

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

In this chapter, I analyze and discuss the meaning of the process of the urban development project, starting with the analysis of the socio-economic consequences of the urban development, to be followed by those of the resettlement policies and activities. I then discuss the livelihood adaptation strategies, the preservation of social relation and the continued practices of religious and cultural beliefs and practices. In the last part I provide the theoretical discussion of the findings.

6.1 Urban development and its social impacts

Improvement of telecommunication network and expansion of roads

The urban development project in Pakse was part of the government strategy to develop the country socio-economically, with Pakse District as the capital city of southern Lao PDR; the center of trade and investment, telecommunications, education, tourism and travel, and other services in the area. The plan is to develop the urban area.

The urban development project was conducted between 1998 and 2003, for which the urban development organization officials teamed up with provincial officials to persuade people to relocate, having convinced them of the need for urban development and told them of the government compensation package – for relocation, house demolition and loss of land. Officials from both sides surveyed people's properties, those that would be destroyed during the implementation of the project, to evaluate the general damage to be caused. Although officials from both sides developed a step-by-step, very clear plan, bringing ideas from Vientiane, the project still caused problems for the people, who lost their occupations and education facilities, plus whose living conditions and other environmental factors have become difficult in new area where the government provided land.

The project officials evaluated its success in late 2003, finding that it had succeeded in accordance with the targets as set before the project. After finishing the urban development project in Pakse, the telecommunications system was modern and

meets the demands of society. Furthermore, the new road network built around the urban municipality connected with international and regional linkages, helping provide a modern, high quality service. In addition, Pakse District also has good road connections with the three other southern provinces: Salavan, Attapue and Sekong, and is also well connected with Vientiane, the capital, and this has further encouraged economic growth. This road system has also connected outside the province, to the three neighboring countries of Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, plus air routes now run from Pakse to Vientiane, as well as overseas. The proximity of Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia have also improved the incomes and economy of the area, bringing stability to people's livelihoods as well as modernity.

Since the project, several telecommunications companies have invested in a phone network in Pakse District, the center of all four southern provinces in Lao PDR and helping to service people across four provinces, as well as investors from inside and outside the country. In addition, these telecommunications companies have expanded the network to include ten districts within the province and even the other four southern provinces, to improve efficiency and quality.

The telecommunications system in Pakse District has spread quickly and is modern; however, this has caused some problems for the society there, and has challenged the incomes of those in the urban area, and in particular those who live in Pattana village. For example, each household now has to have a telephone; for people to communicate with friends and relatives. They also need to speak to each other about work, and for this each household has at least one mobile phone, and some households have as many as six or seven – as per the number of people in the family. This has had an impact on families' economic situation, as in some household which have to support their children's education. Mobile phone bills are quite expensive, impacting upon the families' economic situations.

The government had to help the people who moved with their electricity and water supplies, as these were vital for sustaining their livelihoods in the new environment. The government has; therefore, expanded the electricity network to include Pattana village, installed electricity and gave them free of charge for a time. However, the electricity supply installed is low on power - not enough for household

consumption purposes; therefore, those with big families have had to install a supply of their own.

In addition, the government helped dig some wells (*Nambadan*) for those in Pattana to use for their daily subsistence requirements, as the new area does not have any streams flowing through it. The problem is that although there are enough wells in the village, they are situated quite far from the residents. Some householders go to work from 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. and then return home, and so they need to use a lot of water at night. As a result, some households have dug their own wells to make it easier for them to use.

However, the land provided by the government has so far not suited the people who moved, because it is far from the center of the town, from the main markets and from people's workplaces, and also there is no focal point for the community to gather around and trade or run businesses. As a result, this has impacted upon the villagers' economies, as they have small amounts of capital and cannot trade in the area. Only a few people have had the capital required to build dormitories for Champasak University students or establish other shops to take advantage of this new opportunity.

Also, the new area is not suitable for agriculture, because there are no streams in the area and the land is elevated. This means people in Pattana have had to change their occupations since moving, from doing agriculture in the old location. Furthermore, the new area makes it difficult for people who work at night in the center of the town, because it is quite far from there and there are not many villages along the road into town. In addition, the houses in Pattana are situated quite far from each other, making it somewhat risky to travel to and from work at night.

In certain way, the government policy had helped those most impacted by the urban development project, though it did not equal the value of the 'damage' caused. But, the affected villagers out of the urban development project did not have choices therefore they had accepted the compensation that the government provided for.

Tourism and its socio-economic consequences

The urban development project in Pakse has expanded the role of tourism within Champasak Province, helping to increase the number of hotels, guesthouses and others services; those set up to receive tourists from the domestic and international markets who wish to visit the four southern provinces of Laos. With tourism taking off

within Champasak Province, Pakse has become the center of travel services such as travel agencies, hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and other entertainment venues, in answer to the demands of society. In addition, the income from tourism has helped the country's socio-economic position, and in particular that of Champasak Province, helping to improve people's living conditions. Moreover, tourism has turned Pakse District into most important economic zone in Champasak Province, because it is the center of travel services and; therefore, is the best place to run businesses and other trade activities.

However, while generating additional income for the people in Pakse, tourism has also affected the livelihoods of people and especially that in Pattana village, because as more and more domestic and international tourists have visited Champasak Province, prices of goods have become unstable and the cost of food has increased, as well as services such as transport. Furthermore, the cost of land for building has increased due to investors competing for land to build travel agencies, hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and cafés; to receive the tourists, and so on. Therefore, it can be said that tourism is causing problems for local people, as the cost of living is increasing and the price of goods is unstable.

Improved education

When the affected villagers first moved into Pattana village, they had to adjust to a new way of supporting their children's education, because the area they moved to had no schools (primary, secondary or upper-secondary) at that time. As a result, the children had to travel to study in other villages, and this involved additional expenses for food, petrol and other items.

However, at a district level, since 2000, the education system has improved in Pakse district, both in terms of quality and choice. Several factors have led to this improvement, including the investment, trade, training and also people attracted to the area as a result of the development project, to become better educated and gain knowledge. In addition, with the establishment of Champasak University in 2002, the education system has expanded a lot. The University receives students from the four southern provinces as well as some from elsewhere. A teacher training college has also been opened in the area, as have several other state and private colleges -

established to accept students who do not have the qualifications necessary to go to university.

The development in the education system has aroused the interest of both internal and external students and educators. Having several education institutions within the urban area has increased income levels in Pakse District, increasing tax and duty revenues, and has also turned the district into an important education zone for Laos. As the education system has expanded in Pakse District, it has affected those on less income, those who need to support their children's studies in college or university, particularly given that the competition has increased, so has the quality of the teachers and facilities. The educational fees are also increased. This has become a big problem within local society, and especially in Pattana village, for when the villagers' daughters and sons finish upper secondary school, they cannot continue their studies because their parents do not have enough money to send them to college or university.

In general, the urban development project has improved the economy of Pakse District, with more trade and more people running businesses in the area, and this has had a multiplier effect – attracting internal and external customers and attracting other, service businesses such as restaurants, bars, café, noodle soup shops and other shops to the markets. In addition, urban development has brought several benefits along with the businesses. For example, the transportation system has improved greatly, and now all ten districts in the province are well connected to each other, facilitating trade and business, both in the countryside and in the urban areas.

Development-induced difficulties

Though the urban development project has improved the lives of people in Pakse District in many ways, for those without the knowledge and skills to get jobs in banks, as government officials, or staff at businesses, hotels, travel agencies and other offices it has not been as beneficial. Such people have generally not had the money to invest in their own businesses, such as restaurants, bars, cafés, noodle soup stalls and other shops at the markets. Moreover, the cost of living has also increased rapidly, making the living costs of local people increase considerably, and this has had the biggest impact on the people who relied on subsistence in their old location.

6.2 Weighing resettlement policy and activities and their societal impacts

The study finds that the government had a strategic plan in place for those affected by urban development project. Government officials explored the old area, surveyed the old properties, and gave compensation for the loss of land, for house demolition and for relocation. This can set the example for future development projects as there are many more areas to be developed in Pakse, such as around the international airport and in some industrial areas.

The urban development project in Pakse share certain similarity and difference with the study in the case of Vietnam by Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy (2010). Thuy's has emphasized on the policy of the government for the land expropriation and the compensation to the people who have impacts from the industrial development project. As a result of the development process people are confronted with social suffering and uncertainties related to modernization. They feel insecure in the present and worry about their future. In addition, people are faced with cultural crises in their everyday life in the modern world. Some people found Buddhism, some turn to spirit medium, some ask for cult of popular religion to associate with modernity.

Thuy's study combines and interrelates the significance and importance of the cult of Tran Hung Dao in contemporary Vietnam and the impact of development projects carried out in Hai Phong province. She explores how development projects would impact on social memory and traditional identity of local people who live in remote area with a traditional history.

Similarly, both her study and my study show that development projects are used by the state in order to justify the need “to develop” and “modernize” the people and their places of living as well as their farmland and livelihoods. What differ between her study and my study is the way that the authorities handled the implementation of the urban development project and how the affected people response to such development projects. In the case of Thuy's study, in the process of implementation of the Song Gia resort development project, local authorities employed their power of administration in order to force local people to give up their land and receive the compensation through different tactics, both carrot and stick measures such as the encouraging and rewarding additional payment through gifts for households who have agreed to receive compensation early; or the use of indirect

force through such strategies as stopping dissident's work at the government office, revoking their communist party membership, or registering in cooperative record of family's difference in the curriculum vitae of their children so that they would have little chance to be admitted to a good high school and university; or sent the letters to the dissidents' relatives to persuade family members to accept the compensation.

Due to the lack of communication process and the use of different tactics by the government in forcing the land expropriation, people are confronted with social suffering and uncertainties related to modernization. They feel insecure in the present and worry about future. In addition, people are faced with cultural crises in their everyday life in the modern world. Some people found Buddhism, some turn to spirit medium, some ask for cult of popular religion to associate with modernity.

However, in my case study, the local government had established the plan for the informing of the urban development and its associated policies and activities for the affected villagers in advance. One of the key aspects of the project was communications with the affected villagers in the project area, and UDAA officials were given the task of ensuring the impacted villagers were informed about the resettlement policies. Before going to meet the villagers, the officials had to meet Pakse District officials and officials from the three villages to explain the impacts of the project and describe the new area and the services that would be provided there.

This helped in certain ways in reducing any misunderstanding and any kind of negative impacts and responses. In addition, my study also differs from the findings of Thuy's study in that the Lao local officials planned and arranged the resettlement before implementing the project, putting together a strategic plan aimed at improving the infrastructure and providing appropriate services to the villagers. This plan covered the electricity and water supplies, the roads, health services, education and a telecommunications network, the aim being to improve people's living conditions.

Furthermore, to resettle villagers from the old area, the government appointed a committee to work with the state authorities and head of the village. This committee went to discuss the project with the villagers who were to be moved, in order for them to understand the purpose of the urban development project and why it was necessary; to help support economic expansion, plus help accommodate the increasing population, prevent floods and pollution and improve living conditions and the lives

local people. In addition, the committee announced that compensation would be paid for the houses being demolished, the land being taken and for the relocation of the people to a new area.

Good communication notwithstanding, my study and Thuy's study also show the government can do better if they become more careful in their calculation of compensation as well as the preparation of other necessities that are instrumental for the livelihood stability of the affected villagers. In the case of Pattana, while the government had a plan in place regarding compensation for affected villagers, However, the house demolition compensation did not equal the value of the house; moreover, the economic situation at that time was less stable, so the compensation amounts had a big impact on villagers who had to build a house in the new village in order to sustain their livelihoods. In addition, the house demolition compensation was paid quite slowly, making it difficult for the people who were to migrate. In a similar vein, Thuy's study found that the amount of land compensation to be paid to individual households is quite low. It does not reflect the land's actual market. Value. It has a value in accordance to poor agricultural land rather than the value of area being converted into a recreational space.

6.3 Livelihood strategies: Economic, social and cultural adaptations

There are several reasons why the migrants had to adjust their economic situation in order to survive in the new environment, which is different from the old area. The infrastructure in the new village was an important factor in deciding their living conditions, including the roads, electricity supply, telecommunications and other services; however, the new village lacked a number of things that would have facilitated trade and doing business. For example, the roads were not standard, the electricity supply was poor, and many of the services were far from the village, and this caused the villagers problems. As a result, the villagers' incomes fell, having a big impact on their daily lives.

In addition, the location of Pattana village was not suitable for running trade activities and providing other services because it is far from the center of town, plus the population density is low, meaning the villagers' trade activities did not generate much profit, and sometimes villagers lost their capital investment. Moreover, the

village's location on elevated ground meant it was not suitable for agriculture; there were no natural sources of water such as streams etc. All of these issues caused problems for the resettlers, meaning they had to adjust their economic activities to align with the lower incomes they were earning in the new area.

The villagers' economic adaptation took a number of forms, such as changing their occupations, consumption activities and expenditures. When the environment changed, after they had moved, the villagers had new strategies in place, those that fitted the new environment and also the new, economic mechanisms in the region.

Now, rather than being farmers and gardeners, as in the former location, most villagers are employed as staff; only a few still trade in the markets and or at home. The villagers who are employees work at the markets, for companies, and in hotels, because their previous income sources could not balance with the cost of living and the economic conditions in the new society.

However, being employed as staff has helped improve and develop their lives, for they receive salaries and social welfare working as government officials, as state enterprise staff and as private company staff (such as travel agencies and hotels). These staff jobs have higher incomes than other occupations as being traders.

The consumption patterns and expenditures of the villagers are also an important factor in their economic adaptation, as they have changed since the move due to the different environment. It is true that the economy has expanded, but incomes are not as stable; therefore, the resettlers have had to adjust their economies to fit the situation; they can no longer live off nature by finding food in the natural streams, and the cost of living has also increased, as income have fallen. As a result, the villagers in Pattana have had to alter their consumption patterns, as before they used to buy food along the road or in restaurants to eat at home. Now, they buy vegetables, fish, meat and other ingredients and cook meals themselves at home, to reduce expenditure and also to fit the economic conditions in the new environment.

When I interviewed the villagers in Pattana villager, many had shared similar view - that their social adaptation has been influenced by two main factors: 1) their subsistence requirements such as finding accommodation, and 2) finding an education for their children. Both of these are necessary and important for their livelihoods.

The accommodation provided in Pattana was one thing which created an obstacle for those relocated from the urban development project area, because they were not happy to migrate to areas the government had identified in advance. As a result, some villagers took the compensation, but did not move to Pattana. Instead they built small cabins near the project area in order to trade and run businesses in the same locations they had worked previously, such as at the markets and ports along the Mekong River. Moreover, some households were rich, so when they received land compensation from the government, sold their previous properties then simply bought land in the center of town, to support their business and facilitate their livelihoods. However, those who were poor, after they received their compensation from the government, had to move to the new area that the government had provided, because they had no choice.

From these cases, it is clear that the affected villagers had to adapt themselves in several ways in the new village. The different coping strategies that the villagers used in order to sustain their livelihoods in the new area have pointed to the diversity in livelihood adaptation strategies of different households and individuals.

Cultural adaptation helped the migrants develop a form of unity and solidarity within the community, such as running festivals and other activities. At the beginning, the villagers had different cultural elements as they had come from different parts of the country. For example, their festivals were different; however, when they moved to Pattana together, they had to adjust to suit the environment and living conditions. Because almost all of the resettlers were Lao ethnic people, this cultural adaptation was not so difficult; for they all practiced the Lao New Year festival, the temple festival and a variety of house festivals.

6.4 Social relation and religious and cultural Practices

6.4.1 Social organizations and social relation

Pattana community covers a large area of Pakse District, so the authorities developed a strategic plan for governing the new community. The idea within this plan was to develop the area so that the people moving would benefit. For example, the authorities set up or support the formation of social organizations to promote local livelihoods, such as the monetary fund, the health group, the funeral group, the

women's union and the youth group. The aim of each group was to help the villagers within the community and to promote unity and solidarity among its members.

Some of the advantages of these organizations can be viewed in terms of the support they have for members; for example, those with little capital to trade or run businesses, were able to borrow from the monetary group, as long as they were members and made a deposit every month, plus the interest rate was low when compared to the banks. Accordingly, this gave people the opportunity to improve their livelihoods and improve their economic situation. Or in the case of the health group in which the fund was established to help people who got sick. This is not without problem, however. Indeed, the health group ran in to difficulties due to the limited fund, thus, doctors were reluctant in giving out prescriptive medicines. As a result, some members of the group were not satisfied with the service. Similarly, the women's union and youth group also face difficulties as members did not have enough time to participate in their activities, while there were also complaints among members of the funeral group about late payment by some members.

Obstacles and difficulties notwithstanding, the benefits of all these social organizations can be considered in relation to its social function in maintaining unity, social relations, and cooperation within the community regardless of some existing problems

6.4.2 Religious and cultural practices

A number of practices related to beliefs, religion and culture have been practiced among the community for a long time. The villagers are particularly interested in religious activities due to their Buddhist beliefs their grandparents and parents handed down to them. For example, a temple was established in the village for the villagers to visit and show their respect for and belief in Buddhism, and a number of activities are held there such as alms-giving and a number of seasonal festivals. All of these events reflect the respect the villagers have for Lao traditions and the close attention they pay to maintaining their Buddhist beliefs.

These activities have several benefits for livelihoods, as giving alms every month raises money for relatives who have died, and those who participate in the ceremony wish for good luck for their family, such as having good health, and doing one's duty to the community. The purpose of the seasonal festivals is to continue their

Buddhist traditions and customs, as Lao people have done for a number of centuries, and also make merit and vows - for the family to be happy, do well in business, and to have a long life.

However, these activities can also create obstacles for the villagers' subsistence as most are traders, employees and staff; therefore, taking the time out of work to participate in these activities is not so easy as it once was, except at weekend. However, the villagers in Pattana village continue to practice the alms-giving each month and hold festivals every season in the temple.

Most villagers in Pattana have a Buddha shrine in their houses, to pay their respects to Buddha on a daily basis. In addition, every evening they worship and pray to Buddha before going to bed; vowing to do good things and that good luck and health come to their family, and that they do well in trade and business, that their job situation will be stable and improve. However, having a Buddha shrine in the house sometimes causes problems for the house owners. When they worship and pray to Buddha, they light incense sticks and candles in front of the shrine, and sometimes these can cause fires.

One of the important cultural practices I observed in Pattana village is the wedding ceremony. Of particular interest are the wedding rituals and practices as a marker of Lao culture, and identities and lifestyles of Lao people. As a result, people in Pattana have paid close attention to conserving these particular traditions. From an economic point of view, this cultural practice is good for the new couple, because the money they receive from the bride's parents and the guests gives them capital which they can use to develop their family's economy in the future.

Apart from the wedding ceremony, traditional dress is one marker of Lao cultural identity and is seen as the most important element among people in Pattana village, according to my interviews and observations. The villagers said that women's dress can be divided into two types: 1) clothes to wear to parties, and 2) clothes to wear every day at home or in the village. For parties and ceremonies it is necessary for women to wear a new *sinh* to show their Lao identity. People in Laos have been wearing *sinh* for several centuries and is a key part of their native identity, as practiced across all communities. At home or in the village, people still wear a *sin*

with a t-shirt. This shows the attention paid and importance attached to their cultural practices in society.

In addition, foods consumptions also reflect national culture. For example, Lao people still eat at temples, festivals and in each others' homes. They eat at temples when they hold festivals, during which villagers take food, fruit and other items, to make-merit and give presents to the monks and novices, as part of the religious ceremonies that take place. After these ceremonies have finished, villagers eat together to show solidarity within the community and to perform *seelimongkhon*. Eating together at ceremonies is part of the cultural practices in Pattana village, and this practice has been passed down over the centuries, being carried out at weddings, house festivals and other parties in the village. At these ceremonies, the hosts make food for their relatives, neighbors and friends, who join from outside.

6.5 Theoretical Discussion

The urban development project in Pakse involves a progressive transformation of economy and society. The government employs the modernism approach to development which has been linked to economic and social change, change that brings a quantitative improvement in life's conditions (Martinussen, 1997). The urban development in Pakse can be viewed as what has been called an all-powerful mechanism for the production and management of space (Escobar, 1995; Vandergeest, 2003). Under the rubric of the new economic system, with the aim of improving socio-economic conditions, the state has been concerned about developing infrastructure and has adopted many new urban policies and program including the one in Pakse.

In my case study, the discourse of development in general and of urban development in particular can be used to explain the lack of negotiation on the part of affected villagers. Villagers too, consider urban development as inevitable, necessary path to national development, therefore participate in this development despite fully aware of the challenges that urban development brought to their livelihood subsistence. However, they did employ various coping strategies when faced with socio-economic changes which impacted on their livelihoods sustainability. Moreover, the adaptations carried out by the Pattana villagers can also be understood in the light of what Goudineau (cited in Ervard and Goudineau, 2004) has called the “double

process of resettlement”, which involves both de-territorialization and re-territorialization. According to Goudineau, the process of de-territorialization not only means leaving a territory, but for many villagers also entails changing their whole traditional way of life (ecologically, culturally and technically). The process of re-territorialization; meanwhile, implies not only settling in a new environment, but also accepting and integrating into the cultural references that are bound up with it.

When it comes to the question of the conditions of people's lives, there were mixed consequences. My finding shares similarity with Sounadeth's (2010) analysis in that it shows both the successful aspects of urban development policy and its unintended consequences, including changes in livelihood strategies for those villagers who are relocated. Similar to the study by Khamla (2010) in Northern Laos, the study of villagers affected by urban development in Pakse also reveals that the development of infrastructure, notably roads, and the expansion of commodity markets all contributed to moving farmers away from subsistence based agriculture. Additionally, some villagers in Pattana were able to take advantage of the emerging economic opportunities and diversify their livelihood portfolios, while others with inadequate knowledge and skills needed for emerging employment opportunities were left economically vulnerable.

Similar to Vandergeest's (2003) study of land tenure reforms which highlighted the problem of "development-induced" displacement, the villagers affected by the urban development project in Pakse had been displaced from their old locations to live in the new area provided by the government. In a way, my findings share some similarities with several previous studies (for example, Baird and Shoemaker, 2005; Ervard and Goudineau, 2004; Goudineau, 1997), which all investigate the negative impacts of development-induced relocations. For example, the Pattana villagers whom I interviewed complained about the difficulties they had making a living after the move. Many who do not own a car, a motorcycle or any other type of vehicle had to spend more money travelling, as the village is far from town. In addition, concern over the safety over their properties, due to the low housing density in Pattana village, led many villagers to change their occupations after the move; for example, those who used to earn a living selling noodles in town, started to sell them from home instead. The other key impacts mentioned by the villagers include the low levels of access to

primary and secondary school education after the move, the lack of water resources, and the inconveniences faced when having to travel in and out of the village, to go to town and other areas.

Villagers in Pattana village who supplement their income working as employees have done better in terms of economic adaptation when compared to those other with no employment choices. This finding is similar to those of Pinkaew (2011), who found that a few of the villagers in her study who had been affected by a development project were able to adapt due to incomes earned working as employees.

Similar to previous studies (for example, Sengsouliya, 2011; Pinkaew, 2011) my study shows development project has impacts on the livelihoods of those affected. Yet, villagers are able to adapt because they have employed different livelihood strategies. The resources they utilized, and the kinds of capital mobilized in the process. Human adapt under the influence of change. Their adaptive strategies are diverse, and depend on numerous factors and conditions ranging from traditions, living conditions, the leader of the organization and the context of the community (Charoen, 2000).

The various adaptation techniques used to overcome tensions, depended on each person's foundation and experience. Of equal importance were the tangible and the intangible assets that people had to ensure their sustainable livelihoods. Sounadeth's (2010) study of the urban development and resettlement in Vientiane also found that having a diversity of household incomes can be considered an alternative livelihood strategy for local people, rather than working in only one job as a trader or laborer. Similarly, Hua's (2010) research on the processes of adaptation and responses among affected villagers in an agricultural commune to a government development program also shows a disruption took place in social relations, as well as people's choice of new intervention. His study shows those different households responded differently, with some households being able to maintain their previous livelihood activities, while others had to change their activities or diversify them.

Similarly, villagers in Pattana village who supplement their income working as employees have done better in terms of economic adaptation when compared to those other with no employment choices. This finding is similar to those of Pinkaew (2011), who found that a few of the villagers in her study who had been affected by a

development project were able to adapt due to incomes earned working as employees.

My study in the case of Pattana is similar to a number of studies in Lampang Province in northern Thailand of villagers relocated due to the building and expansion of lignite-fuelled power plants. These studies and my study found that villagers had to change their agricultural-based livelihood into other sectors, in my case into trade and wage labour which is similar to the study of Panyawut (1996), and in the study by Charoen (2000), into the industrial and service sectors.

The findings in the case of social and cultural practices found there are no problems in terms of the practices and continuity of social and cultural because in the case of Pattana despite the affected villagers who moved to live there came from different communities, yet, they have shared culture and cultural practices, as well as other customs and beliefs. My study also found, similar to Charoen (2000) that social relations with the former community declined, and that less people participated in religious ceremonies and other community traditions because they have to work outside the community. In a different note, villagers who came from different communities have been acculturated in the cultural practices of villagers from other communities. Indeed, as attested to by previous studies (Chayan, 1986; Nithi, 1994) cultures also change, can be borrowed, acculturated or assimilated.

Culture as a way of life is accumulated and transmitted in the forms of knowledge, practices and belief systems of groups of people, and be adapted in accordance with a changing situation (Kanchana, 1995; Kasem, 1963; Ekkawit, 2001).

In addition, I found a similarity between the findings of my study and those of Khamla (2010), in terms of the changes that take place in people's central livelihoods systems. His study, which looks at the issues of livelihood and land use dynamics in two different ethnic and topographical settings in northern Laos, reveals that the development of infrastructure, notably roads, and the expansion of commodity markets in China, have contributed to moving rural farmers away from subsistence-based agriculture. Similarly, the development of infrastructures in the case of Pattana village, as well as the changes in topographical setting which make an agriculture-based subsistence economy no longer viable, has resulted in villagers' embracing of other occupations and diversifying their livelihood portfolios in order to sustain their livelihoods.

Some scholars, for example Petit (2008: 118) argue that the agency of Lao settlers, their representations and practices, have been under-analyzed. My study of Pattana village has shown how the impacted villagers had to change their livelihoods in terms of making a living after their move: from practicing agriculture and wage labor in the old location, to carrying out market-oriented and wage labor strategies in the new location. This finding is significant within the Lao context, a country in which livelihoods have been focused on agriculture for the great majority of the population for a long time (Rigg 2005).

Agricultural activities in Laos mostly involve the growing of rice and vegetables planting and the raising of livestock. However, within the context of regional economic integration and Laos moving down an economic development path, agriculture needs to be viewed within the context of a wider livelihoods' base and may require re-engineering (Rigg 2005), though it will remain of central importance to the Lao economy and Laotian people's livelihoods. However, in Pattana village, as there is no agricultural land, non-farm activities became the lifeblood for villagers after they were moved there.

This study of the livelihoods of those resettled to Pattana village shares several characteristics and similarities with previous studies in Laos. While my study supports the argument that agriculture remains central importance to the Laotian economy (Rigg 2005), I agree with Rigg's (2005) argument that the present regional economic integration context, and Laos' move toward greater economic development, necessitate that agriculture be placed within a wider livelihoods context, and also may be subject to re-engineering.

As illustrated by the resettlers in Pattana village, households in Laos now depend mostly on mixed livelihoods, a finding in line with previous studies (Rigg 2005; Shoemaker et al. 2001 cited in Rigg 2005). Rigg (2005), in particular, writing in the context of Laos, also cautioned against overlooking the variation in household livelihoods patterns. My study of different households in Pattana village found that poorer households have more diverse sources of income than in the past, which is similar to Rigg's (2005) findings in the case of villagers in two districts within Oudomxai and Savannakhet provinces.

In addition, while other studies (see; for example, Shoemaker et al. 2001) highlight the existence of locally-oriented networks of exchange based on villages' different ecological and natural resource contexts, and that these networks facilitate livelihoods sustainability, wider marketing and social networks may assume greater importance in ensuring livelihoods sustainability in the emerging context of regional economic integration. This is certainly of great importance for the villagers in Pattana village. Similar to Phouxay and Tollefsen (2010), whose study shows an increasing number of young, rural people, including a larger proportion of women, go to work in large towns, many young people from Pattana village now also work outside the village for companies and businesses in Pakse, where more jobs are available.

6.6 Summary

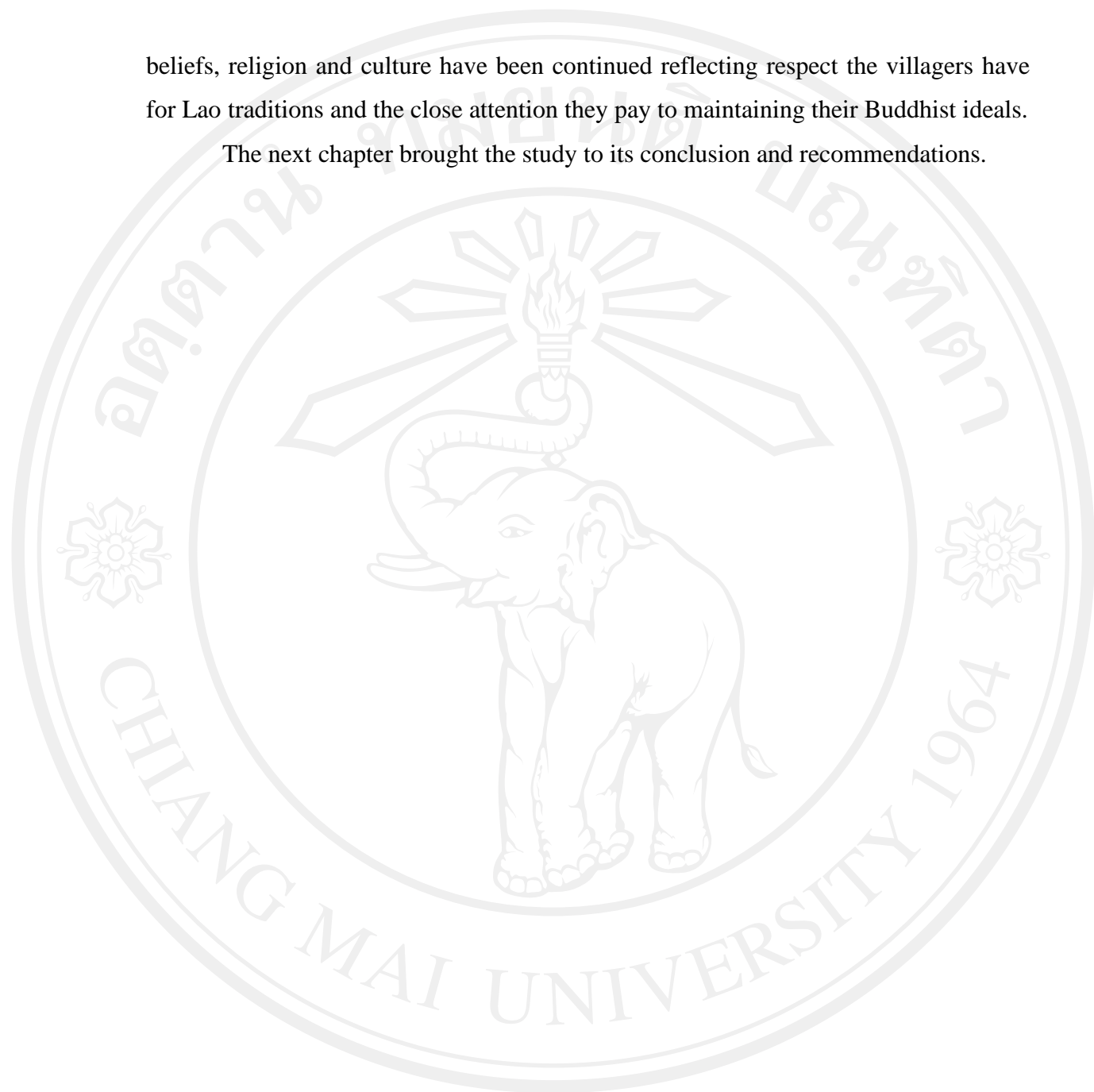
The urban development project in Pakse was part of the government strategy to develop the country socio-economically. The urban development project in Pakse involves a progressive transformation of economy and society. The government employs the modernism approach to development which has been linked to economic and social change, change that brings a quantitative improvement in life's conditions.

In practice, the government had a strategic plan in place to help those forced to move due to the urban development project. The study shows both the successful aspects of urban development policy and its unintended consequences, including changes in livelihood strategies for those villagers who are relocated. The resettlers meanwhile had to adjust their economic situation in order to survive in the new environment. The discourse of development in general and of urban development in particular can be used to explain the lack of negotiation on the part of affected villagers. However, they did employ various coping strategies when faced with socio-economic changes which impacted on their livelihoods sustainability. The social adaptation has been influenced by their subsistence requirements and finding an education for their children.

Meanwhile, cultural adaptation helped develop a form of unity and solidarity within the community. Within the community, the establishment of several social organization help to ensure unity and cooperation and a number of practices related to

beliefs, religion and culture have been continued reflecting respect the villagers have for Lao traditions and the close attention they pay to maintaining their Buddhist ideals.

The next chapter brought the study to its conclusion and recommendations.



ลิขสิทธิ์มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

Copyright© by Chiang Mai University
All rights reserved