy with other duties.

One morning in August 2009 around eight-thirty, we start walking to the plantation together with the mother her daughters, aged eleven and six, and her nine-year-old son. Arriving at the plantation, we meet one son, two nephews and another male cousin, older than the others. They say they have been at the plantation cutting/tapping since early morning and would probably have finished by now if they had not had to wait for us. We soon start collecting the rubber liquid together, row by row. It takes around four hours for two people to collect all the rubber. The older woman does not carry out any activities at the plantation except for collecting the rubber from time to time; normally she stays in the house, she says, since she has so many children. After finishing the collection of rubber, we take a little bit of rest and then the woman starts to cook lunch, with help from her nine-year-old daughter and myself. We have a meal inside the hut where the older nephew seems to be living.

Revisiting the house in autumn 2009, the son and daughter are out tapping at another plantation, near the airport, according to the other family members. I observe how one of the other daughters is hanging out the laundry and an additional daughter cooks the food. The woman says her husband is away quite a lot, even though he has retired, and busy with other things, so she and her daughters and sons help out with the labour.

Both the daughter and son in the household took several pictures of collecting the rubber liquid. Most of the time it is the nephew who is in these pictures and who carries out the labour. He is also in several pictures when the rubber trees are being cut at six o'clock in the morning. The pictures demon-

⁸⁵ In Hmong society all the biological cousins on the father's side are called 'brothers'.

strate and reinforce the fact that it is mostly younger unmarried men who carry out the tapping in this household. In 2012, the household has handed away all the labour to others within and outside HatNyao village, as they lack labour within the household, which the woman argues is a good thing, as it gives them time to rest. They hire labour for the weeding procedure, while the son and daughter help out with the rubber during weekends. During tapping season they have couples working together as waged labour. The rubber production is therefore not as gendered as it used to be in 2009, as in 2012 men and women tend to work together more.

The older woman has the responsibility for the children, although the children also look after each other. Other household work is mainly the daughters' duty, such as cooking and washing. It seems that the daughters, rather than their mother, are the ones who cook the food. The nephew, however, also helps out with this work sometimes. The division of labour between men and women exists, but the separation of duties also occurs among the men and women in the household. As a result age is also significant in the everyday life for this household.

Every now and then they grow vegetables near the river, such as chilli, tomatoes, onions, some of them being sold at the market. The older woman sometimes also collects bamboo or some vegetables or medicine roots on the way home from the plantation. In one of the pictures, taken by the son, the woman prepares pig food. An additional photo is taken of the daughter while she cooks the dinner. One picture, also taken by the son, is of the sixteen-year-old daughter washing a pot. Household labour such as cooking and bringing out the dishes are consequently associated with women. In 2012 they still have a rice field like they used to have and they will continue to cultivate rice in 2012 and also exchange labour, but will hire labour to weed the rice field. The older woman and her husband will go to the rice field many times during the season and stay in the field, tending the livestock there. In the rice fields men and women therefore work together, and in this household the older couple is more involved.

One picture of the marketing procedure was taken by the son when his male cousin took the rubber lump out from the big bucket. In 2009 the whole family went to the plantation to carry the rubber lumps back home, but in 2012 they had started to hire workers for these duties. They are, however, still transporting some of the rubber lumps from other plantations on their own by car. Sometimes the older woman looks after the notebook for the trade; on other occasions it is her husband who does so, which entails collecting the money in the village and being the holder of the notebook. In relation to the marketing procedure there is therefore no real difference between men and women in this household. The work carried out at the market square is, however, a typical male sphere.

Household 10: Clan Vue
Married couple
Married son with wife
3 children
Son

On a normal day, the older couple tell me, they get up at three or five o'clock in the morning to look after the grandchildren and clean the house. They also feed the chicken and the dog, while the older woman makes the breakfast. Their married son leaves for the plantation at three o'clock in the morning and his wife follows him at seven or eight o'clock, after having prepared the breakfast. The younger couple comes home from the plantation at eleven. The older woman cooks lunch, while her husband minds the children. They all have lunch together at twelve or one o'clock. In the afternoon they take a rest, then the younger couple prepares the tools used at the plantation. In the evening the older man feeds the chicken and the pig again. His wife cooks dinner while he minds the grandchildren. At about nine or ten they go to bed, says the older man.

In this household they carry out the cutting and collecting of rubber trees every day. Some of the auto-photographs were taken of these activities by the two sons, demonstrating the division of labour between men and women. The pictures taken were of pouring the rubber liquid into a plastic bag, the rubber lumps at the plantation and on the market day, as well as carrying the rubber lumps from the plantation. It was mostly the males taking these pictures of other males performing these tasks, including carrying the rubber, indicating that these are males' activities. Furthermore, the discussion about the pictures was held with the older son, as it was he and his younger brother who had taken most of them. The women had not been taking any pictures, even though one of the cameras was handed out to them specifically. Additionally, almost all of the pictures were taken by men, portraying spheres of production, with no pictures of other spheres of the everyday, underlining men's association with rubber. One of these pictures can be seen in figure 16, when pouring the rubber liquid into plastic bags.



Figure 16. Pouring the rubber liquid into plastic bags. Photo: male household member

There is a clear division between different generations in this household, where the older couple has the main responsibility for the household labour, and the men to a greater extent look after the children. The women, on the other hand, seem to be responsible for the cooking, although they help out with other household work too. The younger couple works together at the plantation, but the woman arrives there later than her husband. As the older man says, the household is highly dependent upon the old couple to care for the children. Otherwise the younger woman would stay home to look after them, since the children are rather young. Even so, the younger woman in this household also take care of the children and carries out the cooking. In January 2012 the younger couple were soon to be going to the plantations to carry out the weeding, something they do by themselves within the household. During tapping season they go to the plantation together to tap and collect the rubber liquid, accompanied by the younger brother. This is a different situation to 2009, as the children have grown up and the married couple can go to the plantations together. They will start to tap at their second plantation in 2012, but they will try to manage the labour within the household. In 2014, they start tapping their third plantation and therefore will need waged labour.

Some duties in rice cultivation are carried out together in this household, but men are the ones who construct the barrier around the rice field, as well as carry the rice back to the village, although sometimes this is done together with women. In 2012, they have stopped cultivating rice as they use their

income to buy rice instead. Moreover, they have no rubber nursery as they had in 2009, as it was not profitable. This household also hires workers to help in the weeding at the plantations and with the planting. In 2012, they hired labour to transport the rubber lumps, and the married son keeps the notebook for the marketing procedure. It is the same situation in this household as it was in 2009 regarding retail practices, since they carry the lumps to the market together.

(**Household 12: Her**
Married son with wife
Children)

On a normal day, the woman says, she gets up at five o'clock and makes breakfast, which they all eat at around seven. During the non-tapping season they go to the rice field or the rubber plantation together to clear weeds, and sometimes they bring their children there. From time to time, she points out, they have their lunch in the field, around eleven to eleven-thirty. The afternoon is spent weeding until five o'clock, arriving back home at six-forty-five. Occasionally they also cut some firewood before they go back again, she says. Thereafter they have dinner at half-past eight, 'prepared by me', the woman says. The rest of the evening she and her husband watch a movie and go to bed around nine o'clock.

The woman explains her husband went up at six o'clock this morning and is expected home later, maybe around ten o'clock. On a normal day in the field the husband cuts/taps the trees, while she collects the rubber. Then they come back to the house for breakfast and thereafter return to the plantation. It varies who collects the rubber: sometimes it is her husband, and on other occasions she does it. Sometimes they collect the rubber together; it depends on how busy her husband is. Today one of her daughters did not feel well and therefore she stayed home with the children. Normally the children are, however, cared for by her mother-in-law, who lives next door.

As in most other households, the husband and the wife help each other with the labour associated with the non-tapping season: to clear the weeds at the plantation. However, the labour associated more with production, the tapping procedure, is by and large divided between the couple. The man carries out the tapping/cutting of the trees, while the woman collects the rubber liquid, though sometimes they collect together as well. If the children are ill, it is usually the woman who stays home taking care of them, while the husband is out working at the plantation. Household labour, such as cooking, is the woman's responsibility. Normally the children stay with the man's mother, who lives next door and is a necessary help in this way so that the couple can carry out the labour.

In 2009, they were still working at the rice field. The whole family goes there together and stays for some days, as it is at least a two-hour walk to get there. At the rice field they also grow some vegetables, chilli, cucumber and pumpkin. During early autumn there is no work that needs to be done at the rice field, but they go there anyway to have a look and collect some vegetables, since they have already weeded the field. This household never hires any labour, but sometimes relatives on the husband's side help out with weeding at the plantation and to plant the rice. The couple helps each other to carry the lumps to the marketplace in the centre of the village. The husband then puts the lumps onto the scale and takes care of the notebook. As a result, some activities in marketing are carried out by men and women together, whilst others are the man's responsibility.

Conclusions

Half of the six households in the tapping contract with divided gender practices are affiliated with clan Lee. These households started to tap in 2002 and therefore have received an income for a longer period of time. All of them have quite a strict gender division in rubber production, especially in the tapping season. Household 8 and 9 may not appear to have divided gendered practices in as clear-cut way as the other households mentioned, which shows that the gender contracts should not be regarded as fixed. The divided practices are there, but are also due to the lack of labour, as well as a shortage of women being full-time workers. It also illustrates the way the gender contracts are undergoing transformations in relation to rubber cultivation and according to the household members' actions. During the non-tapping season, however, the men and women of all the households in a tapping contract generally work together at the plantation, clearing weeds. Divided practices in the tapping contract in HatNyao organise people's everyday lives, and it is shown how the contract is created between production and reproduction. The separation between production/reproduction, demonstrated by McDowell, Massey, Schough, Tyrkkö and Forsberg (2006; 1997; 2001; 1999; 1992), becomes central in the tapping contract with divided gender practices. This is because men to a larger extent are associated with production and paid labour, recreating the production/reproduction division. The tapping season is the time of the year when the labour brings money to the house, and among these households this labour is most often carried out by men.

By 2012, however, the situation for these households had changed with the extended number of plantations in tapping and the increasing need for additional labour. This has affected gender relations, in that men and women now tend to work more together than separately, which is particularly the case with those households with waged labour as well as the household members. As Tyrkkö and Stenbacka (1999; 2007) argue, this is about how

gendered practices are related to certain circumstances and how diverse relations change and interact with societal transformations. The borders between production and reproduction have to some extent been erased in 2012, when women are more active in relation to tapping and some of the households can therefore be regarded as shared practices. The increasing labour coming with extended plantations and the fact that additional plantations reach tapping are crucial in this regard. A number of households had also 'lost' labour force, as some of the children were studying at other locations. As a result, women's labour in tapping is increasing. Changing status over the life-course can also be why women with older children in 2012 were working with rubber to a larger extent. If women who had smaller children went to the plantation at night, no one would be home with the children. These households generally had childcare with them in the daytime in 2009, but night-time was more problematic. The fact that the children had grown older by 2012 was hence an additional reason for the transition from divided to shared practices.

For most households in HatNyao, it is only the younger married couple or couples who work at the plantation during tapping season. Thus, there is a division of labour between age and sex, which underlines the importance of having an intersectional approach, where age is significant. Krekula et al. (2005) highlight these issues and the generational aspect, but they also highlight the variations in everyday life, which cause these relations to become situated. This can be related to the statement by Manivong (2007), who declared that the primary labour force is full-time workers. The secondary labour force is instead those working part-time, such as schoolchildren or elders, as also seen among the households within this gender contract. Twigg's (2004) combination of age and the material body is also central, in that it does not relate age only to social and cultural inscriptions, but that the material ageing body actually matters for the gendered everyday life in HatNyao.

The tapping contract with shared gender practices

In the analysis, three households have been positioned under the tapping contract with shared gender practices. These households are characterised by a division of labour between men and women that is less substantial in relation to everyday practices in rubber production. The gendered division is, however, more evident in other segments of the everyday. These households are households 2, 4 and 13, all of which started to tap in 2002 and have thus received an income from rubber for a longer period of time, similarly to the previous households presented.

Household 2: Clan Lor

Married couple

External grandchildren

Married son with wife

Children

Married son with wife

Children

The younger couples normally go to the plantations together to tap/cut at three or two-thirty in the morning. When we arrive at their house in August 2009, a niece living in another house follows us to the plantation. At the plantation I help her to collect the rubber, carrying the bucket for her. Two girls from the household and their cousin will later be going to the rice field ten minutes away and they say we can come with them. They are going there to watch the chickens and feed them, as well as collect bamboo shoots. At the rice field there is a small hut where we have a short rest, as it is very hot and sunny. Later we go into the rice field, where small rubber trees are growing too, and collect some cucumber. In the field/plantation there are also chilli, tomatoes, small papaya trees, pig food and sugarcanes growing. The girls say that their aunt tends these vegetables. One of the girls says she will relax for the rest of the day until the evening, when she will help her parents to clean and cook the food.

In this household, the two younger married couples work together on the tapping/cutting of trees, so the men and women go to the plantations together. The collection of rubber is normally performed by the older children, both boys and girls of varied age. The gendered division in this sense does not exist; it is rather a question of age, where the oldest couple stays at home, the married couples cut/tap the trees and the younger children collect the rubber liquid. The older woman in the household never goes out into the field, because she is too old she says; instead she and her husband take care of their grandchildren. The younger woman took a picture in the field of her two sons and her husband. She also took a picture of a tapped rubber tree and one from the road to the plantation, where they go on the motorbike. It is not a coincidence that the woman took several pictures of the rubber, as she is as involved with rubber as her husband, as can be seen from the pictures taken.

Activities outside the rubber sphere, however, seem to be more divided upon gender. For example, after the collection of rubber liquid had finished, three of the girls went to the rice field further away from the plantation, while the boys went home.

One day during the non-tapping season, in January 2009, we follow one of the families to their plantation. The whole family goes there by motorbike, about one and a half kilometres from the village, following quite a steep

track. The family comprises a woman and her husband and their two children: one girl about nine years old and her younger brother around two years old. Two female relatives of the family also come along, but they walk to the plantation. The family clears high grass at the plantation at least once a year, where they work in a line at the same speed. The daughter also works, but not the small boy; he is just playing around. I try to do some cutting myself, but it is difficult when it is so steep and hard for the back when you have to bend all the time because of the low grass. Today, they say, they will spend all day in the field and have lunch at the plantation. The man says it needs about five or six people to do all the weeding at the plantation, which takes them about eight hours.



Figure 17. Weeding at the plantation. Photo: Sonekhame Phamixay

During the non-tapping season there is no division of labour between men and women as they work together to clear the grass. In figure 17, two nieces, the wife and husband are all working together. This household still plants upland rice while the trees are small, but they also have lowland rice fields. However, if they work in the rice field they have no labour available for the rubber activities. In January 2012, they do not have rice at the plantation except for a small plot, since the rubber trees are more mature now. As a consequence, they also have to buy their rice.



Figure 18. Daughter at the plantation. Photo: female household member

One of the younger married women in the household took some pictures when she and her daughter went to collect vegetables in the garden, seen above. One picture also showed where the family grows cabbage, onion and other root vegetables. Occasionally the women in the household, except for the oldest woman, collect fuelwood, bamboo and other things to eat from the forest. Sometimes they can also find pineapple and bananas, though that is rare. Fuelwood is collected from the ‘normal forest’, but that is quite far away from the village. These everyday activities of gardening and collection of NTFPs are therefore to a higher degree bound to women. Moreover, this kind of labour is passed to younger female daughters, indicated by the pictures taken. The younger married woman also took one picture of her husband performing some kind of household activity inside the house. In this way, men also are associated with certain labour within the house.

(**Household 4: Lee**
Woman
Son and daughter)

The woman says she normally gets up at about five o’clock in the morning to carry out the cooking and cleaning. Then she sometimes goes to the field; if not, she stays home and cooks. In the morning, the teenage daughter says, she steams the rice, cleans and does the dishes. About seven to seven-thirty the

daughter goes to school and at noon she comes home for lunch and leaves again at about one o'clock. At around three to three-thirty she returns home, and then she does more or less the same duties as in the morning. At weekends she sometimes goes to the field and clears weeds; otherwise she stays home and looks after the house or does her homework. During the non-tapping season, the family tells me, they clear weeds from between the rubber trees and clear the paths to the plantations. Throughout the tapping season, they sometimes leave at three to three-thirty for cutting/tapping. Occasionally they stay at the plantations and collect the rubber liquid; other days they just come back home and clean the house. If they go back in between, they return at seven to seven-thirty. The teenage girl and her brother say the whole family helps each other to cut/tap the trees and to collect the rubber liquid, although the daughter admits that her brother works faster than she does.

In this household one of the household members stays in the house while the other two go to the plantation. It is normally the mother and her son who carry out the tapping, while her daughter stays at home and cooks. But the male and female members all help out with the tapping procedure and therefore both men and women are involved in production. But since the son and daughter attend school, the work at the plantation is separated so as to be more intense during weekends and holidays. Household labour such as cooking, cleaning and carrying out the dishes are undertaken by the two females in the household, these duties clearly being a typical woman's sphere in the everyday.

The daughter took a photograph of her 'sister'⁸⁶ collecting lemongrass for the salad. Her 'sister' took another one of the daughter while she cleaned the yard in front of the house and as she washed the dishes. The pictures bear out how women are take more responsibility for the cooking. This is also indicated by the daughter's pictures when she performs other household work, such as to clean the house, tend the garden and carry out the dishes. On the way back from the field, the daughter sometimes collects fuelwood and vegetables from the forest. At one of their plantations there is pineapple growing between the rubber trees, which she also collects. The collection of NTFPs is consequently the daughter's responsibility, as in the other households.

This household has access to a rice field, an hour's walk from the village, where the mother helps her cousin with the labour and gets rice for household consumption. It is not a problem to find the time for both rubber and rice as the crops have slightly different seasons. The marketing activities are done by the household members together and they use their income to buy meat and vegetables. In this household, the retail of rubber is not a typical male domain; as there are only the three household members, they need to help each other.

⁸⁶ Not her biological sister, but in Hmong society the cousins, at least on the father's side, are called 'brothers and sisters'.

Household 13: Clan Hang

Married couple

Unmarried children

Married son with wife

Children

The oldest woman says that when she was newly married she got up in the morning to cook for her husband before he went to work. The children of her husband went to school.⁸⁷ She, on the other hand, went to the rubber plantation to clear weed, returning at ten-thirty to eleven to prepare lunch, after which the children and her husband went back to school/job. She says she then cleaned the house or went back to the plantation, before preparing dinner. In the evening they watched a movie and went to sleep. The everyday life for her in 2009 is to stay at home and take care of the children, while the son and daughter-in-law carry out the work at the plantation. She also cleans the house and produces textiles. From time to time, she says, she goes to weed at the plantation. She also cooks every now and then together with her daughter-in-law, and once in a while she helps out in collecting the rubber liquid. In the past, she also went to cut/tap the rubber, but not these days.

In this household they collect rubber liquid every second day and they leave for the plantation at about eight or nine in the morning and are normally back again between ten-thirty and eleven. Sometimes they tap/cut the trees every second day and sometimes every day, it depends. They get about two lumps per time. One of the daughters says she also sometimes carries out the cutting/tapping. When I accompany this household to the field, at first it is both men and women in the household who collect the rubber. Later on, however, only the women continue doing it, since the men have started to drag the rubber lumps down the hill to the tractor.

There used to be a division of labour between the husband and the wife, as she was the one taking care of the rubber plantations, while her husband had another employment. At the same time she was responsible for putting food on the table. Today, there is rather a division of labour according to age, at least regarding the cultivation of rubber. The oldest woman mostly stays at home, while her children and daughter-in-law carry out the work associated with rubber. The woman's husband still has duties within the village and does not work at the plantations, and the older woman only infrequently works with the rubber. In this household, the tapping procedures are performed mostly by younger men and women together, although they hire workers for the weeding. Both men and women collect the rubber liquid and together go to pick up the rubber lumps at the plantation. This household in 2012 continued to work together within the household as they had in 2009, even though the plantations and the income are divided between the families.

⁸⁷ Her husband had been married before and had children from this earlier marriage.

They will also start tapping at an additional plantation in 2012, where the son with family will carry out the labour, as well as the older unmarried daughter during weekends. In the non-tapping season, the household is relatively free, with time to do all the labour, in contrast to the tapping season, when they are very busy and the children go to school.

On several occasions when I visited the house, women of different ages have been sitting outside doing needlework and producing textiles, shown in the pictures taken by the household. In this way women are associated with other kinds of production, as they receive income from producing cloth, which they sell to relatives in the United States. The oldest woman in the household took a picture of her daughter doing the dishes, a duty she normally does. Women in this household are in charge of the household labour, constructing a division between men and women, as also indicated by the pictures taken.

In 2012, they hired labour to transport the rubber lumps from the plantation to the village, as they no longer have a truck. However, that seems to vary as at another plantation, both men and women, transport the lumps themselves. The younger married son is responsible for the marketing procedure at the market square, whilst the plantations and the income are divided within the household between the two families. They also share one notebook which bears the older man's name, but the numbers are separated between the families. This household hires labour to a larger extent in 2012 compared to 2009, as they are in need of that labour. The actual retail activity is therefore a typical male sphere.

Conclusions

The households with shared gender practices, but in a tapping contract, all started to tap in 2002 and belong to the Lor, Lee and Hang clans. Comparing these households with divided gender practices, the younger married men and women in the households to a large extent work together in relation to rubber and in the tapping season. The couples work jointly as they are in need of labour and have additional plantations in tapping, or, as in one case, the household members are few. Here age is a clearer divider when compared with the previous gender contract. In one household, the collection of rubber liquid is carried out by teenagers, and generally it is older children who are more important in this gender contract, since their labour is needed. Theories of intersectionality are therefore relevant, since both children and the elderly are important for the intra-household relations. As seen in other studies from Brazil (Campbell 1996), Sri Lanka (Thennakoon 2002), Malaysia (Ali and Davies 2003) and India (Strasser 2009), women are key economic players in rubber production, where their labour is vastly relevant, but nevertheless often made invisible.

An interesting connection can additionally be made in relation to women as the flexible sex (Thorsen 1989; Flygare 1999), where women cross the border to the traditional man's sphere, but not the other way around to the same extent. This was also seen in Chamberlain's study (2005), where gender roles were fluid, especially for women. The tendency is therefore that women's labour is increasing with the introduction of rubber and that the escalating need of labour in rubber production is making married couples to work together more. That is also why several of the earlier divided gender practices in 2012 rather should be regarded as a gender contract with shared practices. This has also been pointed out by Walby (1997), where a growing demand for labour coming with economic development is changing gender relations. In this way the concept of *diffraction* (Haraway 1997; Barad 2008) has been applied, as it has helped to create new patterns of difference continuously, especially in relation to gendered transformations and adaptation.

The outside employment contract

There are two households where outside employment affects gendered everyday life, in some ways two quite different households. However, as the man in household 5 and the couple in household 6 all have full-time outside employment, this affects everyday life and practices in relation to rubber production. In other segments of the everyday the two households are dissimilar regarding men's and women's division of labour. One explanation for this is that they belong to different socio-economic groups in the village, although the same clan.

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Household 5: Clan Yar
Married couple
6 children
Nephews and niece
]

The man says he works at an office, but he also goes to the rubber plantation to cut/tap the rubber trees, together with his wife. They tap every day, leaving for the plantation between two-thirty and five-thirty in the morning, and are back at the house again at six o'clock, when the man leaves for work in town. His wife collects the rubber every third day on her own. He takes her there before going to the office and picks her up afterwards, when they both return to the house for lunch. On those days, his wife therefore works at the plantation, at the ricefield and takes care of the children all alone. The labour related to weeding is carried out by the couple together, something that would take one day for twenty people, the husband says. Now when they have started to tap the rubber, they no longer have any time for sport or for pleasure as they used to.

This household taps every second day, carried out by both the husband and the wife, even though the husband has outside employment. The woman has the main responsibility for the collection of rubber liquid and she is therefore part of the whole rubber production. It is very difficult for her to take care of the rubber plantations, because the children are still young and cannot help with the labour, and anyway they have to attend school. The woman is also in charge of many other activities in the house, such as taking care of the children and the rice fields. This household does not have any grandparents who could help out with the children, which makes the cultivation of rubber more challenging. The woman rarely goes to the plantation alone in the non-tapping season⁸⁸, but waits for her husband to go there with her at the weekend, while the oldest daughter takes care of her younger siblings. During the week, when the husband is at the office, she stays at home and takes care of the children and she also has many other things to do. When the children were younger, the married couple carried the children with them into the field. Most of the time the couple helps each other, but occasionally the nephew, living with them in 2009, also helped out. In 2012 they still use the same labour as in 2009 as all the children attend school now, and only occasionally collect the rubber liquid. The woman carries out both the cutting and collecting of rubber liquid, though she collects more than she cuts. Some pictures were taken at the plantation in the tapping season. In one of them, the woman was making a cut in a rubber tree, and the man commented on the picture, saying that men and women work together. In another picture, the woman was collecting the rubber liquid, and her husband remarked that it showed she is capable of doing this labour.

This household has a garden where they grow vegetables for consumption, along with papaya, eggplants, chilli and long beans. Sometimes the woman goes there alone and, if the children do not go to school, she takes them with her. One picture taken shows the woman eating fruit, since they have fruit and vegetables growing on the plantation.

On one late afternoon we follow the household to their rubber plantation. Quite soon after arrival, the mother and her eldest daughter disappear to get some bananas and papaya growing on the plantation. They also have some pineapple there, but it is not ripe enough to eat at the moment.

Visiting the house, the woman in the household prepares the food. They had just come back from collecting fuelwood in the forest. The gardening, collection of NTFPs and cooking are thus female duties, akin to the other households. Because they grow their own vegetables, they do not need to buy all their food, only some things. Furthermore, they get rice from relatives in other villages. In autumn 2009 they no longer had the garden behind

⁸⁸ Just a few months before they started to tap for the first time in 2009.

the house near the river that they had eight months ago, because the woman no longer had the time to cultivate it once they started to tap.

In 2009 the couple together transported the lumps to the village, as seen in the pictures taken, assisted by the family's cousin, who lent them his truck. Occasionally they also slept at the plantation, in the house where they keep the rubber. The woman put the lumps onto the scale, as well as lifting them up onto the trucks. She also took care of the notebook. In 2012, the woman and her husband still carry out the retail of rubber, with assistance from relatives living with them. However, they no longer do the marketing procedures in the village, but sell the rubber directly to the rubber factory in town, much closer to their rubber plantation. Therefore, they no longer need the notebook. They transport the rubber lumps together with another household who has their rubber nearby and pay them for the fuel. The married woman is largely involved with the marketing activities, in contrast to the other women. One explanation is that her husband has outside employment and her labour is therefore needed. She reasons that she is already participating in the labour related to rubber, so she should also take part in the retail of rubber. This woman is therefore flexible in her ability to take part in many spaces of the everyday.

Household 6: Clan Yar
Married couple
Nephew, nieces, brother

In the beginning of 2009, the woman says that there is a lot of work at their plantations and they have to go there every weekend, which makes the work difficult. But it is not always that she has the time to go there, since she is also employed by the government. If they do not have the time to go to the plantations, they hire labour from other villages to do the weeding, she says. Her husband does not go to the plantations since he is studying abroad; instead she goes there with her niece, or other times alone. Normally the weeding is hard work, she says, and afterwards she feels very, very tired and she gets sweaty and warm.

In 2009 most of the work that needed to be carried out was during the non-tapping season, characterised by clearing out weeds and grass from between the rubber trees. They also have to weed the paths between the trees and the tracks to the plantations. Therefore the labour is not as intensive as for those in tapping, but, as the woman has outside employment and her husband is abroad, the amount of labour is difficult to handle. This therefore affects the gendered practices within this household. However, they can afford to hire labour and they also have relatives living with them to help out with the rubber, as well as with household labour. In 2011 this household started to tap

their rubber and those carrying out the tapping were generally the niece and the husband's younger brother living with them. The labour in tapping is therefore shared between the girl and boy. The married couple in 2012 both had outside employment in Luang Namtha town and it was therefore difficult for them to find time for the rubber cultivation, although they also had waged labour for weeding at the plantation.

This household only buys their rice, but they have a small farm with land where the woman hires people to carry out the work, and after harvest they divide the profit into around 50-50. The husband and his younger brother transport the rubber lumps to the village from the plantation. The actual retail is occasionally carried out by the husband, but generally by his younger brother, as they do not hire labour for these duties and the husband needs to work. The woman in the house helps out sometimes as well, but the rubber lumps are a bit too heavy for her to lift. As a result, the marketing activities are a male domain in this household, affected by the outside employment, as well as by representations about what men and women can do, and also by their material bodies.

Conclusions

Both households in this gender contract have *outside employment* which in turn affect gendered everyday life in the households and in relation to rubber. In 2009, none of them had started to tap their rubber, but in 2012 both of the households were tappers. The outside employment is, at least for one household, making the woman more active in rubber cultivation, also in the tapping procedures. She is, on the other hand, also working in other spheres of the everyday, and they have six children with no elderly relatives to help them with the childcare such as many other households can call upon. It is therefore relevant to talk about her flexibility in the everyday in relation to Thorsen's (1989) argument. The lack of labour in every sphere of the everyday consequently makes the situation particularly difficult for the woman, even if they have relatives living with them to assist with the labour related to rubber. This aspect was also indicated by Strasser (2009): in households where the husband had external employment; the situation for the woman was very stressful. The lack of elders can be seen as an inadequate social network, adding a dimension to the gender contract. Kinship and neighbourhood are also crucial elements in relation to the gender contract, according to Forsberg (1998).

The second household, on the other hand, is in a better economic position and can hire workers for the labour associated with rubber, as well as having relatives living with them to help out. The woman in the first household is highly involved in all the steps in the marketing procedure, compared to the woman in the second household. Here both the man and woman have external employment, which as a consequence affects their time available for

rubber cultivation. But they do not yet have any children, so the labour is more manageable in comparison with the first household.

Accordingly, a third gender contract is constructed in relation to outside employment among the households, where the gender contract has been forged in a field of tension between production and reproduction, paid and unpaid labour. The outside employment gender contract is in addition shaped by socio-economic structures, the family situation and also by age, something Hirdman (1988) argues and which is similar to the intersectional approach. Forsberg (1998) also stresses how men and women are integrated with labour market conditions in diverse ways and because of varied economic routes. In the two households it therefore becomes clear how the gender contract interacts with not only rubber cultivation, but with the additional external labour. Furthermore, that the gender contract has different outcomes for the two women in the different households: in the first case a greater extent of labour and in the second case less involvement in rubber, due to external employment.

The non-tapping contract

Three households had a *non-tapping contract* and were all non-tappers in 2009, which were households 14, 3 and 11. However, the majority of the households under the present practices had started to tap by 2012.

(**Household 14: Clan Var**)
(**Married couple**)
(**Children**)
(**2 brothers to the married man**)

The two male teenagers tell me that they get up at four to five in the morning when they are on holiday from school, and feed the pig. Then the whole family has breakfast at six-thirty to seven and goes to the rice field or to the rubber plantation to weed, and they usually have lunch there. Before going home again they cut fuelwood, returning to the house at six in the evening. It varies who will prepare the dinner in the household, but they normally eat at seven and then they go to bed. During schoolterm, the boys say, they get up at four or five o'clock to prepare breakfast. At seven they leave for school, but come back home at eleven forty-five for lunch. At one o'clock they go back to school and return to the house at three-thirty. At home again it is time to clean the house, wash the dishes and cut firewood, according to the teenagers. They also cook dinner, which is usually eaten at seven-thirty to eight. Then, the boys mention, they do homework and read for a while before going to bed between nine and ten.

This household plants rice and rubber together, and so the weeding in between the crops is done at the same time. Here they also plant chilli, vegetables and cucumber. The whole family goes to the plantation together, even the children. They go fishing in nearby rivers, but they do not collect other things. The boys' sister-in-law, the only woman in the house, carries out the same tasks as the others. I did not have the opportunity to meet this household in 2012 but, according to fieldwork in 2009, they have probably started to tap by now, although it is also possible that they have lost some trees in the fire. On passing their house, I noticed they still had the same kind of house as in 2009 and not yet one made of brick as many others did in HatNyao.

The boys in household 14 both carry out labour associated with rubber as well as household work, such as to cook, clean the house, carry out the dishes and cut the fuelwood. They can therefore be associated with rubber production as well as other spheres of the everyday. Their everyday life, however, is separated, as they also go to school from Monday to Friday. The household does not hire any labour, but the married man from time to time works for others in HatNyao or in Luang Namtha town, work which mainly comprises weeding or fertilising.

[

Household 3: Clan Xiong

Married couple

Married son with wife
Children

Married son with wife
Children

]

One of the daughters-in-laws in the household says that in the morning women cook the food and look after the children. Then at about eight o'clock men and women together go out to clear the bushes at the plantations, which is done on a daily basis. Men and women normally get back home again at about five o'clock, according to the daughter-in-law. Some days she does not go out into the field, since she has to be home with the children and cook, but from time to time she takes the baby with her, carrying the baby on her back. On the way back home from field they collect food for the livestock, sometimes food and vegetables for household consumption and fuelwood in the natural forest, which are the women's duties. Her father-in-law did not go into field, because he went to tend to the cow, and his wife looked after the children and the household. She also did some needlework.

Upon revisiting the household, it is only the son at home taking care of his baby. Otherwise it is often the older couple who are home caring for their grandchildren, while the others are clearing weeds at the rubber plantation. The grandchildren normally do not go to the rubber plantations, because they are too young and they do not have any responsibilities in the house. In this

household there is a division of labour between young and old, where generally the younger do more of the work in the field, while the older members cook the food until the younger ones get home from school. The older woman also sometimes looks after the chickens in the rice field.

The labour in relation to rubber is to clear weeds at the plantation, as they have not started to tap the rubber yet. This duty is done by younger men and women in the household. It is usually the women who care for the children and do the cooking in the house. They are also the ones collecting forestry resources. Men also take care of the children and stay home with them, but generally it seems that the older couple does that, while the others work at the rubber plantation. The babies, though, can be carried on the women's backs to the plantation, when the women take part in the labour. The older man seems to be the one responsible for looking after the livestock. Many pictures taken by the household were of their family, while others indicated the gendered activities among the household, for example the older woman doing needlework. Another picture showed the older man and the family's cow on a rubber plantation.

Accompanying the older man in December 2008 to their plantation, we pass a pile of timber, which are old rubber trees that have been cut and will be used as fuelwood. This is occasionally also carried out by this household. For consumption this household sometimes buys meat, but mainly they hunt from the forest: birds, rats and pigs, says the older man. This is carried out by men and women together but takes a whole day, since the 'normal' forest is far away from the village. They do not collect anything else from the forest, especially not bamboo, as the older man gets ill from it and they do not have the money for hospital care.

This household has a rice field near the town, where they grow rice and vegetables, but when it is not the season for rice they have to buy it at the market and they grow only Chinese cabbage in the field. One of the women in the household thinks the activities related to rubber are the same as those to rice, even though it is more difficult to cut the rubber trees. Men and women of this household work together in the rice field.

Household 11: Clan Xiong
Married couple
3 children

The everyday activities are, according to the man in autumn 2009, to work at the plantation and at home, as well as in the village organisation. Normally he gets up at five or six in the morning and eats breakfast at seven o'clock. Sometimes he goes to the plantation to clear weeds or to look after the rubber trees. Other days he just stays home and constructs furniture, which he occasionally retails, and he has made most furniture in the house: the beds, chairs

and tables. They have lunch around twelve or one o'clock and in the afternoon he usually makes furniture until the evening, and at seven they have their dinner. After that they watch a movie and go to bed around nine to ten o'clock.

In 2009 they had not yet started to tap their rubber trees and therefore there was not so much work to be carried out at the plantations. On the other hand, they were putting a lot of labour and effort into the plantation process, as they retail rubber seedlings.

We go with them to this rubber nursery in September 2009 in their mini-bus. They share the vehicle with the man's parents and brother with family, who live together next door. Accompanying us are the married couple, their 14-year-old daughter and the man's younger sister. The labour is carried out by the couple together, while the two girls clear bushes. The labour associated with rubber nurseries demands labour at different times of the year, not only in the autumn, according to the husband.

In 2009 this household therefore had many different activities in their everyday life and in the rubber production, as they used to sell rubber nurseries to other households. This demands both special skills and labour, performed by the wife and husband together, but also with help from relatives. The husband is also busy with work at the 'real' plantation, constructing furniture as well as having missions for the village organisation. Weeding at the plantation is conducted by the man and the woman together.

In 2010, when they started to tap, the married couple in the house did the cutting and collection of rubber together, but they were very busy as they had the rubber nursery at the same time. In the beginning all the labour was carried out by the household members, but in 2011 the husband's sister and her husband were hired for the tapping procedure. The sister and her husband worked together, but also got assistance from the daughter and son in the household. In 2012, now that they no longer have the rubber nursery, they have not yet decided in what way the labour will be carried out. The weeding, if needed, is performed by the household members, but carried out by waged labour when the tapping started in 2010. The husband does not construct furniture any longer as he has no time, the wood material is limited and the construction was making too much noise in the village.

Revisiting their house in 2009, the woman is home, as she has been washing clothes. This household has already weeded their plantation, which the couple did together during the tapping season, while the children stayed at home. Women generally carry their babies on their back when they go to the plantation, until the children are one and a half years old. Every now and then the woman collects pig food at the plantation. This household does not have any rice field, but every now and then their cousin living in Muang Sing gives them rice. They also collect vegetables for household consump-

tion, but they do not collect firewood and they do not have a garden. The man in the household took a picture of his wife cutting the banana tree for the pigs' food, a duty he never does. A similar photo showed the wife carrying a pot to boil the pig food and another when she was starting a fire. This information demonstrated that most of the household labour is the married woman's responsibility. She is also in charge of producing cloth, washing clothes and collecting food for the pigs.

The husband and wife in this household each has many different activities in their everyday, working together on the rubber, but also separately with other duties. Regarding the transport and marketing of rubber lumps, it was carried out by the husband in the house. They transport the rubber lumps together, as the plantation is in an area best accessible by truck. It is, though, the husband's name on the notebook and he is therefore to a larger extent bound to the marketing procedures.

Conclusions

The households in the *non-tapping contract* had not started on the tapping in 2009. The non-tapping practices were shared between men and women, particularly by younger married couples together. In 2012, I met only one of these households, that now had started to tap, having shared practices, since the younger married couple was working together with the rubber cultivation, during both tapping and non-tapping seasons. The waged labour they had hired for the tapping was also a married couple working together. Like the transition that was seen in the first gender contract, where the men and women worked together more on the tapping in 2012, a similar change can be seen here.

Because of the transitions in the gender contract it becomes apparent how gender contracts are shaped and reshaped by members in the household. Furthermore, the ways in which gender relations change and interact with societal transformations, in particular local economic trajectories, can clearly be seen here (Forsberg 1998). It also indicates that there no such thing as a 'normal contract', but several different contracts existing at the same time (Forsberg 2000; Tyrkkö 1999); furthermore, the non-tapping gender contract illustrates how gender contracts are in constant transformation. Age was again a dominating factor in the division of work in the household, where the elders did not take part in the activities related to rubber. The teenagers in household 14 nonetheless worked in most spheres of the everyday, crossing the border between production and reproduction. Children are thus salient in an intersectional analysis.

Parallel spheres in everyday life

Rubber cultivation is only one segment of everyday life in HatNyao, which is why there are also parallel spheres existing side by side together with the four contracts associated with rubber and the tapping procedure. According to Forsberg (2000), the gender contract also organises everyday life and determines the everyday for men and women, including each sphere of the everyday.

Women among all the households are to a larger extent responsible for the collection of crops and NTFPs, gardening, and for plants growing both in the rubber plantations and also on the way to the plantations or close to them. These activities are therefore highly integrated with rubber cultivation. This can also be a reason why women tend to walk to the plantations, because they can collect plants or vegetables on the way there and back. But since the gender contracts in relation to rubber have taken over the everyday, these have pushed away the activities associated with the collection of NTFPs and gardening, as also seen in the households presented. The situation is similar regarding rice cultivation, since several of the households are still growing rice for self-sufficiency, even though this has decreased since the rubber was introduced. Rice cultivation was also an everyday activity that in some aspects was divided by gender, whereas nowadays men and women generally work together, with some exceptions. The elders are also to a larger extent working in the rice field. Cultivation of rice consequently exists side by side with the other everyday activities. The different spheres presented, such as the collection of NTFPs and rice cultivation, show how everyday life was organised in the past, before the rubber was introduced in HatNyao. In that sense these spheres illustrate both continuity and change for gendered everyday in HatNyao village today.

Other tasks of the everyday were more related to and carried out near the house. Caring for the livestock was to some extent divided on the basis of gender, where males to a larger extent were responsible for the cows, often kept in the field. The males were of various ages, both elderly as well as young boys. The care for other livestock did not really have a gender division and was more situated and something that varied between the households. Women's responsibilities for household labour are generally the same for all the households, as it is their task to fetch water and to do the cooking, cleaning and washing. The exception to this was just after a baby had been born, when the father tended to stay near the house for around two months to be in charge of the housework, a tradition in many Hmong villages. In relation to household labour, certain duties are therefore bound to women and others to males, but they are generally the same for all households. Nonetheless, I want to stress that there are always exceptions between the individual households. On the other hand, men and women care for the children together. Childcare was additionally a duty for older couples, both men and

women, in the households while the children's parents were out working at the plantations. In general, men in HatNyao are highly involved in childcare together with women, with assistance from siblings. According to Symonds (2004), infants in the Hmong community are constantly held by both males and females, even if it is women and female siblings who have the main responsibility for the children.

As also was mentioned in chapter 6, men are more apparent at the village centre during the market days than women and are in this sense more strongly associated with the marketing procedures and selling of rubber, although this is not invariably the case. Marketing activities are therefore more bound to men and the sphere of production, among all households, as they are connected to an economic system. Representations of men's and women's labour and their material bodies, soon to be discussed in greater detail, are one explanation. Another reason is the man's traditional role of being the 'face out' on a household level. In this particular space, women are once again more bound to the private sphere and men to the public sphere, to reproduction and production. This can also be related to language skills, since all the men in the village speak Lao, but women to a lesser extent understand Lao and speak only Hmong. This is also indicated by Symonds' (2004) argument that men tend to assist more when harvesting alternative cash crops. Men are also more absent from the village when retailing cash crops at the marketplace than they used to be (Symonds 2004). This indicates that men are to a larger extent associated with the marketing procedures than women, in comparison with women and crops for subsistence only.

Despite the fact that in gendered everyday life there are many segments of the everyday and parallel spheres existing side by side, age, socio-economic belonging and ethnicity influence these relations in the everyday. Intersectionality is substantial here, where there are several differences between the households as well. Children, especially teenagers, are regarded as a second workforce and help out with weeding at the plantations, collecting the rubber liquid and assisting at the market days. Furthermore, daughters would often help with the household labour, while boys played with their siblings or tended the livestock. At the same time the older couple within the households would care for their grandchildren. The everyday lives of men and women in HatNyao are thus bending within and between certain spaces of the everyday and are clearly situated. The gendered everyday life in HatNyao can therefore be regarded as paradoxical spaces (Rose 1993), varying and changing with the situation, but where the relation between men and women is still relevant. Furthermore, the gendered everyday life in HatNyao is, in de Lauretis' words (1989:26), a "tension of contradiction, multiplicity and heteronomy". According to Tyrkkö (1999), transformations in the everyday are not a linear movement, but rather a process of contradictions and intersections of practices. The gendered practices and gender contracts are

also under transition and therefore constantly reshaping, which is why gendered everyday life is *bending* and is situation-bound.

Representations and body-materialism

This section is related to the gender contracts in HatNyao and the parallel spheres in the everyday, but with an emphasis on representations and their implication in gendered everyday life. I will demonstrate the representations of men's and women's labour and why certain labour among the spheres of the everyday is regarded as more important than the others. Furthermore, I will present how these representations of labour are interconnected with a concept often used by the households: 'hard work', a reference to men's and women's material bodies in the gendered division of labour. In the following pages I will therefore discuss the research question as to the ways in which men's and women's bodies influence the division of labour and how the material bodies interplay with representations of femininity and masculinity.

Whose labour counts?

To start with I want to show how men and women in HatNyao regard 'labour' and what is considered as work in their everyday lives. Discussing gendered everyday life with men and women, the labour carried out was at first only mentioned as men's labour. In this sense it was as if women's labour did not even count and that the work carried out by women was not regarded as 'real' labour. Women's labour was made visible at a later stage when talking about these things in more detail. In particular, it was made visible while following the households to the plantations, where men and women most often work at the plantations together. As a result, there was a discrepancy between what was said and done, in interviews and observations. Representations of men's and women's labour are highly relevant in this context and affect gendered everyday life. Labour was furthermore frequently referred to in relation to rubber cultivation practices, not to all segments of the everyday such as household labour, childrearing, rice cultivation or the collection of NTFPs.

One man says that nowadays men and women are equal, as both sexes can be the head of the village and have their meals together. Furthermore, women no longer carry out more work than men, since they do not have the rice fields. Today women just help out.

Talking about women's labour with the men in the group interview, they said that women perform only household work such as cleaning, taking care of the house, childcare and cooking. All the other work is carried out by

men. On the other hand, men help women in the house with the heavier work, if they are not busy. According to the gendered everyday life presented in the previous section of the chapter, this is however not the case and should therefore be treated as representations of men's and women's labour in HatNyao. Generally women work in similar activities in the field as men *and* are at the same time the ones mainly responsible for domestic labour.

That certain labour is more important is significant in this respect, where particular spheres of the everyday are seen as more central. As Schough (2001) argues, it also varies with time and space as to what actually is considered and defined as labour. Generally work is defined as activities involving cash and other wages, while work in relation to the home is generally not related to an economic system and thereby not considered as work (Domosh and Seager 2001). In my view, these facts may explain why it took some time before I got the information about women's everyday lives in the village of HatNyao. It also accounts for the discrepancies between what is said and done, as women and men in HatNyao are not exclusively bound to traditional spheres of the everyday as in production or reproduction. Women are highly involved in economic activities such as rubber cultivation in the same way as men are active in other spheres of the everyday. But women and men are still bound to the traditional divide in their minds and in their representations of what men and women are and should do. This brings us back to how binaries function as ways to categorise and bring order to the world, where the sex/gender divide is apparent and interacts with reproduction/production (Miegel and Schoug 1998b). The power relations within the divisions are of particular importance, causing one of them to disappear and be of less value. The labour that counts is thereby associated with the male sphere in HatNyao and the women's sphere is graded lower, despite the fact that men and women work together.

The representations of men's and women's labour within the households of HatNyao can also be referred to the gender contract at the symbolic level, since they are informal and unconscious negotiations (Forsberg 2010; Hirdman 1990). Furthermore, household members often consider themselves as equal and that gender divisions in the households are conscious choices. This was significant among several households in HatNyao, where there was a difference between what I was told in the conversations and what was actually carried out in the field, where representations of men's and women's duties do not fully correspond with how they are executed.

Representations of men's and women's labour and difference in what they actually are doing are also transferred to children and can be related to Hmong norms and gendered values. According to Dao (1992), children learn to take on responsibility early in life, where, for example a seven-year-old girl looks after her siblings, or a ten-year-old boy works in the fields. Mothers, grandmothers and sisters are responsible for teaching children how to become good Hmong, whereby females socialise the girls until they get mar-

ried, whilst boys are taught these social skills by women until the age of six (Symonds 2004). Thereafter they spend more time with other male relatives, such as fathers, brothers or other young boys. This was commonly observed in HatNyao. Girls would, for example, follow their mothers to collect fuelwood while the boys from an early age tended the larger livestock in the village. Girls help out in the household from the age of four, according to Symonds (2004): sweeping the floors, carrying water or washing the clothes. Boys, on the other hand, often play around in the village with other small boys. The issue of children, and the difference between boys and girls in relation to household labour, is therefore important from an intersectional perspective.

‘Hard work’ and embodiment

Both men and women in the households and in the group interviews mentioned a gendered division of labour existing in terms of ‘hard work’ and ‘a lesser amount of hard work’. This has also been indicated by both Khouangvichit and Moser (2010; 2008) studying gender relations and transitions in Laos. Men were more highly associated with hard work by both men and women, whilst women were linked with a reduced amount of hard work. In this context I will return to body-materialistic theories as I see them fruitful when analysing the intertwined relationship between material bodies and social constructions in the everyday. Divisions of labour in gendered everyday life are connected to what the material body permits and restricts, but they are also situated and varying. In some situations or spaces of the everyday materiality is more important, in others representations are more central, but they are almost always in interaction. One common comment about these issues was the following:

A teenage daughter and her mother both contend that men and women work in the fields, but that men have additional hard work compared to women. The reason for this is that men are physically stronger and women weaker. Furthermore, men are happy to perform the hard work, as it makes them feel like they to a greater extent actually are working.

Men’s and women’s material bodies are, according to these women, significant in how the labour is divided between men and women. The ‘truth’ if men actually are physically stronger than women is not that interesting. The essence is rather that the women make a reference to the material body, which cannot be overlooked in the everyday life in HatNyao. Body-materialistic theories (Lykke 2009; Haraway 1991; Barad 1996) on how material bodies interact with social and cultural sex is therefore of importance.

According to Cooper (1983:178), Hmong women's ability to perform hard work is "made irrelevant by the psychological and cultural constraints that prevent them from taking certain actions that they are clearly physically capable of, such as felling trees with an axe, hunting and sacrificing animals, travelling and climbing on rooftops, which women are not allowed to do because then they would be 'above' men". Women's physical strength is thereby not valued in the same way as men's strength (Symonds 2004). This was also commented upon in HatNyao in reference to the Hmong society, and there is an opinion among Hmong that both men and women should work hard, but men are seen as stronger than women, so they are responsible for the hard work.

As has been demonstrated in chapter 6, there are different stages in the labour associated with rubber, as well as diverse segments of the everyday outside the cultivation of rubber. But in relation to rubber, it first of all has to be planted. In this process the hard work mentioned was to dig a hole in the ground, usually considered man's work, at least for those older than eighteen. In most cases, however, men and women did it together, regardless of it being considered hard work. So not only is gender intra-acting with age; this duty seems to be situated and differ between the households. Nevertheless, representations of the planting are associated with men. Other duties considered as hard work are to tap and make the cut in the rubber tree. The cutting and tapping the rubber tree for liquid is an activity generally carried out by men, in the households studied in 2009, but in certain situations women also tap the rubber.

One woman argues that both men and women can carry out the tapping/cutting of the trees, since it is not regarded as particularly heavy. If the men are not present, women perform the tapping.

According to the quote above, even making the cut in the tree is not regarded as hard work, but nevertheless in 2009 it was generally men who left the house early in the morning among the households with divided gender practices. One explanation given was that women are busy with labour in the house and have to take care of their babies. Therefore they go to the plantation later, even though they are capable of performing these duties. In this sense the material body is not valid to the same extent, but is rather *only* associated with representations of what kind of labour men and women are suited for. The division of labour between men and women is instead bound to the production/reproduction divide, where the woman stays at home, while her husband goes to the productive sphere and to the plantation.

In 2012 there were, however, comments about the fact that women are better at making the cut in the tree, as their hands are smoother than men's. This can be compared with earlier fieldwork where cutting has been referred to as a rather technical process, which is why men to a greater extent have

been carrying out these duties. The reference to the body is apparent, but it is changing from making references to men's capabilities to the female body. The sex/gender binary where women are referred to their bodies and men to their capabilities or their brain is still therefore significant as a dominant discourse. This has also been demonstrated in other contexts, indicated by Ali and Davies, Thanthathep and Gordon (2003; 2004; 2008).

Rubber tappers require considerable manual dexterity in handling a rubber knife. The higher output of rubber produced by women may thus be owing to their superior manual dexterity, which enables them to carry out their task faster than men (Ali and Davies 2003:388).

Carrying the rubber lumps to the village for retail and putting them onto the scale is also regarded as hard work, as well as being a practice more associated with men, even though women also retail rubber in situations when the men are not at home. That said, the actual transportation of rubber lumps from the plantation in 2009 was normally carried out by men and women together.

When I follow one household to their plantation, some of the men start to drag the lumps down to the truck for the market procedure. The men say that they carry the rubber onto the trucks because it is so high up and heavy. They are worried that if women put the lumps onto the trucks or onto the scale, something could happen with their ovaries or uterus. In that case it would be difficult to have children. However, observing the activities at the market day, women drag the lumps to the village, as well as putting the lumps onto the scale. On certain occasions they also lifted the lumps onto the Chinese trucks.

Yet again the references to the material body are demonstrated, and more specifically the woman's body and the fact that this gender is unique in producing children. Nevertheless, some women were actually carrying the rubber lumps, which illustrate the discrepancy between representations of women's bodies and what they actually can do. The men at the plantation also said that if the women were not so busy collecting rubber liquid, they could do the same activities as men. They also argued that dragging the lumps is heavier work than collecting the rubber, which is why they do it.

I tell the men that when I tried to drag the lumps by myself I did not think it was heavier than collecting and carrying the bucket. The men make no comment upon that, but the daughter says she agrees with me.

In general, labour is therefore associated particularly with men, as seen above, and is also regarded as more difficult work and hard work. Whether the labour actually is physically harder is not salient in this context; rather, it is who is representing the hard work, which is usually men in production.

The collection of the rubber liquid is normally carried out by women and was regarded as hard work by the daughter, by myself and also, as aforementioned, by the men in the group interview. Nevertheless, it was generally not considered hard, since it was a labour associated with women. Women's labour was instead regarded as repeated activities in the everyday and a lesser amount of hard work.

One woman said that women work more than men in the village and stressed the fact that women work with many different things in the everyday. Another woman argued that women have long working hours, but characterised with a lower amount of hard work.

What is considered as hard work is also dependent upon gender, where the men seem to look upon themselves as hard workers. Women, on the other hand, do not recognise the same labour as particularly hard work. This reinforces masculine representations that men are stronger than women.

In one household the hard work is to cut firewood, fell the big trees and carry the rubber lumps. The woman in the house helps out with the labour but not with the heavy things. The man says he is worried about his wife and her health since she is pregnant. The woman, on the other hand, says she does the same duties as men and none of it is really heavy. She also performs things that her husband does not; cooking and cleaning the house, but both of them take care of the children.

Transitions of 'hard work'

The men in the group interview mentioned that in the past women actually did have hard work in the everyday, for example fetching the water far away from the village. However, this was not the case any longer, since there are several water pumps in the village. Nevertheless, observing the activities of fetching water, this is still a women's activity and, from my own bodily experience of fetching water, it is still rather heavy. Whilst these statements are overall exceptions, they are actually saying that women also carry out hard work, although more often associated with spheres of the everyday outside rubber production.

Comparing rubber with rice, the labour related to rubber is harder, since it demands three plantings, it is tougher to clear weeds and the tapping takes place at night-time.

Analysing this argument about hard work, the labour related to rubber production is more onerous than cultivating rice. Women's labour therefore used to be harder before the rubber came, whilst men's hard work has increased with rubber production. The pre-understandings about hard work and representations of hard work are in this context essential regarding their

interaction with the actual performance of hard work. The representations of men's and women's physical capabilities are also intimately interrelated with how the work is conducted in the villagers' everyday lives.

Compared to in the past, when cultivating rice, life is very different now. It is only men getting up early in the morning, while the woman waits until he comes home. In rubber cultivation the hard work is performed by men, while women only help out occasionally.

However, the representations of hard work in rice cultivation are the same as in relation to rubber. Felling the big trees and carrying them when clearing the rice field are considered as hard work and performed by men. The men also burn the area, since men are those that can keep the fire burning and at the same time keep it from spreading, although others indicated that the burning was done by men and women together. Weeding at the rice field, however, is performed by men and women together, since it is not considered as particularly hard. In one way, women had more work in the past; on the other hand, men are seen as the hard workers also in rice cultivation. This was also indicated by (Cooper 1986, cited in Symonds 2004), in that men are generally those who fell the big trees to prepare a rice field for planting, because men are considered to be physically stronger than women. Accordingly, men's and women's labour and what is considered as hard work are still the same, independent of the transitions in the everyday and despite the labour involved. The representations of hard work are instead bound to men as much today as in the past. Furthermore, these representations are bound not only to duties that are physically heavy, but rather bound to representations of production and reproduction, public and private spheres of the everyday, and with reference to the physical and material bodies.

Concluding comments

This section has demonstrated how gendered everyday life is connected to representations of men's and women's labour. Traditional labour related to women, like household labour, tends to disappear in the everyday and is not really considered as labour at all. Furthermore, that rubber cultivation is more evident in the everyday and is more associated with men, even though men and women most of the time work together. Gendered division of labour in HatNyao exists and is often referred to as hard work and a male sphere, since men are regarded as physically stronger. In this way hard work is bound to interconnections of gendered representations and the material body. But not only are the material body and body-materialistic theories important in discussing hard work and divisions of labour between men and women; it is also an issue of ethnicity, as well as age. Certain representations about men and women can be referred to the social organisation of Hmong

and their view of women as having lower status than men, also affecting what duties in the everyday are considered appropriate. Furthermore, the representations of men and women are transferred to children at an early age, affecting the division of labour between girls and boys. The theoretical approach of intersectionality is therefore essential in this context, where sex/gender, age and ethnicity are in constant intra-action.

8. Bending beyond

In this concluding discussion I will return to the main themes of the thesis and its contribution to the development of theory and practice in understanding the everyday life in rubber-producing households in Northern Laos. I will therefore outline the topics I found important to discuss further and their implications for further research as well as for the future of rubber in Laos and in the border region of Luang Namtha. The aim of this thesis has been to understand and explain the local gendered everyday lives in the village of HatNyao in Northern Laos and in relation to rubber cultivation, with the following research questions:

- In what way are the ethnic Hmong in HatNyao village, their social organisation and decision-making processes interconnected with gendered everyday life and rubber cultivation?
- How do the relations between and inside the households and their management of rubber production interrelate with gendered everyday life?
- How are men's and women's everyday lives organised in relation to rubber cultivation, intra-household relations and other spheres of the everyday?
- How do men's and women's material bodies interplay with representations of femininity and masculinity?

Looking back, I am pleased that I had this open aim and approach and that I was not too fixed with what I wanted to accomplish or with my theoretical considerations. This viewpoint has opened up many doors along the way and additional research questions that had not been there from the start, a common experience in qualitative and ethnographic research. I have combined a number of theories in understanding gendered everyday life and I have striven for a deductive-inductive approach, or rather *abduction* (Alvesson and Kärreman 2007), throughout the whole thesis, where my intention has been a constant interaction between theory and 'empirics'. Furthermore, Haraway's concept of situated knowledge and that production of science is local and situated has been central, added to the fact that I could not detach myself from gendered everyday life in HatNyao and thus I have reached a partial reality. This particular 'reality', or 'phenomenon' as Barad would call it, has been constructed in a material-constructive way in understanding gen-

dered everyday life. Three conclusions will henceforth be elaborated upon in this chapter: everyday life as paradoxical spaces, gender relations in transition and the 'good' and 'bad' in processes of change.

Everyday life as paradoxical spaces

By starting the analysis in the everyday I have tried to grasp every sphere and each of the activities in HatNyao. My argument is that this thesis has given an understanding of how everyday life is bending for men and women in the village of HatNyao, which has been crucial not only for gender relations. It has brought understandings beyond gender and the importance of understanding the rubber production itself. The rubber cultivation practices cannot be isolated when reaching solutions to poverty reduction in Laos or in using the experiences from HatNyao for other villages aiming to introduce rubber. Rubber cultivation must be understood when analysing the entire everyday life. In the case of HatNyao, this has been rice cultivation, collection of NTFPs, the care of livestock, childcare, as well as household labour. The rubber is therefore still incorporated into present and former dominating spheres of the everyday. This has also been argued by Manivong (2007), as well as by Alton et al. (2005), and is of certain importance when HatNyao village and other rubber cultivation villages in Luang Namtha are predicted to have large labour shortages in the future. To reach an understanding about all the labour carried out in the *entire* everyday life is important in predicting how to distribute the labour within the village.

What is often missing in understanding the everyday is, in particular, the integration of the traditional sphere of reproduction, such as household labour and childrearing; labour which is often carried out by women and is made invisible. I argue that this segment of the everyday should not stand on its own but be incorporated into the other spheres of the everyday and regarded as labour in the same way as rubber or rice cultivation, relevant for the context being studied. These statements are not something new, but still crucial declarations as this labour is still in many cases forgotten. The traditional division of production and reproduction is intimately interconnected and, the starting point for the analysis being in the everyday, the border between production/reproduction must therefore be crossed (Mitchell et al. 2003; Tyrkkö 1999). In addition, the women in HatNyao village should be regarded as key economic players in rubber production as they are highly involved in cultivating rubber, as also seen in several other contexts (Ali and Davies 2003; Campbell and Xapuri 1996; Douangsavanh et al. 2009; Strasser 2009; Thanthathep et al. 2008; Thennakoon 2002). Nevertheless, the work related with rubber is normally considered men's labour. This was significant in HatNyao and demonstrated in chapter 7, where the labour in relation to rubber was ranked higher and seen as 'real' labour. The represen-

tations about men and women and their labour in the everyday were in this context essential, where women were excluded and not counted as labour in rubber cultivation, when in fact they were working at the rubber plantations. Furthermore, the representations of men's and women's labour in the everyday and the manner in which these representations interact with the material bodies add another dimension in forming gendered everyday life in HatNyao. I also argue that the involvement of both men and women in the rubber-cultivating process is, in addition, part of the success story in HatNyao.

In addition, other dimensions are central for gender relations in the everyday: in particular, ethnicity, socio-economic belonging and age are creating an additional bend of gendered everyday life. Intra-household relations are in this way essential where the elderly and children are regarded as a second workforce among the households and intra-acting with gender. Furthermore, the Hmong way of organising affects men's and women's status in life, where the elderly, in particular elderly men, generally have a high status. As a result, it is important to bear the local experience in mind when transferring the experiences to other locations, a point which has been stressed by others (see NAFReC 2009). What I mean is that gendered everyday life in HatNyao cannot directly be transferred to any village in Laos where rubber production has been introduced. Not only do gendered practices vary due to ethnic belonging, individual households and status along the life course, but also with the ways in which the rubber in a particular setting is organised. It is, for example, difficult to compare a rubber smallholding like HatNyao with large-scale rubber concessions.

The concept of paradoxical spaces (Rose 1993) is as a result important in HatNyao village, where neither women nor men can be reduced to one specific space, but instead several different spaces, varying with the situation and the individual households. Paradoxical gendered spaces are in HatNyao significant in relation to the dimensions and activities in the everyday and the gender contracts, the variations with, in particular, ethnicity and age, as well as how the transitions in the everyday construct paradoxical spaces. As Mahtani (2001:301) emphasises, paradoxical spaces are not black or white; they are often both and neither and in a variety of spaces at the same time. Furthermore, paradoxical spaces occur when "several social categories and spaces overlap at once". Likewise, gendered everyday life is therefore bending in HatNyao village, and differs with the situation and with the specific household. Thus gendered everyday life in HatNyao is also where the rubber phenomenon constitutes the way in which gendered spaces tend to bend.

Gender relations in transition

As I argued in the beginning of the thesis when referring to Rigg (2005), a process of transition is very complex and a result of many different factors, often both interlinked and overlapping. These statements are important for the transitions which are taking place in HatNyao and that I have stressed in this thesis. Even though there are diverse processes in interaction in HatNyao, I contend that these have been mainly interrelated with the introduction of rubber since 1994.

Gendered everyday life in HatNyao is affected by the way in which labour is organised in relation to rubber cultivation, constituting four gender contracts: the tapping contract with divided practices, the tapping contract with shared practices, the external labour contract and the non-tapping contract. In 2012, additional households were associated with the tapping contract and shared gender practices, households earlier linked to the non-tapping contract or the tapping contract with divided practices. The explanation for this trend is that additional households are tapping and therefore transforming into the tapping contract. The fact that supplementary households to a larger extent had shared gendered practices in relation to rubber in 2012 was due to the increasing labour and the extended number of rubber plantations reaching into tapping. To manage the labour, both women and men have to help each other with the work at the rubber plantations. Furthermore, this was a trend also seen in the waged labour, where the hired hands were males and females working at the plantations together. These transformations in the gender contracts are, however, only significant for the labour in relation to rubber and in the tapping season. Many households are therefore changing to shared gendered practices in relation to rubber cultivation. But as the labour is steadily increasing among the households and women generally have additional duties in their everyday life, as compared to men, in the future they will carry an ever tougher burden. It could therefore result in a double- or triple-burden for women and a rather stressful situation for them, as also indicated by Strasser and Khouangvichit (2009; 2010). The tendencies of waged labour may, however, have an impact on that change, particularly for women, which could ease the amount of labour in the everyday. The other spheres of the everyday (rice cultivation, collection of NTFPs, childcare, market activities and household labour) seem to be less changeable compared with the rubber cultivation practices. The gender contracts of rubber cultivation dominate everyday life and are therefore to some extent replacing the other parallel spheres of the everyday, particularly those related to rice and the collection of NTFPs.

Women's greater involvement in rubber cultivation is additionally affecting the representations of men's and women's bodies and the intra-action with their material bodies. This is particularly significant for the task of tapping or cutting of the tree. In the past, when men were more associated with

this work, it was seen as rather technical and something that only men could perform. Nowadays, however, when it is women who to a larger extent carry out the cutting, women are considered as better ‘cutters’, since they have smoother hands. This has also been indicated by others (Ali and Davies 2003; Gordon 2004), and that women take more care than men when making the cut in the tree. The representations and the connections to the material body of cutting are therefore changing as women become more involved in this work. The material body is in this sense becoming increasingly significant, separating sex from gender, the body from the mind and women from men. Women are in addition to a higher extent than men related with bodily practices. In any case, the material bodies are there and noteworthy, stressing the need for body-materialistic theories.

Waged labour is increasing in HatNyao, a clear transformation between the rounds of fieldwork in 2008 and 2012. This most often occurs in relation to rubber production only and rarely in relation to other spheres of the everyday. In the beginning it was most common to have waged labour for the weeding procedures, but in 2012 it was more widespread for the tapping as well. Both men and women were working as hired labour and in 2012 couples could work as waged labour together at the plantations, which also was indicated by Strasser (2009) in Southern India. Transporting the rubber lumps to the plantations for the marketing procedure used to be a shared activity between men and women. But since the households are getting busier due to the increasing rubber plantations, by 2012 many households had started to hire labour to transport the rubber lumps. However, these workers were men only, replacing the shared gendered practices and it became a sphere dominated by men. The lack of labour is a progressive problem for the households in HatNyao, since many of them are not yet tapping on their additional plantations. Knowledge of the way in which waged labour is divided between men and women is thus important in predicting and planning for labour shortages.

Eroding structures within Hmong

There are several indicators that gender relations within the ethnic Hmong community are transforming in the village of HatNyao from the introduction of rubber. The patrilineal structure that exists within Hmong to a large extent affects the relations between men and women, being bound to certain representations and actions in everyday life. This is particularly significant in decision-making processes at a village as well as a household level, where women are largely excluded. The inheritance of land is an illustration of the patrilineal structure and its relation to rubber plantations. Traditionally, sons inherit land from their parents and stay in the same households as their parents at marriage. Daughters, on the other hand, move out from the households at marriage and generally do not inherit land, since they change clan-

belonging and are no longer part of the household. But because of the rubber in HatNyao and their success in cultivating it, together with a combination of the numerous different clans in the village, many daughters stay in the village after marriage. As a consequence, there is a trend for daughters to start to inherit land from their parents, where married daughters who have grown up in the village remain bound to their biological parents after marriage. The tendency is also for married women, after first moving out from the village with their husband to another village, to return to HatNyao because of the rubber. Another indicator was that married women's biological relatives from other locations were moving into HatNyao to take over plantations that needed their labour. In this sense the social networks on the woman's side are becoming stronger, because of the rubber. This trend is interconnected with the increasing lack of labour, where the help of relatives is necessary in handling the labour shortages. The fact that boys in the village to a certain larger extent continue to study in other locations may also have an impact on inheritance, in that daughters will have more access to land. In the long run this could strengthen women's status and perhaps make women's voices stronger in the Hmong community, particularly in decision-making processes. Inter-household relations and village organisation are also mirrors of each other, especially regarding decision-making processes between men and women. The transitions within the households could therefore affect inter-household relations as well as the village organisation.

There is in addition an indicator that the extended number of plantations within the households is separating the labour and the income between families living in the same households. The rubber production is hence more of a 'family' affair, similar to opium cultivation (Symonds 2004; Cooper 1980; Badenoch 2006). But because of the fire in 2010, several households lost plantations soon ready to be tapped and therefore this was not yet so common among the fourteen households. This will nonetheless increase when additional plantations reach the tapping phase. In this way the institution of the family might become stronger than the household and challenge the traditional patrilineal clan structures, since the economic unit is within the 'family'. The fact that waged labour is replacing labour exchange can strengthen this transition. In turn, these transformations can affect gender relations where the patrilineal structures to a certain extent may possibly wear down. Gender relations in HatNyao are accordingly undergoing various transformations and additional changes will probably come about, largely due to the increasing labour shortages. These changes therefore add a further symbolic meaning to the word *bending*, where gendered everyday life is bending with the transitions.

‘Good’ and ‘bad’ in processes of change

The development of rubber production in Laos is on its way and something that seems to belong to the future development of the country as a whole. There are, however, several types and variations of rubber cultivation and consequently there are both negative and positive outcomes for those villages where rubber cultivation has been introduced, some are more applicable than others. Again, in this context it is important to consider local variations, since outcomes are otherwise hard to predict. As has already been said, ethnicity is here crucial and a reason why the transforming gender relations must be put into their local context and cannot necessarily be transferred to other villages where rubber cultivation has been introduced. I am aware that HatNyao village is an exceptional example in this setting, where the positive effects are still exclusive in a Lao context. It was also the first smallholder village that started to cultivate rubber on a larger scale and is therefore well-known in the region and throughout Laos. Nevertheless, even in this village the inequalities are increasing, where better-off households have improved their situation, while for others it has been more difficult to adapt to the new everyday life and rubber cultivation. These households have also been more sensitive to market fluctuations and are more dependent on a cash-income, compared to rice, a more stable crop. Furthermore, the socio-economic differences affect the possibilities of having waged labour. Those with additional incomes have the opportunity to send their children to higher education, creating an even wider gap from those households who cannot. At the same time, the villagers’ land for rice and other crops is decreasing, replaced by rubber plantations. In relation to Rigg (2005), a process of transition is therefore not straightforward, not valid for a whole community and brings different consequences for the people undergoing this ‘change’. Most households in HatNyao, however, are better off than they used to be and have improved their living conditions. Thus, there are both good and bad outcomes of introducing rubber in Laos and consequently no black or white cases in this development. Or as Dicken (2004:16) says, whether the ‘goods’ or the ‘bads’ exceed the other depends on whom you ask, and the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ are very much unequally distributed on both a social and geographical level.

Land transformations are a significant indicator not only for HatNyao but for the whole region and the development of rubber in Laos. HatNyao lacks land for rice cultivation, as well as for the increasing interest in expanding rubber plantations. Since the village now has reached its 1,000 hectares of rubber plantations, they have no intention to expand rubber within the village borders. As a consequence, villagers have quite extensively started to lease land outside the village border for rubber plantations, as well as for rice cultivation and rubber nurseries. By 2012, this development had increased and households had also ‘bought’ plantations with already-planted rubber

trees, some of them soon ready to be tapped. Therefore, many in HatNyao have plantations outside the village borders and have constituted contracts with other villages, similar to the contract between companies and local farmers. Since the labour will now be done outside the village, this may also have an impact on gendered everyday life, re-creating the division between the private and the public. There is furthermore a risk that this trend could increase inequalities in the region, where villages such as HatNyao want to expand their plantations, since they have the capabilities to do it. Meanwhile, the external villages are losing their right to their own lands, which is a further negative outcome of company-based rubber plantations (see Shi 2008; Baird 2009).

The cross-border relations will continue to be of importance with imminent transformations and challenges in the region, an important area for further research. This especially concerns present and future labour shortages and the effect on migration flows across the China-Laos border. Luang Namtha is going to face the greatest problem in labour shortage in the country and will probably have to recruit labour from other provinces to avoid hiring from abroad (NAFRI 2011). The characteristics of the border region have been crucial for the development of rubber and for HatNyao village and will continue to be so in the future, especially for rubber smallholdings, an alternative to large-scale plantations. These arrangements do, in addition, have more trustful contracts, as they are often made between relatives or ethnic ties. As the number of villages introducing rubber in Laos is increasing, as well as those reaching the tapping stage, it is essential to understand how rubber cultivation in smallholder communities interacts with gender relations. There is a lack of research about these issues, where this thesis demonstrates their complexity. The cultivation of rubber among smallholders has, in relation to gender relations, no clear winners or losers, since it depends on the context, as well as on the paradoxical spaces in the everyday. This concluding discussion has therefore demonstrated the ongoing processes of transformation in HatNyao village, as well as trends of *bending* in the future and beyond the present situation. Furthermore, what the HatNyao case means for the prospects of rubber development in Laos, as well as for the region where borders are crossed and where particularly China has a significant role, whether it be good or bad, or probably both.

Suav Sau Ntsiab Lus (Summary in Hmong)

Cov khoom ua los ntawm roj hmab phaslas yog ibyam uas ua rau muaj kev hloov pauv loj tshaj plaws nyob rau hauv teb chaws Lostsuas thiab sab Esxias (Asia), xws li paub, muaj txiaj ntsim “kev ntxhuav txav ntawm cov ntoo roj hmab phaslas” uas tau hloov pauv peb tib neeg lub neej coob leej ntau tus mus rau qhov zoo dua qub, tshwj xeeb yog cheeb tsam nyob rau yav hauv sab. Lub zos Haj Nyaus, yog ib lub zos nyob rau sab Qaumteb-Hnubpoob ntawm lub teb chaws Lostsuas thiab ze rau ciam teb Suav, lub zos no tseem yog thawj lub zos nyob hauv teb chaws Lostsuas uas cog cov ntoo roj hmab phaslas ntau tshaj plaws nyob rau xyoo 1994, thiab tom qab pom tau tias lawv tau txais txiaj ntsig zoo thiaj li nthuav txav dav fo mus thoob teb chaws Lostsuas, thiab hauv cheeb tsam. Luam Nabthas, yog lub xeev thiab lub nroog uas muaj lub zos Haj Nyaus thiab muaj ciam teb ruaj nrees fab kev ua lag luam nroog teb chaws Suav, tiam sis ib seem kuj yog los ntawm kev sib raug zoo thiab muaj ntau cuab xeeb neeg, ntau haiv neeg uas muaj kev sib hlub. Keeb kwm dhau los thiab niaj hnub niam no kev mus los sib cuag hla ciam teb yog ib qho tseem ceeb rau cheeb tsam no thiab kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas nyob rau xeev Luam Nabthas lossis kuj ib yam li lub zos Haj Nyaus. Ib txhia tub lag luam me uas muaj kev paub txog fab cog ntoo nroj hmab lawm, lawv kuj muaj kev sib raug zoo nroog cov pej xeeb nov tseem ceeb kawg rau cov zej zog no. Txawm hais tias kev-khais av cog ntoo roj hmabphaslas yuav nthuav txav ua ntu zus tsis kawg nyob rau xeev Luam Nabthas, tiam sis kuj muaj ntau yam teeb meem nroog rau cov tuam txhab uas cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas vim tias feem ntau pheed yog kev pom zoo ntawm tsoom nom tswv ua ntej txog niam txiv pej xeeb, hos cov niam txiv pej xeeb ces yeej yog tias tsis tshua muaj kev xaiv (Shi 2008). Raws li txiaj ntsim los ntawm cov pej xeeb hmoob zos Haj Nyaus lossis cov tuam txhab me nroog rau kev sib ntseeg siab yog qhov tseem ceeb uas yuav muaj kev xaiv rau kev txhim kho kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas nyob rau sab qaum teb Lostsuas. Nyob rau phau ntawv kawm tiav fajlem no yuav muab kev tshab txhais txog txoj kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas uas muaj kev cuam tshuam txog lwm txoj hau kev thiab txog kev ua hauj lwm ntawm cov pojniam thiab txivneej nyob rau txhua hnub. Lub hom phiaj ntawm phau ntawv kawm tiav fajlem no yog xav to taub txog thiab tshab txhais txog kev noj nyob thiab lub meej mom ntawm pojniam txivneej nyob rau niaj hnub niam no hauv lub zos Haj Nyaus uas muaj kev cuam txhuam ntsig txog kev cog

ntoo roj hmab phalas. Lub hom phiaj kuj yog yuav teb kom tau cov lus nruab nug nram qab no:

- Zoo li cas tiag hais txog haiv neeg hmoob nyob lub zos Haj Nyaus, lawv tej kev teev num thiab tej kev txiav txim siab uas muaj kev cuam tshuam txog lub meej mom pojniam txivneej nyob rau txhua hnuab thiab kev cog ntoog roj hmab phaslas?
- Muaj kev cuam tshuam li cas nyob rau ob tog thiab hauv cuab yim neeg uas nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus thiab kev teev neeg leg tej qav num uas cuam tshuam txog lub meej mom pojniam thiab txivneej nyob rau txhua hnuab?
- Zoo li cas xwb hais txog poj niam thiab txiv neej txoj kev sib pab uas ntsig txog kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas, nyob rau kev sib pab hauv tsev thiab sab nrauv txhua hnuab?
- Zoo li cas xwb hais txog poj niam thiab txiv neej lub cev uas muaj feem txog lub dag zog ntawm pojniam ua tus sawv cev thiab kev cai dab qhuas thiab meej mom kev siv dag zog ntawm pojniam thiab txivneej?

Lub ntsiab lus tseem ceeb ntawm phau ntawv kawm tiav fajlev no nws muaj qhov uas yuav tsum tau los tshab txhais txog qhov tseeb lub meej mom niaj hnuab niam no uas muaj nyob rau txoj hauj lwm cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus. Hais txog kev xeeb txawm lub cev ntawm pojniam txivneej koj los qhia tias lub cev tsis muaj peev xwm yuav txais tau qee yam hauj lwm tsuas yog kev cai dab qhuas thiab qee yam qhia tsis tau xwb. Ib qho uas tseem ceeb tshaj mas yog kev cuam tshuam los ntawm lub cev, tej hauj lwm thiab kev teeb tsa hauv sim neej ntawm pojniam thiab txivneej. Nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus hais txog fab no nws kuj yogib qho tseem ceeb heev thaum tham txog kev sib faib dag zog rau pojniam thiab txivneej thiab ntsig txog lub cev thiab dag zog. Kev hla ciam teb uas yog ib yam hauj lwm, kev keev mus los lossis meej mom pojniam txivneej raws li kev tshawb fawb kuj yog ib qho uas yuav tsum tau ua. Li cas los xij, meej mom uas ntsig txog pojniam txivneej kuj tsis tag rau qhov tias lub cev thiab kev cai dab qhuas hauv sim neej xwb. Meej mom nws tseem ntsig txog kab lis kev cai mus rau lwm haiv neeg, hnuab nyoog thiab kev muaj kev pluag uas muaj qhov pom tseeb tias vim li cas thiaj muaj qhov tseem ceeb sib txawv. Thaum muaj kev tshawb fawb txog meej mom pojniam txivneej nyob lub zos Haj Nyaus, kev qhia txog kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas kuj yuav yog ib qho uas tshem tsis tau nyob rau txhua hnuab. Pib los ntawm kev noj nyob txhua hnuab pom tau tias muaj qhov kev phom sij qis los ntawm kev faib txiaj ntsim. Kev muaj cov ntaub ntawv pov thawj uas ntos rau hauv no muaj qhov tseem ceeb yuav los qhia tau lub meej mom ntawm pojniam txivneej nyob rau niaj hnuab niam no ntawm lub zos Haj Nyaus uas qhia tau tag nrho fab kev ua hauj lwm thiab fab tuav tswj lub vaj tsev.

Raws li lub tswv yim txawj ntse ntawm Haraway kuj tau lees paub thiab ntsim txog lub txiaj ntsim hais txog kev paub fab kev txawj ntse (science) thiab tus cwj pwm no.ntxiv no, cov tub tshawb fawb kuj yeej ib txwm tsis tau paub txog nws los ntawm qhov tias tab tom kawm paub txog dab tsi thiab tsuas ntxig nug paub txog qee qhov tseeb xwb. Hais ntsig txog qhov ntsiab lus no nws kuj yog ib qho nyuab rau kuv tus kheej ‘thaum ua hauj lwm nyob rau qhov chaw no thiab nrog rau kuv tej ntaub ntawv thiab tej kev uas yuav ua kom tawg tau paj thiab txi tau txiv los ntawm qhov sau cim tseg thaum tab tom ua hauj lwm nyob thaj chaw no. Siv qhov tswv yim thiab fab kev txawj ntse, nws tseem tshuav ntau yam tseem ceeb uas yuav tau nthuav tawm hauv kev tshawb fawb, tsim kev nthuav qhia dav fo rau fab nrhiav kev hloov pauv tshiab.Kuv txoj kev uas mus nyob ze rau qhov chaw ua hauj lwm tau ua rau cov hauj lwm yooj yim dua qub thiab to taub dav dua qub txog kev hloov pauv thiab txhua yam uas lawv hais tawm los. Qhov kev txawj ntse (ethnographic) uas siv kuj tau ntxig nug tom tog kev, nug qee pab pawg , piav keeb kwm tom tej liaj teb, mus koom saib, yees duab thiab nug qho me ntsis. Txheej txeem kev sau phau ntawv no, kuj ua raws li qhov kev txawj ntse uas muaj qhov nyhav rau ib tog twg coj los lwj thiab tshab txhais rau hauv phau ntawv no.

Peb qhe lus kawg muaj peev xwm yuav tsim kev to taub txog meej mom ntawm pojniam txivneej nyob rau hmoob lub neej nyob lub zos Haj Nyaus: ua lub neej nyob txhua hnuv muaj kev tsis sib haum xeeb, uas ntsig txog meej mom ntawm poj niam thiab txiv neej txoj kev sib hwm thiab hais txog qhov phem qhov zoo uas muaj kev hloov pauv.

Qhov Kev Ntseeg Li Yav Tag Nyob Rau Niaj Hnuv No

Pib los ntawm kev tshab txhais lub neej txhua hnuv kuv tau maj mam to taub txog ib ncig puav vij thiab txhua txoj hauj lwm nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus. Kuv txoj kev kawm paub zaum no qhia tau tias phau ntawv no tau muab kev to taub txog qhov txawv ntawm kev ua neej nyob cov pojniam thiab txivneej uas nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus, uas muaj qhov tseem ceeb ntau yam tsis yog meej mom ntawm poj niam thiab txiv neej xwb. Nws tau coj kev to taub txog meej mom pojniam txivneej thiab to taub txog tes hauj lwm cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas thiab kev suav sau nws tej txiaj ntsim. Kev cog ntoo roj hmab nws yog ib qho uas tseg tsis tau yog tseem tshem tsis tau txoj kev txom nyem tawm hauv teb chaws Lostsuas lossis yuav tau siv kev paub cog ntoo roj hmab los ntawm lub zos Haj Nyaus coj mus nthuav txav rau lwm lub zos.Kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas yuav tsum to taub txog tes hauj hwm txhua hnuv. Kev cog ntoo roj hmab phalas kuj tseem muaj kev sib pab ua ntu zus lub neej dhau los txog niaj hnuv niam no. Txhawm rau to taub txog cov dag zog uas *siv* txhua hnuv nws muaj qhov tseem rau qhov twv tau tiasmuaj kev sib pauv dag zog hauv lub zos. Qhov txawv ntawm cov dag zog uas

ntsig txog kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas nws yog ib qhov tseem ceebuas yuav tsum to taub vim tias tsis muaj dag zog txaus. Yam uas keev tu ncua txog kev to taub nyob rau txhua hnuv, tshwj xeeb yog, kev sib pab raws li kab lis kev cai mus rau txoj kev ua hauj lwm, xws li hauv yim neeg ‘dag zog’ kev tu me nyuam; cov dag zog uas poj niam keev yog tus leg ntau thiab ua rau ntsia tsis pom. Kuv ntseeg tau tias nyob rau feem kev ua hauj lwm txhua hnuv yuav tsis los ntawm ib seem twg nkaus xwb tiam sis nws kuj tseem muaj ntau yam uas muaj feem xyuam ntau yam xws li kev tawm dag zog ua teb ntoo roj hmab lossis ua liaj ua teb cog nplej, lwm yam uas zoo li no los kuj yuav tau kawm paub. Tej kab lis kev cai uas suav sau txiaj ntsig thiab kawm paublub txiaj ntsim yog lub hauv paus thiab qhov pib rau kev soj ntsuam txhua hnuv, tej ciaj ciam txog kev suav sau txiaj ntsim/kawm paub los ntawm lub txiaj ntsim yuav tsum muaj kev sib raug zoo yam muaj kev sib txheeb ze. Raws li yav dhau los, cov niam tsev nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus yog tus yuam sij tseem ceeb rau kev ua teb ntoo roj hmab phaslas xws li lawv yog tus ntaus thawj hlo txog kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas thiab tseem ua ntau txoj hauj lwm lwm yam thiab, tiam sis qhov hais los no mas muab tsom xam los lawm yuav tsum yog hauj lwm txiv neej. Nov muaj qhov tseem ceeb heev nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus, uas muaj qhov ntsig txog kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas uas siv dag zog siab thiab pom tseeb tias siv dag zog “tiag”. Kev sauv cev txog pojniam thiab txiv neej thiab lawv lub dag zog nyob rau phau ntawv no yog ib qho yuav tau sau, qhov twg uas tsis muaj poj niam lossis tsis suav poj niam tias yog dag zog pab rau kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas. Ib qho ntxiv, yuav hais txog qhov kev sawv cev poj niam thiab txiv neej lub dag zog nyob rau txhua hnuv thiab txhua yam uas ua tus sawv cev no kuj ua ib qho chaw ntsia mus rau ib seem kom pom meej txog meej mom pojniam txiv neej txhua hnuv nyob hauv lub zos Haj Nyaus. Kuv kuj ntseeg tau tias kev sib pab ntawm poj niam thiab txiv neej rau kev ua teb ntoo roj hmab phaslas yog, ib qho ntxiv, nws yog ib qho ua tiav log lub luag hauj lwm nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus. Ntsia mus lwm seem los kuj yog ua tau ib lub yeej meej mom sib luag nyob rau txhua hnuv: tshwj xeeb, tsis hais haiv neeg me, kev ua lag luam thiab hnuv nyoog kuj muaj tej thaum ua rau muaj qhov tsis sib luag txog lub meej mom nyob hauv sim neej txhua hnuv. Nyob rau hauv vaj hauv tsev nws kuj muaj qhov ntsig txog kev siv dag zog nawm cov neeg laus thiab me nyuam yaus li uas yog lub zog thib ob hauv tsev. Ib qho ntxiv los kuj yog Hmoob txoj kev cai uas siv pojniam txivneej nyob rau hauv lub neej, muaj kev saib siab los ntawm tus muaj hnuv nyoog dua xws li cov txiv neej laus yuav muaj lub meej mom siab dua. Raws li txiaj ntsim sau tseg, nws yog ib qho tseem ceeb uas yuav tau lees paub tias tsis yooj yim uas yuav coj tej kev paub hauv zej zos no mus nthuav tawm rau lwm qhov, nov yog ibqho uas pom tau tias tsis yooj yim (saib NAFReC 2009). Qhov kuv hais no txhais tau tias meej mom pojniam txivneej nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus no yuav tsis yooj yim kwm coj mus siv rau lwm lub zos nyob rau hauv teb chaws Lostsuas uas lawv cog ntoo roj hmab

Phaslas. Kuj tsis yog tias yuav sau txog hauv neeg no los ntawm hauv neeg tsawg no es thiaj yuav ua li no tiam sis kuj sau los ntawm ntau txoj kev xws li cog ntoo roj hmab nws kuj nce rau kev sib pab hauv yim neeg. Piv txwv tias, nws kuj tsis yooj yim uas yuav muab zub zos Haj Nyaus koj mus piv rau lwm qhov uas lawv kais av cog ntoo ntau ntau.

Lub tswv yim uas tsis haum xeeb (Rose 1993) yuav tshwm sim qhov tseem ceeb rau lub zos Haj Nyaus, thaum uas poj niam lossis txiv neej tsis muaj peev xwm txo lub hwj chim kom los tsuj tau ib tug hneev taw tiam sis nyias kuj muaj nyias zaj nce raws kev noj nyob ntawm yim neej. Kev tsis haum xeeb txog meej mom poj niam txiv neej nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus nws muaj qhov tseem ceeb ntsig txog tej kev leg dej num txhua hnuv txhua hmo, tej kev tuav tswj ntaub ntawv pov thawj, kev koj noj koj ua, hauv neeg thiab hnuv nyoog thiab kev koj noj koj ua txhua hnuv hauv yim neeg uas tseem muaj qhov tsis haum xeeb. Zoo ib yam li hais los lub meej mom poj niam txiv neej uas muaj qhov sib cov nyom nyob rau hauv lub zos Haj Nyaus, thiab kev daws tso qee yam nyob rau hauv cov cuam yim neeg. Yog li meej mom poj niam thiab txiv neej nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus thiaj pom tseeb tiasyog tsis mob siab muab kev saib siab nws yuav yog ib qho uas muaj qhov sib nrug deb zuj zus los ntawm tes dej num ua teb ntoo roj hmab Phaslas.

Kev Hloov Pauv Uas Ntsig Txog Meej Mom Poj niam Txivneej

Ib qho kev uas yuav hloov pauv nws kuj ntxov kawg nkaus thiab muaj ntau qhov kev cuam tshuam, keev muaj kev sib txuas zws thiab sib tshooj daws (Rigg 2005). Nqe lus hais no muaj qhov tseem ceeb rau kev hloov pauv nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus thiab yog qhov kuv tau hais tsi ntsees rau npau ntawv kawm tiav fajlem no. Txawm hais tias yuav muaj ntau txoj kab ke los daws tso thiab hloov kev ntseeg hauv lub zos Haj Nyaus, kuv ntseeg tau hais tias qhov hais los no nws muaj qhov cuam tshuam txog txoj hauj lwm cog ntoo roj hmab los puag thaum xyoo 1994 lawm. Meej mom poj niam txivneej txhua hnuv nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus tau txais kev tsis zoo los ntawm kev faib dej num ua cov hauj lwm ua teb ntoo roj hmab phaslas, plaub txoj cai tswj ntawv pov thawm ntawm poj niam txivneej: cov ntawv pov thawj hlais ntoo uas tawm npe ib leeg, tawv pov thawj hlais ntoo uas tawm npe ob leeg, ntawv pov thawj uas yog neeg sab nrauv thiab cov ntawv pov thawj uas tsis yog hlais ntoo. Nyob rau xyoo 2012, muaj ntau nyim neeg uas ua ntawv pov thawj hlais ntoo tawm ib tug npe tiam sis sib koom ua hauj lwm ua ke, hos feem ntau yav dhau los ces tsis muaj ntawv pov thawj lossis muaj ntawv pov thawj uas yog tawm npe ib leeg xwb. Qhov uas cov ntawv pov thawj zoo li no kuj tshab txhais tau tias cov ua txoj hauj lwm no nws ua ntau ntxiv ces

lawv thiaj yuav hloov los kom muaj ntawv pov thawj. Qhov tseeb lawm mas yog cov cog ntoo roj hmab feem ntau kuj tig los ntsia txog meej mom pojniam txivneej rau kev ua teb ntoo roj hmab xyoo 2012 ntau dua vim muaj dag zog ntau thiab kuj muaj cov teb ntoo ntau lawm ces thiaj li yuav tsum tau muaj ntaub ntawv pov thawj txog kev ua hauj lwm. Txhawm rau leg tau tej dej num, tsis hais pojniam txivneej yuav tsum tau sib pab leg tej dej num nyob rau cov teb ntoo roj hmab phaslas no. Ib qho ntxiv, nov kuj yog ib qho tswm sim uas pom tias thaum tag poj niam txiv neeg mus ua hauj lwm rau cov teb ntoo roj hmab no lawm tiam sis poj niam ho tseem tshuav hauj lwm uas nyob hauv vaj tsev ntau uas yuav tau ua ntau hnuv yog tias yuav muab piv rau txiv neej, yog li tom nej no kuj tseem ntsia pom tias lawv yuav tau ua hauj lwm nyhav ntxiv. Kwv yees tias nws tseem yuav nrhav dua li ob lossis peb npaug qhov niaj hnuv niam no. Hais txog cov dag zog hais los no pom tau tias nws yuav muaj kev hloov pauv, tshwj xeeb mas yog cov poj niam, uas yog lub dag zog hauv paus hauv yim neej txhua hnuv. Lwm koj hauj lwm uas muaj nyob txhua hnuv (ua teb npleg, nrhiav khoom hav zoov hav tsuag (NTFPs), zov me nyuam, hauj lwm kav kiab kav khw, thiab tawm dag zog hauv tsev) ntxim li nws yuav tsis hloov tau yooj yim yog piv rau kev ua teb ntoo roj hmab phaslas. Kev ua ntawv pov thawj kev ntiav dag zog pojniam txiv neej rau cov teb ntoo roj hmab kuj ua rau hloov tau qee yam yog li lwm txoj hauj lwm thiaj tsim nyog yuav tau hloov mu sib txog kev li no thiab tshwj xeeb mas yog kev ua liaj ua teb thiab kev nrhiav khoom hav zoov hav tsuag (NTFPs).

Cov poj niam tau los pab hauj lwm ntau rau kev ua ntoo roj hmab phaslas kuj muaj qhov cuam tshuam txog txiv neej thiab poj niam lub dag zog los yog lub cev. Tshwj xeeb thaj mas yog kev txo lossis hlais ntoo roj hmab. Nyob rau yav dhau los thaum lub sij hawm uas cov txiv neej yog tus ua cov hauj lwm no ntau dua, nws kuj zoo li uas yuav tau siv kev txhawj ntse lossis cov txiv neej thiaj ua tau xwb. Niaj hnuv niam no, thaum muaj teb ntoo ntau tuaj poj niam kuj tau los ua thiab ua rau pom tau tias cov poj niam tseem txawj thiab hlais tau zoo dua cov txiv neej, vim lawv tes muag dua cov txiv neej. Vim li no cov poj niam thiaj muaj kev hloov pauv los ua cov poj niam yog tus tau los ua txoj hauj lwm no ntau zuj zus. Kev teeb tsa ntawm poj niam lub cev los nws muaj kev xeeb txawm los haum dua rau txoj hauj lwm no thiaj ua rau muaj kev ntau zuj zus, tau muaj kev nce mus rau fab zoo los ntawm meej mom poj niam piv rau txiv neej. Poj niam yog ib qho tseem ceeb heev hais txog kev xeeb txawm lub cev pim rau txoj hauj lwm no. Li cas los xij, pom tau tias lub cev nws yog qhov tseem ceeb heev thiab yuav tsum yog lub cev lub dag zog tsim nyog yog qhov zoo tshaj.

Muaj dag zog ntau dua qub nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus, pom meej tias muaj kev hloov pauv nyob rau xyoo 2008 thiab 2012. Feem ntau kev hloov pauv no yog los ntawm kev ua teb ntoo roj hmab phaslas xwb thiab kuj hloov pauv me ntswb me ntsis nyob rau lwm txoj hauj lwm uas muaj nyob rau txhua hnuv. Thaum lub hauv paus mas cov dag zog kuj yog muab noob

thiab tu tiam sis tom qab no li 2012 nws kuj nthuav txav mus ua txoj hauj lwmxws li hlais ntoo nroj hmab ntxiv thiab. Tsis hais pojniam txivneej puav leej mus ua hauj lwm hais ntoo nyob rau thiab xyoo 2012 no ob niam txiv kuj muaj peev xwm mus ua zog hais ntoo ua ke tau lawm. Kev thauj cov roj hmab kuj yog ib qho hauj lwm uas pojniam txivneej sib pab. Tiam sis thaum lawv muaj ntau zuj zus lawm kuj ua rau lawv ua tsis tag, xyoo 2012 muaj ntau yim neeg kuj tau ntiav dag zog los pab lawm thiab. Li cas los xij, cov dag zog uas ntiav kuj yeej tseem yog tiv neej xwb, yuav kom sawv daws tau sib pab nyob rau qhov no los kuj yuav yog txiv neej ua tus pab thiab coj. Kev tu neeg ua dag zog nyob rau lub zo Haj Nyaus yog ib qho teeb meem rau lub zos Haj Nyuas, yog li muaj ntau yim thiaj tsis tau los hlais lawv lwm daim teb tshiab. Kev paub txog txoj kev sib cais dag zog poj niam thiab txiv neej nws yog ib qho tseem ceeb rau qhov tias nws yuav tsis muaj neeg txaus ua cov hauj lwm no mus yav tom ntej.

Haiv neeg Hmoob yog ib pawg neeg uas muaj tus cwj pwm txawv tshwj xeeb, muaj kev to taub txog kev ua ntoo roj hmab phaslas thiab meej mom pojniam txiv neej. Tiam sis muaj qee yam kuj tseem yuav tau sib xyaum thiab kho xws li lub meej mom nyob *sab-hauv tsev*, hnuv nyoog, thiab kev noj haus lossis lwm yam uas yog peb hmoob *hauj lwm*. Nws kuj muaj ntau tus cwj qhia txog peb hmoob kev hloov pauv nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus los ntawm kev ua teb nto roj hmab phaslas. Hmoob tej kev coj noj coj ua uas muaj ib txwm nws kuj raug cuam tsuam los ntawm tej dej num muaj kev ncau ntau caj ces tau lso vim yog tej hauj lwm li hais los no thiab kev leg dej num nyob rau txhua hnuv. Ib qho tshwj xeeb dua nov los kuj yog los ntawm kev tau txiav txim siab hauv vaj hauv tsev, cov poj niam tseem muaj feem xyuam tsawg. Kev tau ua tus tswv av kuj yog ib qho uas tseem yuav tau saib xyuas nyob rau kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas. Raws li hmoob txoj cai, cov tub yog cov yuav los tswj niam txiv li teej tug av thiab nyob hauv tsev tom qab muaj cuab muaj yim los nyob tau ib tse nrog niam thiab txiv. Hos cov ntxhais ces tom qab yuav txiv lawm yuav tau tawm hauv tsev mus ua qhua saum luag yuav tsis tau ua tswv av, tom qab lawv mus ua neej nrog lwm cuab xeem neeg ces lawv yuav tsis muaj feem xyuam hauv cuab yim neeg ntxiv lawm. Tiam sis kuj yog ib qho zoo thiab uas lub zos Haj Nyaus muaj ntau cuab xeem neeg thiab kev ua teb ntoo roj hmab phaslas kuj pab tau feem coob uas rov sib yuav cov neeg hauv zos ces lawv kuj rov tau nyob hauv lub zos. Qhov tseem ceeb, nws yog ib qho uas cov ntxhais uas yug nyob rau lub zos no kuj muaj feem xyuam ntau zuj zus rau kev tau ua tswv av los ntawm lawv niam thiab txiv, lossis tom qab yuav txiv tag lawm los kuj tseem tau nyob nrog nriam thiab txiv. Koj kev no kuj ua rau ib txhia ntxhais uas thaum ub yuav txiv es tsiv mus nyob lwm qhov nrog tus txiv lawm kuj tsiv rov los nyob hauv zos Haj Nyaus vim tias muaj tej kev ua ntoo roj hmab phaslas no. Ib qho los kuj yog tias tus ntxhais cov txheeb ze lossis cov nej tsa ho tshais chaw los nyob ua teb ntoo roj hmab rau hauv zos Haj Nyaus es coj lawv rov tuaj ua dag zog. Li no kuj yog ib qho pom tau tias tog

ntxhais zoo dua, vim kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas. Tej no los kuj yog ib qho uas ua rau tsis muaj neeg txaus ua hauj lwm. Qhov tseeb cov me nyuam tub mas feem ntau kuj yog lawv mus kawm ntawv nyob rau lwm thaj tsam lawm kuj yuav muaj qhov cuam tsuam txog kev ua tswv ntawm teb, yog li cov ntxhais thiaj li tau mus ua teb ntau dua. Nov kuj yog ib qho uas tej zaum ntev mus cov ntxais yuav muaj suab npe thiab khov nyob rau cov Hmoob no, tshwj xeeb mas yog kev-txiav txim siab txog av teb. Kev ua hauj lwm nyob rau hauv tsev nrog rau kam zej zog kuj ua daim iav tsom rau koj rau kuv, tshwj xeeb yog kev tiav txim siab ntawm cov pojniam thiab txivneej. Kev hloov pauv hauv cuab yim neeg kuj muaj qhov hloov mus txog kev ua dej num hauv tsev thiab kev coj noj coj ua hauv zej zog.

Dhau li hais los no kuj tseem muaj qhov hais tias ib yim neeg ua teb ntau ntxiv ces muaj kev sib faib teb thiab nyias muaj nyias nyiaj uas yog sawv daws tseem nyob ua ib tse. Cov txiaj ntsim los ntawm kev cog ntoo roj hmab no nws tau txais txiaj ntsim sib thooj li uas kev cog yaj yeeb (Symonds 2004; Cooper 1980; Badenoch 2006). Tiam sis vim hluav taws kub xyoo 2010, ua rau muaj ntau yim tau kev piam tsuaj txog cov ntoo uas twb yuav zoo hlais thiab cov no muaj tag nrho li ntawm 14 yig. Cov no yuav tau ua ntxiv txog thaum uas cov ntoo zoo hlais. Thaum zoo li no lawm tsev neeg yuav tsum tau siv zog dua qub thiab ua cov tshiab ntxiv. Vim kev khwv tag nrho yeej tseem nce rau ib lub tsev neeg xwb. Kev pauv zog los kuj yog ib qho ua rau sawv daws muaj kev hloov pauv. Rov qab qees, cov kev hloov pauv no muaj peev xwm cuam tshuam ntsig txog meej mom pojniam txivneej kev teeb tsa hauv cuab cim neeg kom nqis zuj zus. Meej mom pojniam txivneej nyob lub zos Haj Nyaus tab tom sam sim muaj kev hloov pauv mus rau ntau fab, tej zaum kuj yuav muaj kev hloov pauv ntau vim tsis muaj dag zog txaus. Tej kev hloov pauv li hais los no thiaj li tsis tau ib qhov kev hloov pauv thiab *lees paub txog*, meej mom pojniam txivneej kev hloov pauv zaum no.

Qhov Zoo thiab Qhov Phem Ntawm Txoj Hloov Pauv

Kev nthuav txav cov roj hmab nyob rau teb chaws Lostsuas nws kuj yog ib txoj kev uas ntxim li yuav muaj kev nthuav txav mus rau fab txhim kho lub neej pem suab thooj teb chaws. Tej hais los no, li cas los xij nws kuj muaj ntau hom ntoo roj hmab uas yuav tsum qhov zoo qhov phem ua ke rau lub zej lub zos uas cog cov ntoo roj hmab, qee hom kuj yuav tau txais txiaj ntsim zoo dua lwm hom. Ib qho ntxiv, nyob rau qhov no mas nws yog ib qho tseem ceeb uas yuav tsum tau ntau nqe txog cheeb tsam av, vim qhov yuav tau txais txiaj ntsim zoo tsis yog ib qho yooj yim uas yuav twv tau. Raws li qhov tau hais los lawm tias, haiv neeg uas nyob ntawm no tseem ceeb heev thiab ib qho uas lawv muaj kev hloov pauv txog meej mom pojniam txivneej yuav tsum tau tuav khaws tseg ua lawv teej tug tsis tag yuav tsiv mus rau lwm lub zos uas muaj kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas. Kuv paub zoo tias lub

zos Haj Nyaus yog ib lub zos piv txwv, uas tau txais txiaj ntsim zoo nyob rau hauv teb chaws. Lub zos no kuj yog lub zos xub thawj pab pawg me uas xub pib cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas los ntev dua thiab muaj koob nrov npe thoob teb chaws nplog. Txawm tias, lub zej zos no kev meej mob tsis sib txig yuav muaj ntau dua qub los, cov cuab vim neeg kuj muaj cov txhim kho zoo zuj zus, thaum no lwm tus tseem muaj kev nyuab dua txog qhov hauj lwm txhua hnuv thiab kev cog ntoo rojhmab phaslas. Cov yim neeg no muaj qhov tsis yooj yim yuav tig rau fab kiab khw thiab feem ntau tsuas ywj noj nyob raws li cov nyiaj-khwv tau, cov ntoo no muab piv rau nplej lawm nws muaj qhov ruaj khov dua. Tom ntej no, kev muaj noj-muaj haus yuav muaj qhov hloov pauv ntau txog qhov muaj dag zog txaus. Cov nyiaj khwv tau los no kuj yog ib qho uas yuav xa tau cov me tub menyuam mus kawm ntawv qib siab tau, tsim tau lub sam xeeb zoo rau tsev neeg. Nyob rau tib lub sij hawm no, lawv cov teb nplej thiab lwm yam kuj muaj tsawg zuj zus, thiab lawv ua ntoo coj los hloov tag lawm. Ntsig txog Rigg (2005), ib qho txheej txheem kev hloov pauv mas nws yuav tsis hloov tau ncaj qha, tsis hloov tau tag nrho tsoom pej xeem thiab muaj qhov sib txawv nyob rau ntawm txoj kev “hloov pauv no”. Ntau yim neeg nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus, muaj qhov hloov pauv hauv lawv cuab yim neeg mus rau qhov zoo zuj zus lawm. Yog li nws thiaj hais tau tias nws muaj fab zoo thiab fab phem nyob rau hauv kev cog ntoo roj hmab phaslas nyob rau teb chaws Lostsuas thiab kuj tsis yog yuav mus rau sab dub lossis dab dawb txog fab kev txhim kho. Lossis rawsli Dicken(2004)hais, txhawm hais tias ‘zoo’ lossis ‘phem’ nce rau ntawm qhov tias koj nug txog leej twg, thiab ‘tus yeej’ thiab ‘tus swb’ nws muaj qhov tsis sib luag nyob rau sim neej thiab toj roob hauv pes.

Kev hloov pauv ntawv cov av nws yog ib tug cwj tseem ceeb tsis yog lub zos Haj Nyaus xwb tiam sis tag cheeb tsam thiab kev nthuav txav cog ntoo roj hlab phaslas nyob hauv teb chaws Lostsuas. Lub zos Haj Nyaus tsis muaj teb txaus cog nplej thiab tsis hais teb uas yuav nthuav txav cog ntoo roj hmab lawm. Tam sim no hauv lub zo no twb muaj txog li 1000 hevtaj uas yog ntoo roj hmab law, lawv tsis muaj qhov uas yuav xav nthuav txav kom ntau mus dhau lawv li ciam dej ciam av lawm. Raws li qhov pom, cov neeg hauv lub zos no kuj pib mus qiv av nyob rau cov zos sib puas ciam ua teb ntoo roj hmab phaslas, thiab cog nplej nrog rau ua yub ntoo roj hmab. Xyoo 2012 qhov kev txhim kho no kuj nthuav txav thiab cov yim neeg kuj tau ‘yuav’ cov yub ntoo coj los cog tiav, ib txhia ces twb yuav zoo hlais. Yog li ntawv kuj muaj coob leej nyob lub zos Haj Nyaus muaj teb ntoo roj hmab nyob rau lwm lub zos sab nrauv uas nyob sib ze, zoo ib yam li uas cov tuam txhab tuaj khais av thiab cov pej xeem. Txij li thaum cov dag zog ib txhia tawm mus ua sab nrauv, li no kuj ua rau muaj qhov cuam tshuam txog meej mom kev ua neej nyob niaj hnuv no, txog kev sib cais ntiag tug thiab thiab zej tsoom. Nov kuj yeej yog ib qho kev uas tom ntej no yuav muaj qhov tsis sib nte nyob rau cheeb tsam no, uas lub zos Haj Nyaus xav nthuav txav lawv cov teb ntoo roj hmab, thaum lawb muaj peev xwm ua tau ntau ntau ntxiv.

Thaum lub sij hawm no cov zej tsoom uas nyob ib ncig ho yuav poob lub sam xeeb tias cov ntoo feem ntau yog cov tuam txhab cov ntoo roj hmab phaslas li lawm xwb.

Saib mus ib ncig dav dhau ntawm lub zos Haj Nyaus lawm, Suav cov tuam txhab cog ntoo roj hmab feem ntau kuj tuaj cog puv xeev Luamnabthas feem ntau cov niam txiv pej xeev yog cov ‘tu-av’. Shi (2008) tiam sis lawv kuj hais tias lawv tsis muaj cai yuav yws Suav txog qhov tsis zoo uas cog ntoo roj hmab nyob sab qaum teb Lostsuas. Nov, nws yog teeb meem los ntawm tsoom nom tswv Lostsuas thiab txog cov dej num kev sib pab. Raws li ib tug sawv cev lub tuam txhab cog ntoo Suav, “Cov neeg qab teb uas tuaj nyob ntawm no los ntev heev lawm, tsim tau ib tug choj, ua tau ib lub tsev kho mob, ib lub tsev kawm...cov pej xeev tseem txom nyem, lawv tseem nyob li ib txwm lawv keev nyob los kaum, nees nkaum, tsib caug xyoo dhau los lawm. Yam peb coj tuaj no thiaj yog kev tsim teb kho chaw tiag” (Shi 2008:72). Yog li kuv thiaj ntseeg tias muaj ntau qhov piv txwv tsis zoo los ntawm cov tuam txhab-loj uas cog ntoo roj hmab uas muaj qhov tsis zoo rau cov niam txiv pej xeev nyob rau hauv ib cheeb tsam, ib qho ntxiv, dab tsi thiaj yog kev tsim kho zoo lossis tsis zoo?

Kev sib raug zoo hla-ciam teb tseem yuav yog ib qho zoo nrog rau kev hloov pauv thiab qee yam yuav tau ceev faj nyob rau hauv cheeb tsam no, ib qho kev tshawb fawb txog seem no tseem yuav tau tshawb mus ntxiv. Qhov tshwj xeeb nyob rau qhov hais los no mas yog ntshai tsam cov dag zog tsis txaus raws li qhov yuav siv rau niaj hnuv niam no thiab yav tom ntej thiab muaj qhov cuam tshuam rau cov neeg muaj kev tsiv los hla ciam teb Suav los rau hauv Lostsuas no. Xeev Luamnabthas ntsib teeb meem rau qhov tsis muaj neeg teg nyob rau hauv teb chaws thiab tej zaum yuav tau ntiav neeg teg los ntawm lwm lub xeev txhawm rau tsis txhob tau ntiav txawv teb chaws tuaj. Qhov uas nyob ze rau ciam teb muaj qhov tseem ceeb rau kev cog ntoo roj hmab hauv lub zos Haj NYaus thiab tseem yuav muaj kev sib cuag ua ntu zus txog kev lag luam pabpawg-me, thiab dhau mus ua kev cog ntoo-loj. Cov hais los no, vim yuav muaj cov ntaub ntawv ua hauj lwm uas txaus ntseeg dua, xws li cov uas lawv kev ua nrog kwv tij thiab cov haiv neeg tsawg no. Raws li kev sawv cog ntoo roj hmab hauv teb chaws Lostsuas muaj qhov nce ntau zuj zus thiab nws kuj txog ncuva tau hlais, nws yog ib qho tseem ceeb kawg nkaus uas yuav tsum to taub txog tias kev cog ntoo roj hmab hauv ib pabpawg-me nws yuav cuam tshuam meej mom pojniam txiv neej. Nws tsis ttau muaj kev tshawb fawb txog sab no li, tsab ntawv kawm tiav fajlem no thiaj li txiav tsim siab los ntos txog nqe no. Kev cog ntoo nyob rau pabpawg-me tau, ntsig txog meej mom pojniam txivneej, tsis pom meej tias leej twg yog tus yeej lossis tus swb, yog li nws kuj nce raws lub sam xeeb, thiab nce raws kev haum xeeb nyob rau txhua niaj hnuv niam no. Nov yuav sau lus txog kev sib tsab ntawv tshawb fawb zaum no tias txhua yam tab tom muaj kev hloov pauv nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus, thiab nrog rau qhov no kuj pom meej tias muaj qhov *xeeb ceem* yuav hloov

pauv nyob rau yav neej pem suab thiab txawv li niaj hnuv niam no. Ib qho ntxiv, hais txog qhov tham los nyob rau lub zos Haj Nyaus txais tau tias tsuas yog tham ntsig txog kev ua teb ntoo roj hmab ua kev txhim kho teb chaws Lostsuas, yog tias yuav tham txog cheeb tsam thiab tshwj xeeb teb chaws Suav muaj tus cwj pwm siab heev, tej zaum kuj zoo tej zaum kuj phem, lossis tej zaum mas kuj muaj tag nrho ob seem.

ສັງລວມ

ການຜະລິດຢາງ ເປັນໜຶ່ງໃນຈຳນວນການປ່ຽນແປງທີ່ໃຫຍ່ທີ່ສຸດໃນລາວ ແລະ ຫຼາຍຄັ້ງເວັ້ນອອກສ່ວງໃຕ້ ເປັນຜົນໃຫ້ມີການ “ຜະລິດຢາງທີ່ໂດ່ງດັງ” ແລະ

ເຮັດໃຫ້ຊີວິດການເປັນຢູ່ຂອງປະຊາຊົນຫຼາຍຄົນມີການປ່ຽນແປງໂດຍສະເພາະໃນເຂດຊົນນະບົດ. ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ຕັ້ງຢູ່ທີ່ທິດຕາເວັນອອກສ່ວງເໜືອຂອງລາວ ໃກ້ກັບຊາຍແດນຈີນ,

ເປັນບ້ານທີ່ອຸດົມສົດໃນເຂດນັ້ນທີ່ເລີ່ມຕົ້ນປູກຢາງພາລາຂະໜາດໃຫຍ່ໃນປີ 1994 ແລະ ຜົນສຳເລັດຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າໄດ້ມີຊື່ສຽງຂະຫຍາຍໄປທີ່ວິທະຍາສາພະນັກງານ ແລະ ທີ່ວຽກເຮັດງານ ເມືອງ ແລະ ແຂວງຫຼວງນ້ຳທາ ບ່ອນທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວຕັ້ງຢູ່ໃກ້ກັບຊາຍແດນ ມີການພົວພັນດ້ານເສດຖະກິດທີ່ເຂັ້ມແຂງກັບຈີນ

ແຕ່ວ່າເປັນເຂດທີ່ມີຫຼາຍຊົນເຜົ່າ. ອີງໃສ່ມູນຊື່ອຸປະກອນສາດການພົວພັນໃນທີ່ຜ່ານມາ ແລະ ໃນປະຈຸບັນການພົວພັນໃນເຂດຊາຍແດນກາຍເປັນສິ່ງສຳຄັນໃນເຂດນີ້ ພ້ອມກັບການເກັບກຳວິຊາຢາງພາລາ ທີ່ແຂວງຫຼວງນ້ຳທາ ກໍຄືບ້ານຫາດຍາວ. ຍ້ອນມີການພົວພັນຂອງຜູ້ປູກຢາງພາລາຂະໜາດ ນັ້ນສາມາດພົວພັນກັບຊົນເຜົ່າໃນການໄປມາຫາສູ່ກັນຕາມເຂດຊາຍແດນ ທີ່ມີປະສົບການໃນການເກັບກຳຢາງພາລາເປັນສິ່ງຈຳເປັນທີ່ສຸດສຳລັບໝູ່ບ້ານເຫຼົ່ານັ້ນ. ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າ

ການສຳປະທານການປູກຢາງພາລາຈະມີຂອບເຂດຈຳກັດໃນແຂວງຫຼວງນ້ຳທາ, ໄດ້ມີຫຼາຍບັນຫາ ໂດຍສະເພາະບໍລິສັດທີ່ຕັ້ງໜ້າລົງທຶນໃນການປູກຢາງ ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າຈະມີການເຊັນສັນຍາຢ່າງຖືກຕ້ອງ

ທີ່ຊາວບ້ານມີທາງເລືອກໜ້ອຍທີ່ສຸດ (Shi 2008). ຍ້ອນເຫດນັ້ນ ສຳລັບຜູ້ທີ່ມີທຶນໜ້ອຍທີ່ຢູ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ຫຼື ມີການຮ່ວມ ມືໜ້ອຍກັບການພົວພັນດ້ວຍຄວາມຈິງໃຈທີ່ສຳຄັນສຳລັບການພັດທະນາການ ປູກຢາງໃນພາກເໜືອຂອງລາວ. ທິດສະດີນີ້ໄດ້ເປັນການປະກອບສ່ວນໃນວິທີ ທາງທີ່ການເກັບກຳຢາງພາລາເຜີ້ມຂຶ້ນດ້ວຍຫຼາຍມິຕິ ແລະ ຫຼາຍວິທີ ທາງໃນແຕ່ລະມື້ໃນການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງຍິງ ແລະ ຊາຍ ໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ. ຈຸດປະສົງຂອງທິດສະດີນີ້ແມ່ນເຂົ້າໃຈ ແລະ ອະທິບາຍເຖິງຊີວິດປະຈຳ

ວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ພາກເໜືອຂອງລາວ ທີ່ພົວພັນເຖິງການເກັບ
ກູ້ຢາງພາລາ. ຈຸດປະສົງໄດ້ໃຫ້ຄຳຕອບຕໍ່ຄຳຖາມດັ່ງຕໍ່ໄປນີ້:

- ວິທີທາງໃດ ທີ່ຊາວມື້ງໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ, ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທາງສັງຄົມຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ ແລະ ຂະບວນການໃນການຕັດສິນໃຈພາຍໃນກັບຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດ ຍິງ-ຊາຍ ແລະ ການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ?
- ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງຄົວເຮືອນ ແລະ ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງແຮງງານພາຍໃນທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງກັບຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວເປັນຄືແນວໃດ?
- ໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ເພດຍິງມີການພົວພັນກັນຄືແນວໃດໃນການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ, ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງຄົວເຮືອນ ແລະ ບັນຍາກາດອື່ນໆໃນແຕ່ລະວັນ?
- ມີປະຕິກິລິຍາແນວໃດທາງດ້ານຮ່າງກາຍລະຫວ່າງຍິງ ແລະ ຊາຍ ໃນການທີ່ເປັນຕົວແທນໃຫ້ເພດ ຍິງ ແລະ ເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ການແບ່ງແຍກດ້ານແຮງງານລະຫວ່າງເພດ?

ຕາມໂຄງຮ່າງທົດສະດີແລ້ວ ມີຄວາມຈຳເປັນທີ່ຈະຕ້ອງອະທິບາຍໃນການປະຕິບັດລະຫວ່າງເພດຂອງທ່ານ ອ່ຽງການປູກຢາງພາລາ ທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ. ໃນດ້ານທົດສະດີ ວັດຖຸໄດ້ມີການນຳໃຊ້ເພື່ອສະແດງອອກວ່າຮ່າງກາຍບໍ່ສາມາດເຫັນໄດ້ ສະເພາະການສ້າງສັນທາງສັງຄົມ ແລະ ສິນທະນາ. ສິ່ງສຳຄັນທີ່ສຸດກໍຄືການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງຮ່າງກາຍ, ວັດຖຸ ແລະ ການສ້າງສັນສັງຄົມຂອງເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ເພດຍິງ. ຢູ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ລັກສະນະເຫຼົ່ານີ້ແມ່ນເດັ່ນຂຶ້ນ ເມື່ອເວລາປືກສາຫາລືກ່ຽວກັບການແບ່ງແຍກແຮງງານລະຫວ່າງ ເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ເພດຍິງ ທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງເຖິງຄວາມສາມາດຂອງຮ່າງກາຍ. ເມື່ອເວົ້າເຖິງຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງລະຫວ່າງວັດຖຸ, ປະສົບການສ່ວນປູກຄົນ ຫຼື ການເປັນຕົວແທນໃຫ້ແກ່ເພດໃນການວິໄຈໃນກໍລະນີນີ້ຖືວ່າມີຄວາມຈຳເປັນ. ເຖິງ ຢ່າງໃດກໍຕາມ, ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດ

ບໍ່ແມ່ນກໍ່ ບົວກັບການພົວພັນພາຍໃນລະຫວ່າງສ່ວນກາຍ ແລະ ການສ້າງສັງຄົມ.

ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດຍັງເປັນການສ້າງການພົວພັນໃຫ້ແກ່ ຂະແໜງການອື່ນໆ ຂອງສັງຄົມເຊັ່ນ: ຊົນຊາດຊົນເຜົ່າ, ອາຍຸ, ແລະ ຖານະທາງເສດຖະກິດ ແລະ ສັງຄົມ ຊຶ່ງມາພົບກັນໃນຫຼາຍຈຸດທີ່ສຳຄັນ. ເມື່ອວິໄຈຊີວິດການເປັນຢູ່ ປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດ ທີ່ບໍ່ທາດຍາວ ເພາະສະນັ້ນ

ການນຳປະຕິບັດການປຸກຢາງພາລາຈື່ງບໍ່ສາມາດແຍກອອກໄດ້ ຈາກພາກສ່ວນອື່ນໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ. ເລີ່ມຈາກການຫຼຸດຜ່ອນລະດັບຄວາມສ່ຽງປະຈຳວັນຂອງ ການແບ່ງແຍກຂອງການຜະລິດ ຫຼື ຜະລິດຄືນ. ການຜູກພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດຕາມ ເນື້ອໃນນີ້ ແມ່ນເປັນປະໂຫຍດສຳລັບການພິສູດຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດ ທີ່ບໍ່ທາດຍາວ ໃນສອງດ້ານຄື: ດ້ານວຽກງານ ແລະ ດ້ານການຈັດຕັ້ງຂອງ ຄອບຄົວ.

ໃນຈຸດທີ່ສະດີກໍ່ ບົວກັບການກຳເນີດຂອງທຳມະຊາດຂອງທ່າອ່ຽງການຈາກໄປ ກໍ່ ບົວກັບແນວຄວາມຄິດຂອງ Haraway ຂອງຄວາມຮູ້ ແລະ ການຜະລິດວິທະຍາສາດ ໃນທ້ອງຖິ່ນ ແລະ ການດຳລົງຢູ່. ນອກຈາກນັ້ນ ການຄົ້ນຄວ້າຍັງບໍ່ສາມາດ ເກັບກຳໄດ້ ວ່າ ໄດ້ຮັບຮູ້ ຫຍັງຈາກສິ່ງທີ່ໄດ້ຄົ້ນຄວ້າ ເພາະສະນັ້ນ ຈື່ງຮູ້ໄດ້ສ່ວນໜຶ່ງຂອງຄວາມເປັນຈິງເທົ່ານັ້ນ. ສິ່ງທີ່ກໍ່ ບົວຂ້ອງ ກັບການມີຄຳເຫັນໃນແຈ້ງການນີ້ ມັນເປັນການຫຍຸ້ງຍາກທີ່ສະຫຼັບສະຫຼາຍ ຈຸດຢືນຂອງຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ “ໃນດ້ານນີ້” ແລະ ຜູ້ບອກ ແລະ ວິທີການຂອງຄວາມ ຮູ້ ໂດຍການຂຶ້ນບົດບັນທຶກທີ່ສະໜາມ. ໂດຍການນຳໃຊ້ວິຊາເລື່ອງຊົນ ເຜົ່າ ແລະ ວິທີການ, ເຖິງຢ່າງໃດກໍ່ຕາມ ມັນມີຄວາມສຳຄັນທີ່ຈະຕ້ອງ ເປີດກວ້າງຂະບວນການຄົ້ນຄວ້າທີ່ສະໜາມວຽກໂຕຈິງໃນວິທີທີ່ງ່າຍດາຍ ແລະ ເປີດກວ້າງຄວາມເຂົ້າໃຈຂອງການປ່ຽນແປງ ກໍ່ຄື ການພິຈາລະນາບັນຫາໃນ ເມື່ອມີບັນຫາເກີດຂຶ້ນ. ທິດສະດີຂອງຊົນຊາດຊົນເຜົ່າໃນການນຳໃຊ້ ເຂົ້າໃນການສຳພາດດ້ວຍຫຼາຍວິທີການເຊັ່ນ: ການສຳພາດເປັນກຸ່ມ, ການ ສົນທະນາເລື່ອງຕ່າງໆໃນສະໜາມ, ການເຂົ້າຮ່ວມສັງເກດການ, ການຖ່າຍຮູບ ແລະ ການຖາມຄຳຖາມເລັກໆນ້ອຍໆ. ຂະບວນການຂຶ້ນເປັນຫຼາຍວິທີການ ແຕ່ລະ ວັກຂອງການຂຶ້ນໄດ້ຢູ່ເນື້ອທີ່ນັ້ນໜັກໃນທິດສະດີນີ້. ສະຫຼຸບແລ້ວ ມີສາມບັດ

ໄຈເລີ້າໃຈລະອົດຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວຄື: ຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ ແນວຄິດດັ່ງເດີມ, ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດໃນໄລຍະຂ້າມຜ່ານ ແລະ ສິ່ງທີ່ດີ ແລະ ສິ່ງທີ່ບໍ່ດີໃນຂະບວນການປ່ຽນແປງ.

ຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນໃນແນວຄິດດັ່ງເດີມ

ໃນການເລີ່ມວິໄຈແຕ່ລະມື້ ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ພະຍາຍາມຈັບທຸກໂອກາດແຕ່ລະການເຄື່ອນໄຫວໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ. ສິ່ງທີ່ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ແຍ້ງກໍຄື ທິດສະດີທີ່ໄດ້ໃຫ້ຄວາມເຂົ້າໃຈວ່າ ຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນແຕ່ລະວັນສຳລັບຜູ້ຊາຍ ແລະ ຜູ້ຍິງໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ໄດ້ໄປມຸ່ງເຂົ້າຫາກັນ, ຊຶ່ງມັນເປັນການຮຸນແຮງ ບໍ່ພົງສະເພາະການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດເທົ່ານັ້ນ. ຍ້ອນໄດ້ນຳຄວາມເຂົ້າໃຈເລີກກວ່າຄຳວ່າ ລະຫວ່າງເພດ ແລະ ຄວາມເຂົ້າໃຈສຳຄັນທັງສອງຢ່າງຄື: ທ່າອ່ຽງການປູກຢາງພາລາ ແລະ ການຜະລິດໃນຕົວມັນເອງ. ການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ ບໍ່ສາມາດແຍກອອກຈາກການລຶບລ້າງຄວາມທຸກຍາກຢູ່ໃນລາວໄດ້ຫຼື ນຳໃຊ້ບົດຮຽນປະສົບການຈາກບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ເພື່ອຂະຫຍາຍຕໍ່ໄປຍັງບ້ານອື່ນໃນການປູກຢາງພາລາ. ການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ ຈະຕ້ອງເຂົ້າໃຈເມື່ອວິໄຈທັງໝົດຂອງຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ. ກ່ອນອື່ນໝົດ ການປູກຢາງຈະຕ້ອງເຂົ້າກັນໄດ້ໃນບັດຈຸບັນ ແລະ ບັນຍາກາດຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນໃນເມື່ອກ່ອນ. ເພື່ອເຂົ້າເຖິງຄວາມເຂົ້າໃຈແຮງງານທັງໝົດ ທີ່ປະຕິບັດໜ້າທີ່ໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນທັງໝົດແມ່ນມີຄວາມສຳຄັນທີ່ຈະຕ້ອງຄາດຄະເນວ່າ ຈະກະຈາຍແຮງງານພາຍໃນບ້ານແນວໃດ. ຄວາມຄິດທີ່ແຕກຕ່າງຂອງແຮງງານ ກໍ່ດ້ວຍກັບການພົວພັນການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາເປັນຄວາມເຂົ້າໃຈທີ່ຮຸນແຮງ ບ່ອນທີ່ວ່າ ການຂາດແຮງງານໃນອະນາຄົດ. ສິ່ງທີ່ຂາດໄປໃນຄວາມເຂົ້າໃຈຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ ໂດຍສະເພາະກໍ່ດ້ວຍກັບການຍົກສູງບັນຍາກາດພື້ນບ້ານຂອງການຜະລິດຄືນໃໝ່ ຕົວຢ່າງເຊັ່ນ “ກຳມະກອນ” ຄົວເຮືອນ ແລະ ແຮງງານເດັກສ່ວນຫຼາຍເປັນເດັກຍິງ ແລະ ເປັນສິ່ງທີ່ເປັນຂ້າມ. ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ແຍ້ງວ່າ ສ່ວນນີ້ຂອງຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນບໍ່ຄວນຈະຢູ່ໂດດດ່ຽວ ຄວາມຮ່ວມມືກັບພາກສ່ວນອື່ນໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ ແລະ ໃຫ້ຖືວ່າເປັນແຮງງານຂອງການປູກຢາງພາລາ ຫຼື ການເກັບກູ້ເຂົ້າຕາມເນື້ອໃນທີ່ໄດ້ສຶກສາ. ການຜະລິດແບບພື້ນບ້ານ ແລະ ການຜະລິດຄືນເປັນການເສື່ອມຕໍ່ພາຍໃນ ແລະ ຈຸດເລີ່ມຕົ້ນສຳລັບການວິໄຈໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ, ລະຫວ່າງການຜະລິດ ແລະ ຜະລິດຄືນ

ໃໝ່ ຈະຕ້ອງມີການແນະນຳ. ອົງປະການໜຶ່ງ, ຜູ້ຍິງທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ຄວນຖືວ່າເຂົາເຈົ້າເປັນຜູ້ທີ່ມີບົດບາດສຳຄັນໃນດ້ານເສດຖະກິດໃນການຜະລິດຢາງພາລາ ໃນຂະນະທີ່ເຂົາເຈົ້າມີສ່ວນກ່ຽວຂ້ອງຢ່າງສູງໃນການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ, ດັ່ງທີ່ເຫັນໃນຫຼາຍໜ້າວົກ ແຕ່ວ່າສ່ວນຫຼາຍກໍເປັນວົກຂອງຜູ້ຊາຍ. ນີ້ແມ່ນສຳຄັນຫຼາຍໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ, ໃນຂະນະທີ່ແຮງງານກ່ຽວກັບການປູກຢາງພາລາແມ່ນມີແຮງງານກວມຈຳນວນຫຼາຍ ແລະ ເປັນແຮງງານ "ທີ່ແທ້ຈິງ". ຕົວແທນລະຫວ່າງເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ເພດຍິງ ແລະ ແຮງງານຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າໃນແຕ່ລະວັນແມ່ນມີຄວາມຈຳເປັນຫຼາຍ ຊຶ່ງແຮງງານຂອງຜູ້ຍິງກໍລວມຢູ່ໃນນັ້ນ ແລະ ບໍ່ນັບໃນແຮງງານສຳລັບເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ ຊຶ່ງຕາມຕົວຈິງແລ້ວ ເຂົາເຈົ້າເຮັດວຽກຢູ່ສ່ວນຢາງພາລາ. ຍິ່ງກວ່ານີ້ ຕົວແທນແຮງງານຂອງເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ເພດຍິງໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ ແລະ ການກະທຳຊຶ່ງກາຍເປັນຕົວແທນມີປະຕິກິລິຍາກັບຮ່າງກາຍ ບວກກັບຂະໜາດອື່ນໃນການສ້າງລະຫວ່າງເພດຂອງຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ. ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຍັງມີຄຳເຫັນໄດ້ ແຍ້ງວ່າ ການມີສ່ວນຮ່ວມຂອງເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ເພດຍິງໃນຂະບວນການເກັບກ່ຽວຢາງພາລາ ເປັນສ່ວນໜຶ່ງຂອງຄວາມສຳເລັດໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ. ອົງມີຕິໜຶ່ງກ່ຽວກັບຈຸດລວມສຳລັບການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ ໂດຍສະເພາະຄື: ຊົນຊາດຊົນເຜົ່າ, ຖານະທາງສັງຄົມ ແລະ ເສດຖະກິດ ແລະ ອາຍຸ. ເປັນການສ້າງທ່າອ່ຽງລະຫວ່າງເພດໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ. ການພົວພັນພາຍໃນຄົວເຮືອນ ວິທີນີ້ມີຄວາມຈຳເປັນໃນເມື່ອຜູ້ເຖົ້າ ແລະ ເດັກນ້ອຍເປັນເໝືອນແຮງງານສຳຮອງໃນຈຳນວນຄົວເຮືອນ ແລະ ມີປະຕິກິລິຍາພາຍໃນກ່ຽວຂ້ອງລະຫວ່າງເພດ. ນອກຈາກນີ້ ວິຖີຊີວິດຂອງເຜົ່າ ມີຢ່າງຜົນສະທ້ອນຕໍ່ຖານະຊີວິດລະຫວ່າງເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ເພດຍິງ ໂດຍສະເພາະຜູ້ເຖົ້າ ຜູ້ຊາຍ ປົກກະຕິຈະມີຖານະບົດບາດດີກວ່າ. ຍອ້ນເຫດຜົນດັ່ງກ່າວ ມີຄວາມຈຳເປັນຈະຕ້ອງອົດທົນກັບປະສົບການຂອງທ້ອງຖິ່ນໃນໄລຍະຂອງການຖ່າຍທອດປະສົບການໄປສູ່ເຂດອື່ນ ຈຸດທີ່ເນັ້ນໜັກໂດຍຜູ້ອື່ນ (ກະລຸນາເບິ່ງ NAFRC 2009). ສິ່ງທີ່ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໝາຍເຖິງຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ບໍ່ສາມາດຖ່າຍທອດໂດຍກົງໄປສູ່ບ້ານອື່ນໆ ໃນລາວ ບ່ອນທີ່ມີການຜະລິດຢາງພາລາ. ບໍ່ພ້ອມແຕ່ເປັນການປະຕິບັດຕໍ່ລະຫວ່າງເພດທີ່ນັ້ນ ຍັງເປັນການປະຕິບັດຕໍ່ຊົນຊາດຊົນເຜົ່າອີກດ້ວຍ, ຄົວເຮືອນສ່ວນບຸກຄົນ ແລະ ບົດບາດຂອງຊີວິດ ແຕ່ກໍຍັງກ່ຽວກັບ

ວິທີໂດຍສະເພາະການຈັດຕັ້ງການບູກຢາງພາລາ. ຕົວຢ່າງເຊັ່ນ ມັນເປັນການ ຍາກທີ່ຈະສົມທົບການບູກຂະໜາດນ້ອຍຂອງບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ກັບການສຳປະທານ ຂະໜາດໃຫຍ່.

ແນວຄວາມຄິດແບບດັ່ງເດີມ (Rose 1993) ມີຄວາມສຳຄັນໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ເມື່ອຜູ້ຍິງ ແລະ ຜູ້ຊາຍ ບໍ່ສາມາດລົດລົງເປັນອັນດຽວກັນ ແຕ່ໃນ ທາງກົງກັນຂ້າມ ມີຫຼາກຫຼາຍຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງກັນ, ແລ້ວແຕ່ສະຖານະການ ແລະ ຄອບຄົວແຕ່ລະຄົນ. ແນວຄວາມຄິດແບບດັ່ງເດີມທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວມີຄວາມ ສຳຄັນຕໍ່ການພົວພັນກັບການເຄື່ອນໄຫວ ແລະ ມີຕິດຕໍ່ກັນໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳ ວັນ ແລະ ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດ ໂດຍສະເພາະຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງດ້ານຊົນຊາດຊົນ ເຜົ່າ, ອາຍຸ, ແລະ ວິທີການຂ້າມຜ່ານໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນຂອງແນວຄວາມຄິດ ເດີມ. ນອກຈາກນັ້ນ, ຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດໄດ້ມີການໂນ້ມນັ່ງທີ່ ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ແລະ ມີຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງກັບສະຖານະການທີ່ແຕກຕ່າງກັບຄົວ ເຮືອນສະເພາະ. ເພາະສະນັ້ນ ຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ທີ່ມີແນວໂນ້ມການຜະລິດຢາງພາລາເປັນວິທີໜຶ່ງທີ່ເຮັດໃຫ້ຄວາມແຕກ ຕ່າງລະຫວ່າງເພດມີການໂນ້ມຂຶ້ນຫາກັນ.

ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດໃນໄລຍະຂ້າມຜ່ານ

ຂະບວນການໃນການຂ້າມຜ່ານມີຄວາມສັບສົນ ແລະ ເປັນຜົນສະທ້ອນ ຕໍ່ຫຼາຍພາກສ່ວນທີ່ແຕກຕ່າງກັນ, ໃນສອງວິທີການຄື ການພົວພັນພາຍ ໃນ ແລະ ການທັບຊ້ອນກັນ (Rigg 2005). ຖະແຫຼງການເຫຼົ່ານີ້ມີຄວາມສຳຄັນ ສຳລັບໄລຍະຂ້າມຜ່ານຊື່ໆເກີດຂຶ້ນທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ແລະ ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າໄດ້ ຢ້ຳຕໍ່ທິດສະດີນີ້. ເຖິງຢ່າງໃດກໍຕາມ, ເຖິງແມ່ນຈະມີຫຼາກຫຼາຍຂະ ບວນການໃນການປະຕິບັດທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ, ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າເຂົ້າໃຈວ່າ ສິ່ງ ເຫຼົ່ານີ້ແມ່ນກໍ່ວິວັດຂອງໂດຍກົງກັບການເລີ່ມບູກຢາງພາລານັບແຕ່ປີ 1994. ຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເພດທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ມີຜົນສະທ້ອນໃນ ເລື່ອງແຮງງານທີ່ພົວພັນເຖິງການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ ມີການພົວພັນສື່ ຢ່າງລະຫວ່າງເພດຄື: ສັນຍາການປະຕິບັດແບ່ງແຍກ, ສັນຍາການປະຕິບັດຮ່ວມ ກັນ, ສັນຍາແຮງງານພາຍໃນ ແລະ ສັນຍາການບໍ່ຂີດຢາງ. ໃນປີ 2012, ມີຄອບຄົວ ເພີ່ມອີກໃນການເຮັດສັນຍາການຂີດຢາງ ແລະ ແລກປ່ຽນການປະຕິບັດລະຫວ່າງ

ເພດ, ຄອບຄົວທີ່ພົວພັນກັບການທີ່ບໍ່ໄດ້ເຊັນສັນຍາຂີດຢາງໃນເມື່ອກ່ອນ. ການອະທິບາຍກ່ຽວກັບທ່າອ່ຽງນີ້ກໍຄືມີຄອບຄົວຈຳນວນໜຶ່ງມີການຂີດຢາງ ແລະ ກາຍເປັນຮູບຮ່າງສັນຍາ ການຂີດຢາງ. ຄວາມຈິງມີຢູ່ວ່າ ຄອບຄົວຈຳນວນໜຶ່ງມີການຂະຫຍາຍຕົວອອກໄປອີກໄດ້ປະຕິບັດການຮ່ວມກັນກ່ຽວກັບການປູກຢາງພາລາໃນປີ 2012 ຍ້ອນວ່າມີການເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນຂອງກຳມະກອນ ແລະ ການຂະຫຍາຍເນື້ອທີ່ ການປູກຢາງພາລາກ້າວໄປເຖິງການຂີດຢາງ. ເພື່ອເປັນການຄຸ້ມຄອງແຮງງານທັງສອງພາກສ່ວນຄື ເພດຍິງ ແລະ ເພດຊາຍຈະຕ້ອງຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອເຊິ່ງກັນ ແລະ ກັນບົນວົງການທີ່ສວນຢາງ. ນອກຈາກນີ້ ຍັງແກ້ໄຂໄດ້ຈາກທ່າອ່ຽງຄ່າແຮງງານການເຮັດວັດກັດດ້ວຍມືຂອງເພດຍິງ ແລະ ເພດຊາຍຮ່ວມກັນທີ່ສວນຢາງ. ການປ່ຽນແປງເຫຼົ່ານີ້ໃນການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດ ເປັນທາງສັນຍານການພົວພັນທາງດ້ານແຮງງານໃນສວນຢາງ ແລະ ໃນລະດູຂີດຢາງພາລາເທິງນັ້ນ. ຫຼາຍຄອບຄົວມີການປ່ຽນແປງກ່ຽວກັບການປະຕິບັດລະຫວ່າງເພດທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງກັບການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ. ແຕ່ວ່າໃນຂະນະທີ່ແຮງງານໄດ້ມີການເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນຢ່າງໜັ້ນຄົງໃນບັນດາຄົວເຮືອນທັງຫລາຍ ແລະ ເພດຍິງກໍມີໜ້າທີ່ຫຼາຍຢ່າງໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າຖ້າສົມທົບໃສ່ເພດຊາຍ, ໃນອະນາຄົດ ພວກເຂົາເຈົ້າກໍຈະພົບກັບວົງການທີ່ຫຍຸ້ງຍາກກວ່ານີ້ອີກ. ມັນອາດຈະຍາກກວ່ານີ້ສອງເທື່ອ ຫຼື ສາມເທື່ອສຳລັບເພດຍິງ ແລະ ເຂົາເຈົ້າກໍຈະມີຄວາມກົດດັນຫຼາຍກວ່າ. ທ່າອ່ຽງຂອງຄ່າແຮງງານອາດຈະມີຜົນກະທົບຕໍ່ການປ່ຽນແປງນັ້ນ ໂດຍສະເພາະເພດຍິງອາດຈະໃຫ້ຄວາມສະດວກແຮງງານໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ. ບັນຍາກາດອື່ນອີກຂອງຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ (ການເກັບກ່ຽວເຂົ້າ, ການເກັບເຄື່ອງປ່າຂອງດົງ (NTFPs), ການລ້ຽງເດັກ, ການເຄື່ອນໄຫວຢູ່ຕະຫຼາດ ແລະ ແຮງງານຄົວເຮືອນ) ອາດຈະມີການປ່ຽນແປງໜ້ອຍ ຖ້າສົມທົບໃສ່ການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ ໂດຍສະເພາະກ່ຽວກັບການປູກເຂົ້າ ແລະ ການເກັບກູ້ ການເກັບເຄື່ອງປ່າຂອງດົງ (NTFPs).

ເພດຍິງມີການກ່ຽວຂ້ອງອັນໃຫຍ່ຫຼວງໃນການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ ມີຜົນກະທົບຕໍ່ຮ່າງກາຍຂອງເພດຍິງ ແລະ ເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ມີປະຕິກິລິຍາພາຍໃນຮ່າງກາຍຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ. ໂດຍສະເພາະໜ້າທີ່ການຂີດຢາງ ຫຼື ການຕັດຕົ້ນໄມ້. ທີ່ຜ່ານມາ, ຜູ້ຊາຍມີສ່ວນກ່ຽວຂ້ອງຫຼາຍກວ່າ ເພາະເປັນວົງການທີ່

ມີເຕັກນິກ ແລະ ເປັນວົກ ບາງຢ່າງທີ່ ຜູ້ຊາຍເທົ່ານັ້ນທີ່ ເຮັດໄດ້. ເຖິງຢ່າງໃດກໍຕາມ ແຕ່ປັດຈຸບັນນີ້, ຜູ້ຍິງກໍມີການຂະຫຍາຍຕົວສາມາດ ເຮັດວົກຜູ້ຊາຍໄດ້ ຜູ້ຍິງກໍສາມາດເປັນຜູ້ທີ່ມີຜົນດີໃນການຕັດ ຕົ້ນໄມ້ ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າເຂົາເຈົ້າຈະມີມືທີ່ອ່ອນໄຫວກໍຕາມ. ການ ພົວພັນຂອງຮ່າງກາຍໃນການຕັດຕົ້ນໄມ້ໄດ້ມີການປ່ຽນແປງໃນຂະນະທີ່ເພດ ຍິງມີສ່ວນກ່ຽວຂ້ອງຫຼາຍຂຶ້ນກ່ຽວກັບວົກນີ້. ຮ່າງກາຍມີການຂະຫຍາຍ ຍາມຕົວ, ແຍກເພດອອກຈາກຄວາມເປັນເພດ, ຮ່າງກາຍ ແລະ ຈິດໃຈ, ຜູ້ຍິງຈາກ ຜູ້ຊາຍ. ຜູ້ຍິງມີຄວາມອົດທົນກວ່າຜູ້ຊາຍໃນການປະຕິບັດ. ໃນບາງ ກໍລະນີມີ ຮ່າງກາຍແຕ່ບໍ່ມີຄຸນຄ່າ, ມີຄວາມຈຳເປັນສ້າງທິດສະດີສຳ ລັບຮ່າງກາຍ.

ຄ່າແຮງງານໄດ້ເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ມີການຫັນປ່ຽນໃນວົກສະໜາມ ໃນປີ 2008 ແລະ ປີ 2012. ສ່ວນຫຼາຍແມ່ນກ່ຽວກັບການຜະລິດຢາງພາລາ ແລະ ວົກອື່ນແມ່ນມີໜ້ອຍໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ. ໃນຕອນ ເລີ່ມຕົ້ນ, ເປັນ ເລື້ອງທຳມະດາທີ່ມີຄ່າແຮງງານສຳລັບວິທີການປູກພືດ. ແຕ່ໃນປີ 2012 ໄດ້ມີການຂະຫຍາຍຕົວໃນການຂາດຢາງພາລາ. ທັງຜູ້ຊາຍ ແລະ ຜູ້ຍິງ ຖືກ ຈ້າງອອກແຮງງານເຮັດວົກເປັນກຳມະກອນໃນປີ 2012 ຜົນສາມາດເຮັດວົກເປັນ ກຳມະກອນໄດ້ຮັບເງິນເດືອນທີ່ສອບຖາມຢາງພາລາ. ການຂົນສົ່ງຢາງພາລາໄປຫາ ບ່ອນປູກ ແລະ ໄປຫາຕະຫຼາດເປັນກິດຈະກຳຮ່ວມກັນລະຫວ່າງຊາຍ ແລະ ຍິງ. ແຕ່ວ່າເມື່ອຄອບຄົວມີວົກຫຼາຍຂຶ້ນ ຍ້ອນມີການປູກຢາງພາລາເພີ່ມ ຂຶ້ນ, ໃນປີ 2012, ຫຼາຍຄອບຄົວໄດ້ເລີ່ມຈ້າງກຳມະກອນໃນການຂົນສົ່ງຢາງພາລາ. ເຖິງຢ່າງໃດກໍຕາມ, ກຳມະກອນສ່ວນຫຼາຍເປັນຜູ້ຊາຍເທົ່ານັ້ນ, ປ່ຽນແທນ ການປະຕິບັດລະຫວ່າງເພດ ແລະ ກາຍເປັນບັນຍາກາດທີ່ມີແຕ່ຜູ້ຊາຍ. ການ ຂາດແຮງງານ ເປັນບັນຫາເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນສຳລັບຄອບຄົວໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ. ເຖິງ ແມ່ນວ່າ ສ່ວນຫຼາຍເຂົາເຈົ້າບໍ່ໄດ້ຂາດຢາງພາລາໃນທີ່ດິນທີ່ ປູກເພີ່ມອີກ. ຄວາມຮູ້ວິທີການທີ່ຄ່າແຮງງານໄດ້ແບ່ງແຍກລະຫວ່າງ ຜູ້ຊາຍ ແລະ ຜູ້ຍິງ ມີຄວາມສຳຄັນໃນການຄາດຄະເນ ແລະ ແຜນການຂອງຂາດແຄນ ແຮງງານ.

ກຸ່ມຂອງຊາວມື້ງ ມີລັກສະນະສະເພາະຂອງຕົນເອງ, ຍາກເກີດຈະເຂົ້າໃຈເທົ່າ ອ່ຽງຂອງການປູກຢາງພາລາ ທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ແລະ ຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນລະຫວ່າງເມດ. ແຕ່ວ່າການພົວພັນພາຍໃນແມ່ນຕ້ອງການວ່າ ຊົນເຜົ່າມາຈາກເຜົ່າໃດ, ເມດ, ອາຍ, ແລະ ສະຖານທີ່ຢູ່, ວ່າເຫດໃດກໍ່ບົວກັບການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເມດ ພາຍໃນ ແລະ ຊຸມຊົນເຜົ່າມື້ງອາໄສຢູ່. ມີຫຼາຍຕົວຊີ້ບອກ ຊີ້ບອກ ວ່າການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເມດພາຍໃນຊົນເຜົ່າມື້ງມີການຖ່າຍທອດໃນບ້ານ ຫາດຍາວ ນັບແຕ່ມີການເລີ່ມປູກຢາງພາລາເປັນຕົ້ນມາ. ໂຄງສ້າງການສືບ ເຊື້ອສາຍທີ່ຍັງຄົງມີຢູ່ໃນເຜົ່າມື້ງ ແລະ ຂະຫຍາຍອອກໄປເປັນຜົນ ສະທ້ອນຕໍ່ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງ ຊາຍ ແລະ ຍິງ ແລະ ກາຍເປັນຕົວແທນ ແລະ ການດຳລົງຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ. ນີ້ແມ່ນມີຄວາມສຳຄັນຍິ່ງຕໍ່ຂະບວນການ ຕັດສິນບັນຫາໃນຂັ້ນບ້ານກໍ່ຄືໃນລະດັບຄອບຄົວ ຊຶ່ງເມດຍິງມີອັດຕາ ສ່ວນກວມເອົາຈຳນວນຫຼາຍ. ທີ່ດິນສະແດງອອກເຖິງໂຄງຮ່າງການສືບທອດ ມູນມໍລະດົກ ແລະ ການພົວພັນຂອງມັນກັບການປູກຢາງພາລາ. ຕາມປະເພນີ ແລ້ວ, ລູກຊາຍໄດ້ຮັບມໍລະດົກທີ່ດິນຈາກພໍ່ແມ່ຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ ແລະ ອາ ໄສຢູ່ໃນເຮືອນດ້ວຍກັນກັບພໍ່ແມ່ຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ. ອີກດ້ານໜຶ່ງລູກສາວ ເມື່ອເວລາແຕ່ງງານແລ້ວຈະຍ້າຍໄປຢູ່ກັບຄອບຄົວຂອງຜົວ ແລະ ປົກກະຕິຈະ ບໍ່ໄດ້ທີ່ດິນຈາກພໍ່ແມ່ ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າຈະມີການບໍ່ປົນແປງໃນການສືບ ທອດມໍລະດົກຂອງເຜົ່າພັນ ແລະ ບໍ່ແມ່ນສ່ວນໜຶ່ງຂອງຄອບຄົວ. ແຕ່ ຍ້ອນວ່າການປູກຢາງພາລາໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ແລະ ເຂົາເຈົ້າປະສົບຜົນສຳເລັດໃນ ການເກັບກໍ່ບົວຢາງພາລາ ແລະ ພ້ອມກັນນັ້ນກໍ່ປະສົມກັບການທີ່ເຂົາເຈົ້າ ຢູ່ຮ່ວມກັນຈາກຫຼາຍເຜົ່າພັນໃນບ້ານດ້ວຍກັນ ແລະ ລູກສາວຫຼາຍຄົນກໍ່ ຢູ່ກັບເຮືອນພໍ່ແມ່ ເມື່ອເວລາແຕ່ງງານແລ້ວ. ເມື່ອເຫດການຜ່ານໄປ ເປັນເວລາຫຼາຍປີກໍ່ມີທ່າອ່ຽງວ່າລູກສາວຈະໄດ້ສືບທອດມໍລະດົກທີ່ດິນ ຈາກພໍ່ແມ່ຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ ຊຶ່ງລູກສາວເມື່ອແຕ່ງງານແລ້ວກໍ່ມີການ ຜູກພັນຢູ່ກັບພໍ່ແມ່ຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າຢູ່ໃນບ້ານນັ້ນຫຼັງຈາກແຕ່ງງານ. ທ່າອ່ຽງສຳລັບຜູ້ຍິງເມື່ອແຕ່ງງານແລ້ວ ພາຍຫຼັງທີ່ຍ້າຍອອກຈາກ ບ້ານນີ້ໄປຢູ່ບ້ານໃໝ່ກໍ່ບໍ່ຜົວໄດ້ກັບຄືນມາຢູ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວອີກຍ້ອນ ເຫດຜົນເມື່ອປູກຢາງພາລາ. ຕົວຊີ້ບອກອີກອັນໜຶ່ງສະແດງອອກວ່າ ແມ່ຍິງເມື່ອແຕ່ງງານແລ້ວມີພື້ນຖານກັບມາບ້ານຫາດຍາວອີກຍ້ອນ ການປູກຢາງພາລາ ແລະ ຍ້ອນຄວາມຕ້ອງການແຮງງານ. ໃນກໍລະນີນີ້ ເຄື່ອນຄ່າ

ອສັງຄົມໃນເລື່ອງຂອງແມ່ຍິງແລ້ວຈະກາຍເປັນຄວາມເຂັ້ມແຂງ ເພາະວ່າມີການປຸກຢາງພາລາ. ທ່າອ່າຍ ດັງນີ້ ກໍ່ ດຶວຂ້ອງກັບການຂາດແຮງງານທີ່ເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນ, ຊື່ງອົກທາງໜຶ່ງແມ່ນຕ້ອງການ ການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອຈາກຍາດພີ່ນ້ອງ ເພື່ອແກ້ໄຂບັນຫາການຂາດແຮງງານ. ຄວາມຈິງມີຢູ່ວ່າ ຜູ້ຊາຍໃນບ້ານນັ້ນໄດ້ອ້າຍໄປຢູ່ບ່ອນອື່ນ ເພື່ອການຮັບໃບທີ່ອື່ນຈຶ່ງເປັນຜົນກະທົບຕໍ່ການສືບທອດມໍລະດົກ ເພາະສະນັ້ນ ລູກສາວຈຶ່ງມີໂອກາດໄດ້ສົດຄອງທີ່ດິນ. ໃນອະນາຄົດອັນຍາວນານ ຖານະຂອງແມ່ຍິງ ຫຼື ອາດຈະເວົ້າວ່າ ສັງຄົມຂອງແມ່ຍິງຈະເຂັ້ມແຂງຂຶ້ນໃນຊຸມຊົນເຜົ່າ ມີ ໂດຍສະເພາະໃນການຕັດສິນບັນຫາຕ່າງໆ. ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງຄອບຄົວ ແລະ ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງຂອງບ້ານເປັນແຕ່ນແຍງໃຫ້ກັນ ແລະ ກັນ ໂດຍສະເພາະໃນການຕັດສິນບັນຫາຕ່າງໆ ລະຫວ່າງເພດຊາຍ ແລະ ເພດຍິງ. ໄລຍະຂ້າມຜ່ານພາຍໃນຄົວເຮືອນອາດຈະມີຜົນກະທົບກັບການພົວພັນພາຍໃນຄົວເຮືອນກໍ່ຄືການຈັດຕັ້ງຂອງບ້ານ.

ມີສິ່ງໜຶ່ງຊື່ບອກວ່າ ການຂະຫຍາຍເນື້ອທີ່ ການເພາະປຸກຂອງຄົວເຮືອນມີການແບ່ງແຍກແຮງງານ ແລະ ລາຍຮັບລະຫວ່າງຄອບຄົວທີ່ອາໄສຢູ່ໃນເຮືອນດັບກັນ. ຜົນຂອງການຜະລິດຢາງພາລາເປັນວິກິດການຫຼັກຂອງຄອບຄົວຄ້າຍກັບການຜະລິດຜື່ນ (Symonds 2004; Cooper 1980; Bademoch 2006) ແຕ່ອ້ອມໄພໃໝ່ໃນປີ 2010 ຫຼາຍຄອບຄົວໄດ້ສູນເສຍເນື້ອທີ່ ການປຸກຊື່ງໃກ້ຈະໄດ້ຂີດຢາງແລ້ວ ເພາະສະນັ້ນ ເລື່ອງນີ້ຈຶ່ງເປັນເລື່ອງທຳມະດາສຳລັບ 14 ຄອບຄົວ. ນີ້ເປັນການສູນເສຍ ບໍ່ເຮັດໃຫ້ເພີ່ມການຜະລິດໄດ້ໃນເມື່ອບ່ອນອື່ນສາມາດຂີດຢາງພາລາໄດ້. ວິທີນີ້ ສະຖາບັນຄອບຄົວອາດຈະມີຄວາມເຂັ້ມແຂງກວ່າຄົວເຮືອນ ແລະ ມີຄວາມທ້າທາຍຕໍ່ກັບໂຄງສ້າງຮີດຄອງການສືບທອດມໍລະດົກດັ່ງເດີມ, ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າມີຫົວໜ່ວຍເສດຖະກິດພາຍໃນຄອບຄົວກໍ່ຕາມ. ຄວາມຈິງມີຢູ່ວ່າ ຄ່າແຮງງານຈະມາແທນທີ່ການແລກປ່ຽນແຮງງານ ແລະ ສາມາດມີຄວາມເຂັ້ມແຂງໃນໄລຍະຂ້າມຜ່ານ. ໃນທາງກັບກັນ, ການປ່ຽນແປງຂ້າມຜ່ານສາມາດມີຜົນກະທົບການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດຕໍ່ກັບໂຄງສ້າງການສືບທອດມໍລະດົກໃນໄລຍະໃດໜຶ່ງທີ່ແນ່ນອນ. ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ໄດ້ດຳເນີນໄປໃນຮູບແບບແຕກຕ່າງກັນ ແລະ ມີການປ່ຽນແປງເພີ່ມເຕີມຊື່ງອາດຈະເກີດມີຂຶ້ນ ສ່ວນໃຫຍ່ຈະເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນອັນການຂາດແຮງງານ. ການປ່ຽນແປງຫຼື ັນນີ້ເປັນການສືບ

ຕໍ່ເພີ່ມເຕີມເຄື່ອງໝາຍຂອງຄຳວ່າ “ທ່າອ່ຽງ” ຊຶ່ງຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ
ລະຫວ່າງເລດມີທ່າອ່ຽງເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນໃນໄລຍະຂ້າມຜ່ານ.

ສິ່ງທີ່ດີ ແລະ ສິ່ງທີ່ບໍ່ດີໃນຂະບວນການປ່ຽນແປງ

ການພັດທະນາການບູຮານຢາງພາລາຢູ່ໃນລາວໄດ້ດຳເນີນໄປ ແລະ ໄດ້ມີບາງສິ່ງບາງ
ຢ່າງພົວພັນກັບການພັດທະນາໃນອະນາຄົດຂອງປະເທດທັງໝົດ. ເຖິງຢ່າງໃດກໍ່
ຕາມ, ການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາຫຼາຍຊະນິດ ຫຼາຍພັນ ກໍຍັງມີທັງຂໍ້ໄດ້ ແລະ
ຂໍ້ເສຍສຳລັບບ້ານຕ່າງໆໃນບ່ອນທີ່ມີການເກັບກູ້ຢາງພາລາ, ບາງບ່ອນກໍ່
ເໝາະສົມ ແລະ ບາງບ່ອນກໍ່ບໍ່ເໝາະສົມ. ອີກເທື່ອໜຶ່ງ ຕາມເນື້ອໃນນີ້
ມີຄວາມສຳຄັນທີ່ສຸດທີ່ຕ້ອງພິຈາລະນາຄວາມຫຼາກຫຼາຍຂອງທ້ອງຖິ່ນ
ຖ້າບໍ່ດັ່ງນັ້ນ ຈະເປັນການຍາກທີ່ຈະຄາດການໄດ້. ດັ່ງທີ່ໄດ້ກ່າວມາ
ນັ້ນ, ຊົນຊາດ ຊົນເຜົ່າ ທີ່ນີ້ ເປັນບັນຫາທີ່ຂ້ອນຂ້າງຮຸນແຮງ
ບັນຫາມີຢູ່ວ່າ ເປັນຫຍັງຈຶ່ງຕ້ອງເອົາການປ່ຽນແປງການພົວພັນ
ລະຫວ່າງເລດເຂົ້າໃນຈິດໃຈຂອງທ້ອງຖິ່ນຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ ແລະ ບໍ່ຈຳເປັນ
ຕ້ອງຖ່າຍທອດໄປສູ່ບ້ານອື່ນທີ່ມີການບູຮານຢາງພາລາເຊັ່ນດຽວກັນ.
ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າມີຄວາມເປັນຫວັງວ່າ ບ້ານຫາດຍາວເປັນບ້ານແບບຢ່າງບ້ານ
ໜຶ່ງທີ່ຍອມຮັບໄດ້ຕາມເນື້ອໃນນີ້ ຊຶ່ງມີຜົນດີຕາມເນື້ອໃນຂອງ
ລາວ. ນັບເປັນຄັ້ງທຳອິດທີ່ບ້ານທີ່ມີທຶນໜ້ອຍເລີຍເກັບກູ້ບົວຢ່າງ
ພາລາໄດ້ຈຳນວນຫຼາຍເປັນທີ່ມີຊື່ສຽງໃນເຂດນັ້ນ ແລະ ມີຊື່ສຽງໃນທີ່
ປະເທດ. ເຖິງຢ່າງໃດກໍ່ຕາມ, ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າບ້ານນີ້ ຄວາມບໍ່ສະເໝີພາບໄດ້
ເກີດຂຶ້ນທາງຄອບຄົວໄດ້ ຍົກຖານະຂອງຕົນເອງດີຂຶ້ນ ແລະ ບາງຄົນກໍ່ບໍ່
ຕົວຍາກເຂົ້າໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນໃນການເກັບກູ້ບົວຢາງພາລາ. ຄອບຄົວ
ເຫຼົ່ານີ້ມີຄວາມຮູ້ສຶກວ່າ ຕະຫຼາດມີການຜ່ນຜວນ ແລະ ຂຶ້ນກັບລາຍ
ຮັບທີ່ໜ້າໄດ້ ເຊັ່ນສົມທົບໃສ່ການບູຮານຂຶ້ນ, ພຶດພັນທີ່ໜັ້ນຄົງ.
ນອກຈາກນີ້, ຄວາມແຕກຕ່າງທາງດ້ານສັງຄົມ ແລະ ເສດຖະກິດກະທົບຕໍ່ຄວາມ
ເປັນໄປໄດ້ຂອງຄ່າແຮງງານ. ໃນນັ້ນລວມທັງລາຍຮັບເພີ່ມທີ່ສາມາດສົ່ງ
ເສີມລູກຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າໄປຮັບຕໍ່ໃນຂັ້ນສູງຂຶ້ນ, ສ້າງຊື່ສຽງຫວ່າງໃຫ້
ກວ້າງອອກກັບຄອບຄົວຜູ້ທີ່ບໍ່ມີຄວາມສາມາດຈະເຮັດໄດ້ແບບນັ້ນ. ໃນ
ຂະນະດຽວກັນ, ທີ່ດີນສຳລັບປູກເຂົ້າ ແລະ ພຶດຢ່າງອື່ນຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າໄດ້

ຫຼຸດລົງ ແລະ ເຂົ້າມາແທນທີ່ດ້ວຍການປູກຢາງພາລາ. ກ່ຽວກັບການ
 ພົວພັນຕໍ່ Rigg (2005) ຂະບວນການຂ້າມຜ່ານບໍ່ໄດ້ໄປຊື້ໂດຍກົງ ບໍ່
 ສາມາດຈະເປັນຜົນໃຫ້ທັງໝົດຊຸມຊົນ ແລະ ນຳຜົນສະທ້ອນທີ່ແຕກຕ່າງ
 ຕໍ່ປະຊາຊົນທີ່ຢູ່ໃນລະຫວ່າງການ “ປ່ຽນແປງ” ນີ້. ເຖິງຢ່າງໃດກໍຕາມ,
 ສ່ວນຫຼາຍ ຄອບຄົວໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ກໍ່ມີຊີວິດການເປັນຢູ່ທີ່ດີຂຶ້ນ
 ກວ່າແຕ່ກ່ອນ ແລະ ເງື່ອນໄຂຊີວິດການເປັນຢູ່ຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າກໍ່ດີຂຶ້ນ.
 ເພາະສະນັ້ນ ຈຶ່ງມີ 2 ແງ່ມຸມ ທັງດີ ແລະ ບໍ່ດີ ໃນການ ເລີ່ມປູກຢາງ
 ພາລາໃນລາວ ແລະ ຕາມຄວາມເປັນຈິງແລ້ວ ຈະບໍ່ແມ່ນສີຂາວ ຫຼື ສີດຳ ໃນການ
 ພັດທະນາ. ຫຼື Disken (2004) ໄດ້ເວົ້າວ່າ ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າ “ຈະດີ ຫຼື ຈະຊົ່ວ”
 ຈະຂຶ້ນຢູ່ກັບວ່າແມ່ນໃຜທີ່ເຈົ້າຕັ້ງຄຳຖາມ, ແລະ ຜູ້ທີ່ “ຊະນະ” ແລະ
 ຜູ້ “ເສຍ” ຈະບໍ່ມີຄວາມເທົ່າທຽມກັນທີ່ສຸດໃນທັງສອງພາກສ່ວນຄື
 ລະດັບທາງດ້ານສັງຄົມ ແລະ ທາງດ້ານພູມສາດ.

ການປ່ຽນແປງທີ່ດິນ ເປັນຕົວຊີ້ບອກທີ່ສຳຄັນ ບໍ່ສະເພາະແຕ່ບ້ານຫາດ
 ຍາວເທົ່ານັ້ນ ແຕ່ກວມເອົາໝົດຂົງເຂດ ແລະ ການພັດທະນາການປູກຢາງພາລາ
 ຢູ່ໃນລາວ. ບ້ານຫາດຍາວຂາດທີ່ດິນໃນການປູກເຂົ້າ ພ້ອມກັນນັ້ນກໍ່
 ເປັນການເພີ່ມຜົນປະໂຫຍດໃນການຂະຫຍາຍເນື້ອທີ່ການປູກຢາງພາລາ. ເຖິງ
 ແມ່ນວ່າປັດຈຸບັນນີ້ ບ້ານໄດ້ມີເນື້ອທີ່ 2,000 ເຮັກຕາ ໃນການປູກ
 ຢາງພາລາ ແຕ່ເຂົາເຈົ້າກໍ່ບໍ່ມີຄວາມຕັ້ງໃຈທີ່ຈະຂະຫຍາຍການປູກ
 ຢາງພາລາຈົນສຸດຂອບເຂດຂອງບ້ານ. ທີ່ເປັນຢູ່ໃນປັດຈຸບັນ, ຊາວບ້ານໄດ້
 ເລີ່ມຫາທີ່ດິນເອົາຈົ່ງເອົາຈ້ຽນອກຂອບເຂດບ້ານຂອງຕົນເພື່ອການປູກ
 ຢາງພາລາ ກໍ່ຄື ການປູກເຂົ້າ ແລະ ການກ້າເບ້ຍຢາງພາລາ. ໃນປີ 2012 ການ
 ພັດທະນາດັ່ງກ່າວໄດ້ເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນ ແລະ ບາງຄອບຄົວຍັງໄດ້ຊື້ເນື້ອທີ່
 ການປູກຢາງພາລາບ່ອນທີ່ເຂົາເຈົ້າປູກຕົ້ນຢາງພາລາຮັບຮ້ອຍແລ້ວ, ສ່ວນ
 ຢາງພາລາບາງບ່ອນເກືອບຈະໄດ້ຂີດຢາງແລ້ວ. ເພາະສະນັ້ນ, ຫຼາຍຄອບຄົວໃນ
 ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ໄດ້ປູກຢາງພາລານອກຂອບເຂດບ້ານຂອງຕົນ ແລະ ເຊັນເຊີ່າທີ່
 ດິນ ຫຼື ຂີ່ປູກກັບບ້ານອື່ນ, ຄ້າຍຄືກັນກັບເຊັນສັນຍາກັບບໍລິສັດ
 ແລະ ຊາວນາໃນທ້ອງຖິ່ນ. ນັບຕັ້ງແຕ່ແຮງງານໄດ້ຮັບດວບການອກຂອບເຂດບ້ານ
 ຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ ເຫດການນີ້ກໍ່ເປັນຜົນກະທົບຕໍ່ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດ

ໃນຊີວິດປະຈຳວັນ ເຮັດໃຫ້ມີການແບ່ງແຍກລະຫວ່າງເອກະຊົນກັບລັດ. ນອກນີ້ ຍັງມີຄວາມສ່ຽງເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນໃນດ້ານຄວາມບໍ່ສະເໝີພາບໃນຂົງເຂດບໍລິເວນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ເພາະຕ້ອງການຂະຫຍາຍເນື້ອທີ່ການປູກຢາງພາລາເພີ່ມຂຶ້ນ, ນັບແຕ່ເຂົາເຈົ້າມີຄວາມສາມາດເຮັດເອງໄດ້. ໃນຂະນະດຽວກັນ, ຂອບເຂດນອກບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ເຂົາເຈົ້າກໍ່ສອບຖອດທິດຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າໃນການຄອບຄອງທີ່ດິນ ຊຶ່ງເປັນຜົນສະທ້ອນທີ່ບໍ່ດີໃຫ້ແກ່ພື້ນຖານການປູກຢາງພາລາຂອງບໍລິສັດ. ນອກຈາກຢູ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວແລ້ວ ບໍລິສັດປູກຢາງພາລາຂອງຈີນຍັງສົນໃຈທີ່ສຸດໃນແຂວງຫຼວງນ້ຳທາ ຊຶ່ງມັກຈະຄອບຄອງທີ່ດິນໂດຍຊາວບ້ານໃນທ້ອງຖິ່ນນັ້ນ. Shi (2008) ຢ່າງໃດກໍ່ຕາມ ຈະໂທດບໍລິສັດຂອງຈີນກໍ່ບໍ່ຖືກໃນການປູກຢາງພາລາໃນພາກເໜືອຂອງລາວ. ນອກຈາກນັ້ນ ເປັນບັນຫາຂອງລັດຖະບານລາວເຊັ່ນກັນໃນການຄຸ້ມຄອງໂຄງການ. ຕາມຄຳເຫັນຂອງຕົວແທນບໍລິສັດປູກຢາງພາລາຂອງຈີນກ່າວວ່າ “ຊາວຕາເວັນຕົກມາຢູ່ບ່ອນນີ້ເປັນເວລາຍາວນານ ສ້າງຂົວ 1 ແຫ່ງ, ໂຮງໝໍ 1 ແຫ່ງ ແລະ ໂຮງຮຽນ 1 ແຫ່ງ... ປະຊາຊົນຍັງຫຍາບ ເຂົາເຈົ້າຍັງມີຊີວິດການເປັນຢູ່ ຍ້ອນຫຼັງໃນສະໄໝ 10 ປີ, 20 ປີ ແລະ 50 ປີ ຫຼັງ. ສິ່ງທີ່ພວກເຮົາເຮັດໃນປະຈຸບັນ ແມ່ນການພັດທະນາທີ່ແທ້ຈິງ, ເປັນຄວາມທັນສະໄໝທີ່ແທ້ຈິງ” (Shi 2008:72). ໃນຂະນະທີ່ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າຢາກຢັ້ງຢືນ ນັ້ນເປັນຕົວຢ່າງປາກົດການຫຍຸ້ງທ້າຍຢ່າງໃນການປູກຢາງພາລາຂະໜາດໃຫຍ່ໃນສປປລາວ ແລະ ນັ້ນກໍ່ເປັນສິ່ງບໍ່ດີສຳລັບຊາວບ້ານໃນທ້ອງຖິ່ນ ແລະ ຢັ້ງຢືນເທື່ອໜຶ່ງວ່າ ສິ່ງທີ່ບໍ່ດີ ແລະ ສິ່ງທີ່ດີໃນການພັດທະນາແມ່ນຫຍັງ?

ການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງຊາຍແດນຈະດຳເນີນຕໍ່ໄປດ້ວຍຄວາມສຳຄັນໃນການຫັນປ່ຽນທີ່ຖາວອນ ແລະ ທ້າທາຍໃນຂົງເຂດຂົງເຂດທີ່ມີຄວາມສຳຄັນສຳລັບການຄົ້ນຄວ້າຕໍ່ໄປ. ໜ້າເປັນຫວ່າງໃນເລື່ອງຂາດແຄນແຮງງານໃນບັດຈຸບັນ ແລະ ໃນອະນາຄົດ ແລະ ຜົນສະທ້ອນຂອງການເຄື່ອນຍ້າຍແຮງງານຜ່ານຊາຍແດນລາວ-ຈີນ. ແຂວງຫຼວງນ້ຳທາ ຈະພົບກັບບັນຫາໃຫຍ່ໃນການຂາດແຄນແຮງງານໃນປະເທດ ແລະ ອາດຈະຊອກແຮງງານຈາກແຂວງອື່ນເພື່ອຫຼີກລ່ຽງການນຳແຮງງານຈາກຕ່າງປະເທດ. ເຂດຊາຍແດນໄດ້ມີຄວາມສ່ຽງຕໍ່ການພັດທະນາການປູກຢາງພາລາ ແລະ ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ແລະ ຈະສືບຕໍ່ໄປແບບນີ້ໃນອະນາຄົດ ໂດຍສະເພາະຜູ້ມີທຶນຂະໜາດນ້ອຍໃນການປູກຢາງພາລາ, ເພື່ອກ້າວໄປຫາການປູກຂະໜາດໃຫຍ່.

ນອກຈາກນີ້ ການກະກຽມດັ່ງກ່າວ ກໍ່ໄດ້ມີການຊຸກຍູ້ສັນຍາຕົວມອີກ
ນອກຈາກການຮູ້ດ້ານສັນຍາລະຫວ່າງພື້ນຖານ ອັດຕະໂນມັດ ທີ່ລະຫວ່າງຊົນເຜົ່າ
ດັ່ງກ່າວນັ້ນ. ໃນຂະນະທີ່ຈຳນວນຫຼາຍບ້ານທີ່ທຳການປູກຢາງພາລາໄດ້ເພີ່ມ
ຂຶ້ນໃນສປປ ລາວ ກໍ່ຄືການເຖິງຂຶ້ນກະກຽມຂີດຢາງພາລາ ມັນມີຄວາມຈຳເປັນ
ທີ່ຈະຕ້ອງເຂົ້າໃຈວ່າ ການປູກຢາງພາລາຂະໜາດນ້ອຍໃນຊຸມຊົນມີປະຕິ
ກິລິຍາກັບການພົວພັນລະຫວ່າງເພດ, ບໍ່ມີຄວາມຈະແຈ້ງວ່າຜູ້ໃດເປັນ
ຜູ້ຊະນະ ແລະ ຜູ້ໃດຈະເປັນຜູ້ເສຍໄຊ ຊຶ່ງມັນກໍ່ຂຶ້ນກັບເນື້ອໃນກໍ່ຄື
ຮີດຄອງເດີມທີ່ມີຢູ່ໃນບັດຈຸບັນນີ້. ເນື້ອເປັນການສະແດງອອກໃຫ້ເຫັນ
ວ່າ ຂະບວນການປ່ຽນແປງທີ່ກຳລັງດຳເນີນຢູ່ໃນບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ກໍ່ຄືທຳ
ອ່ຽງໃນອະນາຄົດ ແລະ ຍັງອັນຫຼັງສະຖານະການໃນບັດຈຸບັນ. ນອກຈາກນີ້,
ສິ່ງທີ່ບ້ານຫາດຍາວ ມີຄວາມໝາຍໃນການພັດທະນາການປູກຢາງພາລາໃນສປປ
ລາວ ກໍ່ຄືໃນຂົງເຂດທີ່ມີເສັ້ນຊາຍແດນຕິດຈອດກັນ ໂດຍສະເພາະກັບຈີນ
ແມ່ນມີບົດບາດສຳຄັນເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າອາດຈະເປັນທັງຂັດຕໍ່ຫຼືຂໍ້ສອບ.

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