

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background and Research Problems

In the context of Vietnam, economic development has aimed primarily to reduce poverty (Anh 1994) and also find an alternative solution for generating more income at the local level. However, tourism in Vietnam is considered a tool or unintended consequence of economic development in order to attract foreign exchange. There has not been much work on how tourism contributes to development other than in terms of economic growth. Since the *Doi Moi* policy in 1986, Vietnam has become one of the most prominent developing countries in Southeast Asia. Vietnamese macroeconomic policies have tried to encourage a ‘transition’, ‘stabilization’ or to facilitate ‘structural adjustment’ so as to create a healthy environment for stimulated growth and poverty reduction (Griffin 1998). Investment in agriculture, coastal fisheries, urban services and the informal tourism sector as well as labor-intensive export industries are all policies put in place to prevent a fall in output and incomes. Griffin (1998) argued that though there was a dramatic fall in agriculture, the reform process was still led by agriculture, especially for export.

Consequently, economic growth became an incentive and a goal for policies which opened up a space for tourism development. In this phase of mass tourism, there was considerable investment in the hotel industry and accommodation sector in order to meet tourists’ demand. There has been a dramatic increase in hotel rooms but also a lack of strategic planning to control hotel development (Mok and Lam 1998: 88).

In order to control the tourism industry in terms of environmental politics and government involvement, the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) was set up in 1993 to reinforce “stronger State management, strategic planning, training and the easing

of formalities for the tourism industry” (Mok and Lam 1998: 88). However, the lack of clear policies and “strategic marketing planning and promotion activities” have been challenging issues. The underlying socialist ideas of the state against policies of liberalizing the market have revealed inherent contradictions and fostered more conservative policy implementation. Lloyd (2014) explored the “turbulent relationship” between the Communist Party’s strategy of ‘socialist market economy’ and neo-liberal institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank towards political pluralism. He argued that “foreign tour operators and Vietnamese tourism authorities perceive that role of international capital in tour operations quite differently” (Lloyd 2014: 197). These limitations encouraged local autonomy, which were undermined by “an informal set of rules that cut across and inhibit attempts at top-down policy formulation and implementation” (Lloyd 2014: 211).

The Master Plan published by the WTO in collaboration with the United Nations merely highlighted the possible environmental, social and cultural degradation possible in hotel and infrastructure building. After becoming a member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in July 1995 and, under the pressure of the UNDP and the World Tourism Organization (WTO), Vietnam has had to commit to a contribution towards sustainable development in tourism. Again, only after their membership in ASEAN (and with the help of UNDP and WTO), Vietnam introduced a new law on tourism that follows the trend of sustainable development as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development. They also subscribed to the principles of sustainable tourism development according to the PATA (Pacific and Asian Tourist Association) code for environmentally responsible tourism (Heinemann: 1995). Generally, tourism is a new industry that the government needs to be concerned with in terms of balancing the policies of the free market and national security. Therefore, most research has concentrated on the hotel industry or accommodation development along the lines of economic liberalization as a tool or first stage for tourism development. The goals have been to meet tourists’ demand instead of radically paying more attention to types of sustainable tourism. To this day, there has been a big gap in research on rural tourism and agritourism as well as ecotourism in order to meet the long-term policy goals of sustainable development.

There have been three main approaches to agritourism: “(1) the type of setting (e.g., farm, any agricultural setting); (2) the authenticity of the agricultural facility or the experience; and (3) the types of activities involved (e.g., lodging, education)” (Arroyo et al. 2013: 40). In regards to the third approach (which is the most understandable), Barbieri presented her definition of agritourism activities and services, including “leisure and educational tours, nature contemplation, U-pick vegetables/ fruits, on-farm lodging (e.g. cabins, camping sites), hunting and fishing for a fee, on-farm sales and gift shops, lodging and food services, programing special events such as private parties and festivals, among many others activities” (2013: 255). Phillip et al. (2010) provide the most widely used definition, which is simply to contact of tourists with agriculture.

In the 1990s, farmer income in Europe declined for several reasons. For example, there were reductions both in price and demand (Sznajder et al. 2009). Farmers’ incomes are derived from two main sources: agriculture and off-farm work. Farm household income from off-farm sources (including off-farm work, investment and other sources) increased dramatically in the 1950s. Urbanization was the main factor that dramatically impacted on the rural population. Therefore, the relationship between urban and rural areas changed in terms of redistribution of income from urban to rural people. Agritourism came up as an alternative solution to solve this concern. Wolfe and Holland (2005) found that agritourism development was impelled by the causes of low farm income, urbanization, redistribution of urban people’s income to agritourist farms and the state of rural infrastructure. In this sense, agritourism products in EU became the link between urban people’s demand for relaxation and the need for additional income in rural areas. Later on, Brundtland’s report in 1987 (World Commission on Environment and Development) raised the issue of sustainable development as it related to the degraded environment and heightened fears about food security. The concept of agritourism in terms of sustainability gained additional meanings and there was a call for more awareness by researchers and scholars. For example, there was a study of sustainable tourism in the practices of rural development (McAreavey and McDonagh 2010).

Agritourism was initially introduced in three provinces in Vietnam in 2007 by the Dutch Farmers Association (Agriterria), including the provinces of Tiền Giang and An Giang in

the Mekong Delta and Lào Cai in the mountainous north. The program provided training courses on tourism management as well as tried to raise the farmers' awareness on sustainable tourism and agritourism. After three years, An Giang proved to be the most successful case and thus received a follow-up project for the next four years. According to Agriterro, the project aims to "transform the existing agro-tourist office of the provincial union (AGFU) into a rural farmers' tourist centre. The aim is to establish a viable Farmers' Rural Tourism Centre at the provincial level while mobilizing the potential of farm households to host tourists and generate income through agro-tourist services and job opportunities. The outreach consists of 15 communes and 100 households". Therefore, their goals were to "generate income and employment of rural households in agritourism activities by establishing an agritourism centre in AGFU which will provide services in marketing, training and access to finance/loans from the bank". Accordingly, my research explores how the original European concept and practice of agritourism has been interpreted and implemented in An Giang Province, specifically in the three communes where the project was conducted. These communes are Mỹ Hòa Hưng, Ô Lâm, and Tân Trung. My objectives include exploring farmers as agritourism providers in An Giang province, their rationality of the concept of agritourism, the farmers' practices involved in agritourism and an assessment of the sustainability of agritourism after seven years of operation.

The Mekong Delta has favorable natural conditions and geography which contribute an important portion of Vietnam's national economy through agriculture. Agriculture has been Vietnam's traditional economy due to such geographical characteristics and also a motor for economic growth. *Doi Moi* policies have strongly impacted the Mekong Delta in all aspects from the transition to a market-based economy to its use of natural resources. Rapid economic growth and successful agricultural production, together with intensified agriculture usage and large-scale water-control structures, challenged environmental sustainability and social equity in the region (Kakonen 2008). According to the General Statistics Office 2008, the Mekong Delta has the population of 16.365 million, occupying 22% of the national population with a population growth rate of 2.4% per year. 82.5% of the population lives in rural areas. "Agricultural land (mainly rice paddies) occupies 75% of the delta. Rice cultivation is the primary livelihood for 60% of the delta's people. The

delta produces about half of the national food volume, 51% of total rice-paddy production, 55% of the national fisheries and fruit production, 60% of the country's exported aquaculture goods, and 61% of the total national export value" (General Statistics Office 2008).

The Mekong Delta is the main agricultural economy specializing in rice and fisheries for export. Kakonen (2008) found that land reclamation began in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries after the Fu Nan civilization and then the Khmers. During French colonial time, water construction and control was intensified in order to build a more legible system and permit more efficient control and taxation of the local people and their resources. These included various temporary measures that effected greater political control and promoted economic objectives to further export-commerce. During the Cold War, the idea of human control over resources and social conditions through the application of science and technology led to the borrowing of the American model for development. This model provided the rationale for building several irrigation and dam projects in the Mekong Region. The Americans' interest in the pacification of the delta led to the development of the Mekong Delta Development Program (MDDP) in 1966 through 1968. This focused on water resources' development in order to control water for agriculture for the purpose of developing intensive farming and a multi-cropping system. Agricultural development was subsequently ruptured due to war and collectivization after unification. But, thereafter, the market liberalization policies together with continuing water control provided more incentives for farmers and contributed to Vietnam becoming the world's second largest rice exporter in (Kakonen 2008). Moreover, the study showed that the Mekong Delta's development is at a crossroads in terms of environmental and social sustainability. New alternatives must be explored. There were also signs of a "shift away from the simple protectionist monoculture policies toward more diversification and also environmentally friendly options" (Kakonen 2004: 210). Accordingly, the policies should focus on pro-poor solutions and social equity to give equal opportunities to vulnerable groups.

Local contingencies are another concern for policy makers. In a study exploring the political economy of market reform and the formation of socio-spatial identities in Tam

Nông Commune, Mekong Delta of Vietnam, the concept of indigeneity was used to show “one community’s conflict over resource use that demonstrates how land law, local rules of access, and the evolution of competing claims to land can create politicized socio-spatial localities overnight” (Spencer 2007: 99) in the context of increasing global integration. Spencer (2007) suggested, “Contemporary globalization and market integration is creating new indigenous communities that need to be understood” (Spencer 2007: 99). In Tam Nong, “villagers are reluctant to plant Tram trees and have created viable economic alternatives to rice agriculture in areas where acidic soils make rice cropping a risky investment” and “farmers’ choices may not always reflect “rational” economic decisions” (Spencer 2007: 120). Spencer argued that the concept of indigeneity “presents an excellent opportunity for planners and policy makers to take more seriously how emerging calls for community-based regulation and governance in Vietnam” (Spencer 2007: 120).

Not only policy changes but also environmental impacts like climate change in the Mekong Delta have adjusted farmers’ perspectives on agriculture towards adaptive behavior and well-planned adaptation strategies. Dang et al. (2014) conducted a study in the Mekong Delta to explore perceived risks of farmers. Structured interviews with 598 farmers revealed that “perceived risks to production, physical health, and income dimensions receive greater priority while farmers pay less attention to risks to happiness and social relationships” (Dang et al. 2004: 331). The authors also found out that livelihoods are still the main concern of these farmers and “farmers’ perceived risks of climate change are relative and contextual” (Dang et al. 2004: 344). Authorities were recommended to pay attention to information quality, timing and channels which have an influential impact on farmers’ perception. In conclusion, pattern uses of natural resources link directly with the concept of sustainability and call for policies that encourage and control farmers’ practices towards better natural resource usage.

An Giang was one of the three provinces introduced to the agritourism project in 2007 in order to provide training for farmers, build infrastructure, and raise farmers’ awareness of sustainable tourism and agritourism. The province has been famous for its tourist attractions due to its favorable geography, historical sites and diverse culture before

agritourism occurred. The follow-up agritourism project in An Giang was conducted in 2010 to evaluate its implementation and build a business plan to monitor and further develop agritourism after the successful end of the first project. According to the agritourism project, its marketing office has attracted 800 tourists out of the 7,000 total that visited An Giang through 2010. In 2011 alone about 300 tourists were attracted to the region through this office. There are a variety of agritourism activities “including participating in community activities (farming), experience local culture, dinner with farm household, stay overnight in homestay, guide through the village and scenery” (Agritourism project). Local products are also promoted such as handicrafts.

Overall, the follow-up project aims to build a tourism management structure that promotes collaboration with travel companies and insurance companies to generate income and jobs for farmers. Moreover, it aims to strengthen farmers’ capacity to work in groups such as the Vietnam Farmers Union (VNFU) or An Giang Farmers Union (AGFU). These are organized, local groups that, through building their membership, hope to facilitate product enhancement, market and finance access, and collaboration with other chain actors and businesses. AGFU has planned to establish a tourist center to manage tourism business and advise the farmer entrepreneurs on agritourism, provide trainings, marketing promotions and access to loans. In this sense, the Dutch Farmers Association tried to promote and build farmers’ capacity to set up their own agritourism business with the support of a farmers’ union at the provincial level.

The project’s results showed the potential for a prosperous future - each household on average earned a profit of €500. There were 84 households in 15 different communes included in the project. Accordingly, a variety of part time jobs and income were provided. The number of visitors between 2007 to 2010 is now roughly 43.000 domestic visitors and 1900 foreigners, including Europeans and Japanese, which is a promising market. The tourists are identified as students, pupils, government officials/staff, members of farmers’ unions and other mass organizations. The budget was completely controlled by AGFU, according to Agriterra’s report: 60% of investment costs (motorbikes, website, part of office interior upgrading), 60% of marketing costs, 34% of

operational costs (including travelling costs, audits and evaluation but not salaries or office expenses), and 97% of training cost (not including the production costs).

Overall, the agritourism project had two phases. For the first three years (2007-2010), building infrastructure and farmers' capacities were the main goals and were the premise for further development. For the last four years (2010-2014), tourism management was built to sustain the agritourism business with the goal of generating a substantial number of new jobs and income for farmers. The most important feature is that the project tried to promote collective action of farmers through their increased membership within the farmers union and with other stakeholders and build the individual farmers' capacity to do their own business. This project coincided well with the provincial policy to promote sustainable development as well as ecotourism. However, in contradiction to the trainings it provided in its first phase, it emphasized the role of generating jobs and income for farmers and focused on economic benefits rather than sustainability.

Agritourism in Vietnam was recommended by the Agriterria with the aim of generating jobs and income for farmers. Similarly, in the context of Europe, agritourism was considered as an alternative solution to the need to redistribute income from city dwellers to rural people (Wolfe and Holland 2005). However, the way agritourism emerged in Vietnam is quite different from its emergence in Europe because of two main motivations. Firstly, Vietnam planned to be a modern and industrialized country by 2020 (the 10th National Congress). Secondly, overproduction and the use of chemicals signaled the need for more integrated farming in Mekong Delta to support more sustainable production (Vo and Matsui 1998). Those two factors motivated the quest for alternative solutions to economic growth. Since *the Doi Moi* policy in 1986, the government has tried to promote economic development to eradicate poverty (Anh 1994). However, they have also struggled with the tension between social ideology and the commitment to market liberalization which was called a "turbulent relationship" (Lloyd 2014). As a consequence, there has been no clear guidance policy for regional economic development. This opened up more space for local autonomy to self-mobilize their economic status (Achariya 2012). Agriterria's agritourism project conformed to the government's policy aimed at developing the regional economy and they promoted their

approach as an alternative solution to the need for generating more income and jobs in rural areas.

In terms of tourism, the Master Plan published by the WTO in collaboration with the United Nations only focused on hotel and infrastructure building, posing possible environmental, social and cultural degradation (Heinemann 1995). There has not been much work on rural development that commits to sustainable development. In order to fill this gap, my research aims to explore how local farmers integrated the concept of “agritourism” into their practices. I employed the concept of community of practices that examine the group’s rationality through understanding how farmers learn the concept of agritourism and, by participation in community, construct new meanings or change their ability to work in agritourism. Moreover, this concept has helped me explore farmers’ collective action in agritourism instead of individual economic development and how rural livelihoods and social relations have changed due to farmers’ participation in agritourism. The concept of agritourism as a new space for examining farmers’ identity in the tourism business is presented to show how they actively engaged in the market.

1.2 Research Questions

1.2.1 Why and how did agritourism happen in An Giang Province?

1.2.2 What is the rationality of farmers as agritourism providers? How have local farmers integrated “agritourism” in commoditizing rurality?

1.2.3 How have they played their roles in sustaining rurality?

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 To identify farmers’ (as agritourism providers) rationality towards “agritourism” in An Giang Province and their strategic communication to engage in agritourism.

1.3.2 To investigate how farmers articulate themselves in commoditizing farmers’ daily lives.

1.3.3 To assess farmers' roles in sustaining farmers' practices and the environment.

1.4 Literature Review and Theoretical Concepts

1.4.1 Review of Theories and Concepts

In this part, I present three main concepts that are relevant to my research objectives and were helpful to me when analyzing the phenomena. The first one was about actors engaged in agritourism. These agritourism models provided a holistic approach that has helped me locate my actor of farmers in the model and then think in which way they interact with the other actors. The second concept was communities of practices which navigate my analysis of farmers' daily activities and their underlying implications. And the third one was the concepts of sustainability and agritourism. These two concepts were used to review the work on agritourism in terms of sustainable tourism.

1) Commoditizing Farmers' Daily Life in Rurality

There are various ways to look at how actors engaged in agritourism interact with each other. In my study, I prefer to use the agritourism model of McGehee (2007) based on Weberian perspectives to examine actors/ agritourism providers' relationships and their actions that operate the model in a sustainable way. Another useful concept is the commodification of rurality. Though the agritourism model can provide me a holistic approach when thinking of actors' motivations and perspectives, I still need to focus in more detail on farmers' practices. The concept of commodification of rurality is helpful for me in exploring the relations between farmers and rural space, including landscape. These relationships are vital when assessing the later concept of sustainability in agritourism.

This model provides a holistic framework to locate actors and understand how they interact with each other to operate the model. There are three ways to look at these actors. Firstly, McGehee (2007) introduced an agritourism systems model based on a Weberian Perspective on formal and substantial rationality of the motivations and needs of the three main stakeholders - agritourism providers like family farms, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and agritourists - to argue that if they find ways to collaborate and communicate successfully, the model is more prone to fulfill their needs and motivations. The three stakeholders need to employ strategies that engage in decision-support tools for entrepreneurial farms and firms to achieve a higher quality of life in the community as well as economic sustainability.

McGehee also tried to point out evidence of motivations and obstacles for each stakeholder that show how their formal and substantial rationality play a role in contributing to the success of the model. In her interpretation, Weber is famous for his economic rationality in capitalism, the underlying force or reasoning (means) behind the creation of some form of economic activity (Roth and Wittich 1978 Taylor 1994). According to McGehee (2007: 113), Weber's argument is that the individual bears formal – sought efficiency – or substantive – adherence to a conceptual or ideological system – reasons to engage in economic enterprise. Substantive rationality are choices motivated by a particular philosophical bent, sense of morality, or vision for societal change. For example, a farm family not only wants economic gain but also wants to educate the public about agritourism. The substantive reasons behind the behavior of agritourists are to support farmers and healthy food. In this sense, Weber argued that the problem lies between the tensions of formal and substantive rationality in the individual that effect other elements of the community. Therefore,

understanding the motivation of the three stakeholders may facilitate communication and successful experiences.

In her study, McGehee utilized the Agritourism Systems model based on the definition of tourism of Weaver and Fennell's (1997). She used this to justify needs and obstacles in formal and substantive rationality, or a mix of both, to argue that understanding the three primary stakeholder groups with their different rationality for participation in the model may facilitate communication and improvement. The model also has a strong argument for the existence of substantive rationality as well. The obstacle is the relationship between agritourism providers and DMOs to find a common place to negotiate (Clarke 1996), which may be formal rationality. Though the model shows the holistic picture of agritourism, there are still some weaknesses. As the model focuses mainly on motivations, it may underestimate the social relations and social interactions. These factors possibly are the cause of the obstacles and help shape the motivations. It promotes finding mutual agreement amongst the three main stakeholders according to their "best practices" (an altogether too broad and vague concept that lacks definition). Thus, the model needs more work to include more actors in different contexts and to explore the concept of sustainability operating in the model. It is still helpful for me (1) in locating agritourism providers as farmers in the model, (2) to show how farmers' formal and substantive rationality towards sustainability influences their practices, and (3) to further explore the operation of the concept of sustainability in the model.

Secondly, the process of commodification of rural space is a supported way of examining agritourism, specifically the interaction between farmers and rural space. Kikuchi (2009) discussed the sustainable commodification of rural space in relation to urbanity. Rural spaces or rurality (including rural landscape and other factors) have sustainable relationships with urbanity. These relationships can be considered when

developing rural-based tourism. He proposed that in rural space “environmental and economic aspects were noted expressions of their character and community locations with reference to agricultural activities and production. Therefore, rurality consists of agricultural activities and production, rural land use and landscape, and farms and their community” (Kikuchi 2009: 90).

As Kikuchi mainly focused on the sustainable relationships between rurality and urbanity, he does not help me very much in my exploration of the detailed components in rurality and my actors’ interaction within the rural space. Liepins (2000) also explored the concept of rurality through ‘community’, which is characterized by discourses, practices and spaces. She examined the concept of community in poststructuralist developments, engaging more with the characteristics of fluidity and heterogeneity embedded in rurality. She proposed that “the social formation of power and discourse are particularly important contexts to consider when proposing a social analysis of rural ‘communities’” (Liepins 2000: 327). For further explanation, she concentrated on four dimensions. “First, the knowledge of ‘community’ as a social construct is predicated on the collective interaction and enactment of ‘community’ by people.” “Second, people will develop shared meanings about their connectedness in ‘community’ via local discourses and activities.” “Third, people will enact ‘community’ relations and discursively construct their meanings about ‘community’ based on a range of processes or practices that connect people with key activities, institutions and spaces.” “Fourth, ‘communities’ will be embodied through specific spaces and structures” (Liepins 2000).

Thus, the concept of rurality long has been associated with community. Meanwhile, rurality is characterized highly with agricultural production and rural landscape embedded in community; the concept of community opens up a more detailed examination of meaning practices

and spaces, mainly in social relations and collective interactions and structure. I employed the concept of rurality of Kikuchi as my operationalization and, later, the work of Liepins which emphasizes the four functions of community: social construction, shared meanings, relations, spaces and structure. My redefined concept of rurality will be elaborated more thoroughly in the concept detailed below about actors' practices. Rurality in my study is defined as a source of agricultural knowledge or knowledge of farmers' lives which farmers could share and use to educate outsiders. Additionally, the agritourism model based on a Weberian perspective gave me more approaches to understand farmers from the perspective of entrepreneurs; how their perspectives are embedded in rural space and the agritourism model and to discover the power relations underlying the social system as well as discuss the concept of agritourism as it is produced by powerful actors. In my study, farmers were those who were selected to join in the agritourism project.

2) Farmers' Roles as Entrepreneurs

In my review of the concept of practices, I employed the concept of communities of practices of Wenger (1998) as a dialogue and exchange between "rural entrepreneurs" and tourists to examine the farmers' roles as entrepreneurs in the agritourism business. Instead of using only formal and substantive rationality on the part of the actors from a Weberian's perspective, I could additionally explore how farmers engaged in agritourism negotiated among themselves and with tourists through their interpretation of agritourism. This concept helped me understand how farmers learnt the concept of agritourism from the project and how it transformed their agricultural practices and then how they negotiated their rationality with other actors' rationality.

Wenger (1998) introduced an influential concept of communities of practice in education with operational concepts of learning, meaning, and identity. This concept is relatively easy to operationalize in community. To him, meaning is changing our ability to experience our world; practices emphasizes shared historical and social resources and mutual engagement in action; community consists of social configurations characterized through participation and competence; identity is about how learning changes personal histories in a community context (Wenger 1998: 5). Conceptions are the implications of our perspectives, theories and beliefs. And thinking about learning happens everywhere, effecting everyone's status and jobs to legitimate peripheral participation that characterizes learning. In the figure, social structure is constructed through institutions, norms and rules shaping cultural systems, discourse and history to legitimate action, agency or knowledgeability in the individual actor. Situated experience expresses agency, intentions and interactive relations of people with their environment, which is the local construction of individual or interpersonal events including activities and conversations. Social practice is production and reproduction engaging with the world in everyday activities and, in real time settings, in shared resources, coordinated activities, mutual relationships, and interpretations of the world. In a more detailed description, identity is the social formation of a person, cultural interpretation of the body or membership shown in rites of passage and social categories characterized by gender, class, ethnicity, age, forms of categorization, association, differentiation and complex relations of mutual constitution between individuals and groups (Wenger 1998: 17).

Wenger's concept of communities of practices emphasizes the learning process of the individual as a way to change their capacity and construct their identity and power through negotiation with others as a member of a group. In order to explore how membership can be constructed, it

is useful to consider the concept of access introduced by Ribot and Peluso (2003). This concept is operationalized by “the ability to derive benefits from things,” and “the right to benefit from things”. These abilities and rights are formed by “a bundle of power” embedded in social relationships. To them, “access is about *all* possible means by which a person is able to benefit from things. Property generally evokes some kind of *socially acknowledged and supported* claims or rights – whether that acknowledgement is by law, custom, or convention.” (Ribot and Peluso 2003: 156). They also develop structural and relational mechanisms of access to follow, focusing on Neale (1998: 48 – italics in original): “the issues of *who* does (and who does not) get to use *what*, in *what* ways, and *when* (that is, in what circumstances). These mechanisms consist of access to technology, to capital, to markets, to labor and labor opportunities, to knowledge, through authority, through social identity, and via the negotiation of other social relations. Lastly, Wenger’s concept of communities of practices is useful for me when I try to understand farmers’ practices in the process of learning the meaning of agritourism in order to play their central roles of being farmers while also changing their power or identity when their practices are embedded in social relations and boundaries within the community.

To sum up, I employed the communities of practices to explore how farmers interact with each other to define their meanings and construct their identity due to their rationality in order to operate an agritourism business. Therefore, I had to locate farmers as agritourism providers in an agritourism model and their perspectives towards the concept of agritourism as well as their rationality. By combining communities of practices, I wanted to examine the group rationality in the unbounded rural space. In my study, I defined farmers as entrepreneurs actively engaged in tourism production and consumption so as to avoid being objectified by tourism. My study emphasized the farmers’ role as

entrepreneurs focused on non-economic benefits or substantial rationality so as to argue that the entrepreneurs' morality is an attempt to articulate the farmers' engagement with agritourism.

3) Agritourism as Sustainable Tourism

After identifying farmers' practices and perspectives in an agritourism model, I examined the farmers' identity as moral entrepreneurs playing important roles in sustainable tourism. Sustainability is an integrated and problematic concept embedded in the complexity of the three issues of environment, society and economy. A wide range of work needs to happen to open a space for multidisciplinary negotiation. According to The World Conservation Union 1993, the concept of sustainable tourism includes "four major principles: ecological, cultural, economic, and local sustainability" (Amnaj 2013). This aforementioned concept of sustainable tourism is similar to Munt's concept (2003) which is also related to ecology, economy, society, and culture. Amnaj indicated the concept of rural sustainability, including:

"Ecological sustainability – development that takes into account the maintenance of ecological process, biological diversity and biological resources. Economic sustainability – development that is economically efficient and the benefits of such development are distributed between generations. Social sustainability – development that improves the quality of life all social groups by giving them the opportunity to participate in decision-making. Cultural sustainability – development that requires taking into account the values of the people affected by it and strengthens" (Amnaj 2013: 159).

Barbieri (2013: 253) presented Brundtland's idea of the concept of sustainable development in the 1980s (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987) as "a framework to

holistically examine the impacts of different entrepreneurial activities across the social, economic and environmental dimensions of local communities and their surroundings.” To her, sustainable tourism varies from the “multidimensionality” of sustainability and tourism, focusing on economic viability “without destroying the environment or the social fabric of the local community” (Swarbrooke 1999) and “promoting the stewardship of both physical and human environments” (Butler 1999). In this sense, she provided us with the concept of agritourism as “preserving the farmers’ historic ties to the land and traditional knowledge, employing stewardship and sustainable agricultural practices, increasing farm revenues and profits, sustaining the landscape, habitats and soil productivity, preserving the family farmland for future generations and sustaining rural economies” (Barbier 2013: 253). Sustainable tourism focuses on diverse issues from understanding the attitudes and perceptions of local residents, tourists and other stakeholders to forms of sustainable tourism stressing its entrepreneurial value to forms that foster rural development. Barbieri (2013: 255) proposed another definition of agritourism, “including a wide variety of activities and services, including leisure and educational tours, nature contemplation, U-pick vegetables fruits, on-farm lodging (e.g. cabins, camping sites), hunting and fishing for a fee, on-farm sales and gift shops, lodging and food services, programing special events such as private parties and festivals, among many others activities” (Barbieri 2013: 255).

Another widely used definition is provided by Phillip et al. (2015). They defined agritourism based on the relationships between tourists and farmers characterized by working farms, contact with agricultural activity, and the authenticity of a tourist’s agricultural experience. What they mean by contact is characterized by the level of contact; either direct, indirect or passive. According to the authors, “Direct contact with agricultural activity indicates that agricultural activities are a

tangible feature in the tourist experience (e.g. milking a cow; harvesting a crop). Indirect contact indicates a secondary connection to agricultural activity within the tourist experience, perhaps through contact with agricultural produce (e.g. crop maze, food processing, sale of or consumption in meals). Passive contact with agricultural activity indicates that tourism and agriculture are operated independently and only the farm location is held in common (e.g. outdoor activities” (Phillip et al. 2010: 755).

According to Philip et al. (2010), there are five types of agritourism. The first one is non-working farm agritourism; this happens when the tourist activity is not based on a working farm. The second one is working farm, passive contact agritourism when the tourists contact passively with agricultural activity on a working farm. The third one is working farm, indirect contact agritourism when the tourists contact indirectly with agricultural activity. The fourth one is working farm, direct contact and staged agritourism when tourists do not experience authentic agricultural activity even though they are on a working farm and in direct contact. The last one is working farm, direct contact and authentic agritourism when tourists experience authentic agricultural activity. This definition includes ‘the farm’ as an economic, social, and cultural entity and an open space for negotiation of authenticity between tourists and farmers.

Sustainable agritourism is a topic gaining more attention from researchers in terms of economic, sociocultural and environmental impacts. Mostly, agritourism is a tool for the rural economy’s revitalization, especially when it generates more employment and income as well as diversifies income sources. In socio-cultural terms, agritourism can maintain local knowledge, strengthen social cohesion and networking, and/or reinforce family gatherings. These benefits are explored through the concepts of sustainable development and tourism.

However, even when clear guidance has been constructed, it mostly depends on different approaches within specific case. *Our Common Future* calls for attention to be given to sustainable development especially when it pertains to food security. Health is another issue directly related to food security and other social factors. This has led to more consideration of sustainable agricultural practices. The term, sustainable agricultural practices, is still being constructed; its integration with agritourism transforms it into ecotourism.

In my study, I employed the definition of agritourism of Phillip et al. (2010) and the concept of sustainability defined by sustainable tourism principles. This definition of agritourism examines the farmer's authentic identity as presented when commoditizing his daily life through making contact with tourists and helping them experience agriculture at different levels. Choo and Jamal (2008) employed ecotourism principles from many scholars' work to argue that tourism on organic farms in South Korea can be considered a new form of ecotourism. Ecotourism principles are translated into indicators characterized by five main categories. The first includes economic and socioeconomic benefits consisting of new income streams and jobs to local communities (Lindberg and Hawkins 1993, Wight 1994), increased consumption of local products (area-grown foods, etc.) (Place 1995, Walpole and Goodwin 2001) and local economic diversification (Place 1995, Wight 1994, Ying and Zhou 2007). The second is concerned with social-cultural sustainability, consisting of attention being given to the local cultural heritage (Jamal et al. 2006, Lai and Nepal 2006), equitable changes in local lifestyle (Jamal et al. 2006, Weaver and Fennell 1999) and the fostering of human-environment relationships (Jamal et al. 2006). The third one is concerned with ecological conservation including contributions to the conservation of the natural ecosystem (Fennell 1999, Wallace 1996), contribution of money to ecological conservation (Bottrill and Pearce 1995, Goodwin

1996) and small scale operations/low environmental impact projects (Walpole and Goodwin 2001). The fourth category consists of education and learning opportunities; these include fostering learning opportunities for visitors (Fennell and Weaver 2005) and providing aid to educational programs for local communities (Wallace 1996, Wight 1994). The final category is community participation. This includes the local residents' involvement in the planning process when it is concerned with the development of local attractions (Fennell and Weaver 2005, Lai and Nepal 2006, Wallace 1996, Ying and Zhou 2007), good communication among parties involved in policy and decision making processes (Lai and Nepal 2006, Place 1995, Wight 1994) and community participation encouraged by local authorities (Place 1995).

1.4.2 Review of Related Studies

Agritourism is not a new concept; it first started in Europe in the 1950s (Michal et al. 2009). At its inception, agritourism's primary roles were to revive the rural economy (while dealing with labor shortages derived from increased city migration due to industrialization and modernization) as well as generating more income for rural people. Moreover, agritourism was soon considered a bridge between rurality and urbanity in many socioeconomic ways like money flows, labor, and the need for entertainment as well as education (Michal et al. 2009, Kikuchi 2009, Amnaj 2014). Agritourism emerged from rural tourism and later ecotourism as evidence of its positive benefits became obvious, especially in regards to the principles of sustainable development. Sustainable agricultural practices are a major issue in sustainable development, playing an essential role in maintaining an agriculture-based economy and in meeting the requirements of city dwellers. They have also become an effective tool for farmers to negotiate with tourists. In my reviews of related studies, I focused on

the farmers' actions during the commodification of rurality, their negotiation with tourists through the concept of authenticity, how sustainable agritourism was implemented and how ethnicity was involved in tourism in Vietnam.

1) Commoditization of Rurality

Kikuchi and Obara (2005: 39) studied the re-creation of rurality around the Totoro forest on the outer fringe of the Tokyo Metropolitan area and found that the “restructuring of rural land use and recreating rurality have been practiced with conservation and maintenance activities in Totoro forest” with different perspectives and the participation of both rural and urban residents. To the authors, the creation of rurality was established by the relationships between rurality and urbanity characterized when “rural residents bear the sentimentality of rurality and the religion of rural life as the spirituality of rural spaces for the Totoro forest, and urban residents bear the enjoying to rural recreation and the yearning for rurality as the spirituality of green space and their own homes (*furusato*) for the Totoro forest” (Kikuchi and Obara 2005: 39). The problems occurred when there were serious conflicts between rural and urban land usages concerning the environment of the outer fringes. Farmlands had been converted for commercial and industrial facilities since the 1970s and rural land use decreased due to the influx of urban people. These two phenomena totally changed the ecological conditions and socio-economic bases in this rural space. Gradually, “rural and urban residents feel that rurality should be conserved as alternative elements of the amenity and the healthy within the outer fringe” (Kikuchi and Obara 2005: 51). This study showed that rural space was created through the negotiation of urban and rural residents when they were forced to settle down in the same area and environment. In this case, the commodification of rurality was not only made by rural but also by urban people working towards sustainable development.

Though they may have had different perspectives and interests, they had common ground; both chose to live in the same environment.

Amnaj (2014) conducted a case study in Mae Kam Pong village situated in Huay Keaw sub-district, Maw On district, Chiang Mai province. Mae Kam Pong's rurality is constructed through many things. These include rural spaces, communities, activities, rural products and activities based on residential area spaces, agro-forest, forest area embedded in households, villages, cultivations, livelihoods, income, population and religious products that produce tourism activities and attract tourists. The results showed that tourism generated income totals similar to the amount gained through their traditional livelihood, tea cultivation. There was also the negotiation between homestay providers and tourists. The villagers' acceptance levels regarding tourism was polled through interviews. When asked about rural space issues and rural communities, products and activity issues, 91.2% of the villagers welcomed Japanese long-stay residents but 86.7% of them said they did not want to make changes that might improve the homestays and better meet the needs of the tourists. But coordinating the volunteer activities of Japanese long-stay tourists was also deemed acceptable by the villagers (85.2%). The survey showed that gross annual income generated from tourism was 32.3%, close to the income generated from coffee cultivation, 37.1%. From the tourists' expectations regarding nature-based activities, culture-based activities, health and wellness activities, and other such needs, their interests categorized them into two groups: mid-centric tourists, those looking for relaxation, pleasure and escape from their urbanity (McKercher Du Cros 2002, and 'allocentric tourists', whose primary interest was experiencing changes and strangeness to sharpen their worldview.

2) Negotiating Authenticity in Agritourism

The concept of “authenticity” has gained much cachet in cultural tourism of late, primarily focused on the “authenticity-seeking” model in tourist experiences (Wang 1999). Arroyo et al. (2013: 40) deconstructed agritourism definitions into three issues including “the authenticity of the agricultural facility or the experience”. According to S. Phillip et al. (2010), the concept of authenticity is best provided by MacCannell (1973) with his designation of ‘front’ and ‘back’ regions. MacCannell argued that tourists have to experience ‘back-stage’ or ‘staged authenticity’ to consciously uncover ‘back’ from ‘front’ regions. Tourists and farmers may perceive differently this concept but farmers can stage agricultural activities for tourists (Phillip et al., 2010: 756).

Daugstad and Kirchengast (2013) explored how summer farmers in Bregenzerwald (Austria) and Valdres (Norway) deal with their double role as farmers and tourists’ host. They found this “influences tourist-host interactions and the staging of summer farms and the ways in which the discourses of authenticity and heritage manifest themselves therein.” Agrarian and tourism activities are set up by the farmers’ actions through their staged physical surroundings as well as performances. In this study, “farmers construct a pseudo-backstage: a temporal frontstage that is presented as an ‘actual’ backstage” in a broader context when the rural life and landscape of summer farming successively emerged as symbols of national identity”. The concept of *pseudo-backstages* is a result of the negotiation process between farmers and tourists which both enable farmers’ to have better time control and provide ostensible ‘special’ treatment for tourists. “The construction of a *pseudo-backstages*, as performed on the studied summer farms, is one way of translating the current netting of discourses on tourism, authenticity, and heritage into the social

practices of concrete tourists-host interaction in an agri-tourist setting.” (Daugstad and Kirchengast 2013: 188).

Flanigan et al. (2014) borrowed the typology for defining agritourism of Phillip et al. (2010) to develop the concept of agritourism from the perspective of providers and visitors. This “incorporates three discriminating characteristics, which are fundamentally consistent with the original version: the nature of interaction between visitors and agriculture; whether the product is based on a working farm; and whether the visitor experiences authentic working agriculture.” A detailed explanation of the notion of contact agriculture and working farms, the nature of interaction between visitors and agriculture and a working farm location for agritourism (including off farm or on farm products) replaces the first discriminators. The third discriminator is about authentic agriculture in the context of agritourism. The findings showed that the inherent argument between providers and visitors could include a solution that held that “agriculture should not be reproduced, sanitized or presented in a selective manner as it gives a false impression to the general public.” However, “providers and visitors believe that authenticity is a compulsory requirement for agritourism, the results also suggest that ‘staged authentic’ agriculture can be justified in the agritourism product.” (Flanigan et al. 2014: 403).

3) Sustainable Agricultural Practices Promoting Agritourism as Sustainable Tourism

Agritourism has been separated from mere rural tourism and has engaged more with sustainable tourism. Still, there needs to be more work done to prove its contributions. Choo and Jamal (2008) explore touristic organic farms in South Korea when they examine forms of environmentally sustainable tourism. The authors employed ecotourism principles as a guide to evaluate activities and practices on the farms.

“Organic farmers in the study were concerned about ecological conditions on their land, possessed close ties to that land, and employed related knowledge to help preserve natural habitat and minimize adverse environmental impacts. Social-cultural gains were evident, for both visitors and local inhabitants.” “It is argued that this type of tourism on organic farms may be a potentially new form of ecotourism (*eco-organic farm tourism*)” (Choo and Jamal 2008). In this study, sustainable tourism practices and sustainable agriculture practices created an intersection for sustainable agritourism. Ecotourism principles are corroborated with conservation, learning, economic, and social-cultural well-being as well as community participation in offering tourism services. Additionally, an agricultural land ethic also emerged as a concern. The authors suggested “(1) the need for greater local involvement and control in policy and planning for tourism on organic farms; (2) training and education of service providers in the organic farm destination, and (3) financial incentives and support for organic farming.” (Choo and Jamal, 2008: 451).

Barbieri (2012) assessed the sustainability of agritourism and other farm entrepreneurial ventures in the US. She used a “sustainable development” and “farm enterprise diversification” framework to explore the economic, environmental and social benefits of both agritourism and other farm entrepreneurial ventures. The findings showed that agritourism “is more successful in increasing farm profits, creating jobs and conserving the natural and cultural heritage.” “While many agritourism farms practice integrated pest management, they need to be more engaged in other environmentally friendly and conservation practices” (Barbieri 2012: 252). Purely using quantitative methods, the study built a wide range of indicators based on the concept of sustainability in terms of economic, sociocultural and environmental impacts. The result proved that agritourism farms produced more revenue and profit, strengthened the family farm institution and

engaged in the preservation of American rural heritage while also conserving wildlife habitat and water.

Mae Kampong Village situated in Huai Kaew Subdistrict, Mae On District, Chiang Mai City, Thailand is famous for its ecotourism which initially developed from their agricultural-based economy. Seeking additional income, the villagers shifted from cultivating tea to coffee cultivation to sustain their livelihoods. Moreover, the idea of ecotourism introduced by the former village headman successfully transformed their agricultural-based economy into a tourism business and they gained more benefits generated by the concept of sustainability. Ecotourism not only reinforces villagers' traditional livelihoods but also empowers local people to manage their life. Villagers have more capacity to manage their multiple jobs and their sources of income. From farmers, solely working on their tea and coffee gardens, they have become managers of their lives, actively economizing their income. Ecotourism also engaged diverse participants throughout the community in a similar manner. Not only villagers involved in ecotourism but also non-participants gained some economic benefits such as grandparents having children working in the tourism business as well as grandchildren. However, regulations that permitted members to engage in a homestay group may simultaneously exclude villagers that haven't reached enough capacity yet. This problem needs further study. Additionally, the concept of ecotourism opened up the idea of protecting trees, effectively creating more responsibilities for local villagers towards forest conservation and further strengthening the local people's good public image. These findings were positive and acceptable like those of Karawan Sangkakorn's findings. In her study benchmarking community-based tourism management in Thailand while focusing on the good practices of Community Based Tourism, she concluded that "Mae Kam Pong has most successfully developed a high quality community-based tourism

product. The village is situated in an appealing natural environment for tourists; the local residents participate in soundly managing their tourism product through a village tourism committee” (Karawan 2008).

4) Tourism in Vietnam

Vietnam has a favorable geography and diverse culture, a rich source for tourism development. Since the *Doi Moi* policy in 1986, the tourism industry has become a tool for foreign exchange and economic growth. However, unclear policies by the state regarding tourism are big disadvantages; there is a lack of concern for the country’s social, cultural and ecological features. Following in the fashion of sustainability that was first raised by The World Commission on Environment and Development, the Vietnamese government committed to sustainable guidelines (Heinemann 1995). But it is challenging to define what kinds of tourism are really applicable in Vietnam because the reasons mostly rely on who introduced the tourism model (and to what purposes) and how they are practiced. Nevertheless, the notion of ecotourism and cultural tourism can be understood through their advertisements which attach themselves primarily to the images of location, ethnicity or forest. At present, however, there have not been many studies done on specific ethnic issues. Researchers’ interests have been too diverse to categorize.

Achariya (2012) studied how White Tai ethnicity in the Northwest Upland area of Vietnam localized and negotiated the concept of authenticity in the tourist market space. She also showed how they reconstructed and negotiated the concept of authenticity and their identities in the context of post-socialist Vietnam and a globalized marketplace. Mai Châu district, Hòa Bình Province is located in the Northwest Upland region of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) and is considered a place of ethnic and cultural diversity. She argued

that under socialist state rule, the Mai Châu economy was characterized as a household economy instead of a collective economy. Socialist ideology was meaningless in this transition. Tourism in Mai Châu was from inside-out. An agricultural-based economy was still practiced because villagers were aware of the value of their land as their source for sustaining their livelihood. Another argument was that “market space has become a space for redefining relationships, and has allowed the transformation of these relations”. She also found peasants transformed themselves into a variety of business persons in the tourist market by changing their relationships from host-tourist to guest-tourist.

Another study about gender in ecotourism was conducted in Northern Vietnam by Tran & Walter (2014). They employed Longwe’s empowerment framework to explore women’s participation in a community-based ecotourism venture in Giao Xuan. Longwe’s framework includes indicators to examine equitable division of labor, increased income, self-confidence and community involvement, and new leadership roles for women. The result showed that ecotourism benefits women at all levels as perceived by both men and women. The roles of husbands and wives in family were shifted to support each other. For example, a wife can become a tour guide now while her husband takes care of the children. Also, following Scheyvens’ (2000) ideas of dimensions of empowerment for women in terms of political, social, psychological, and economic, the authors found that women were more self-confident and more involved in community activities. They also adopted new leadership roles and had a stronger voice in political decision-making. However, Confucian patriarchal norms still impacted on women’s roles in the family in terms of fuller control over household income, the intensification of reproductive labor and violence against women. It is clear that men and women are constructing their new identities – even men can learn to make a bed

and clean - but it doesn't mean that women are strong enough yet to effectively oppose their husbands' alcohol use and violence against them. Another concern is economic inequalities in the community that constrains women's ability to become involved in tourism. In conclusion, the authors suggested that there should be "interest-free ecotourism loans or a sliding fee structure for poorer families, the provision of childcare for women participants, and anti-domestic violence trainings for both men and women in the project" (Tran and Walter 2014: 129).

1.5 Conceptual Framework

According to my literature review, I would like to employ the concept of rurality introduced by Kikuchi (2009) on the work of Amnaji (2014). However, instead of focusing on the relationships between rurality and urbanity, I will primarily concentrate on the space of rurality and, as a base line, explore how farmers commoditize their daily life in agritourism to produce tourism products. This can show the farmers' motivations and what needs they wish fulfilled when looking into agritourism. I will explore farmers' practices in the making of agritourism activities. The concept of communities of practices guided me to examine how the farmers' learning process adjusted their personal histories when their capacity changed in the agritourism business. Farmers' practices are operationalized through their daily activities and conversations in cultural systems, discourses and history embedded in the space of the farmers' community.

To understand the perspectives of agritourism providers, I prefer to use a Weberian model to identify their economic and non-economic benefits (or their ideology) when they engaged in agritourism. I would like to emphasize that I most assuredly focus on farmers as agritourism providers as my main actors, playing entrepreneurs' roles in the agritourism business. I may find out how farmers communicate among themselves and how and where I can put the concept of sustainability that intertwines their relationships and practices. By combining the concept of communities of practices to my study about

group rationality, I would like to learn how agritourism was introduced and maintained by farmers and how farmers changed into their roles as entrepreneurs.

After locating farmers as agritourism providers and identifying their economic and non-economic motivations, I would like to assess farmers' active roles in sustaining the rural environment and farmers' practices through ecotourism principles based on the work of Choo and Jamal (2008). I analyzed five main sections: economic and socioeconomic benefits, social-cultural sustainability, ecological conservation, education and learning opportunities, and community participation. Though this study was designed to explore the farmers' abilities, I also wanted to explore how farmers' roles and participation were recognized and engaged in agritourism. This meant that on one hand, the farmers had had the capacity to be involved in the agritourism business. But on the other hand, I questioned whether they really had equal access to other sources that were necessary for them to become a member of the tourism business.

In conclusion, the conceptual framework designed to examine farmers' practices and motivations in the rural community were bounded with cultural systems, discourses and history. Farmers' practices in their roles of entrepreneurs are operationalized by their daily activities and conversation. Finally, I investigated the concept of sustainability in farmers' practices embedded in the rural community.

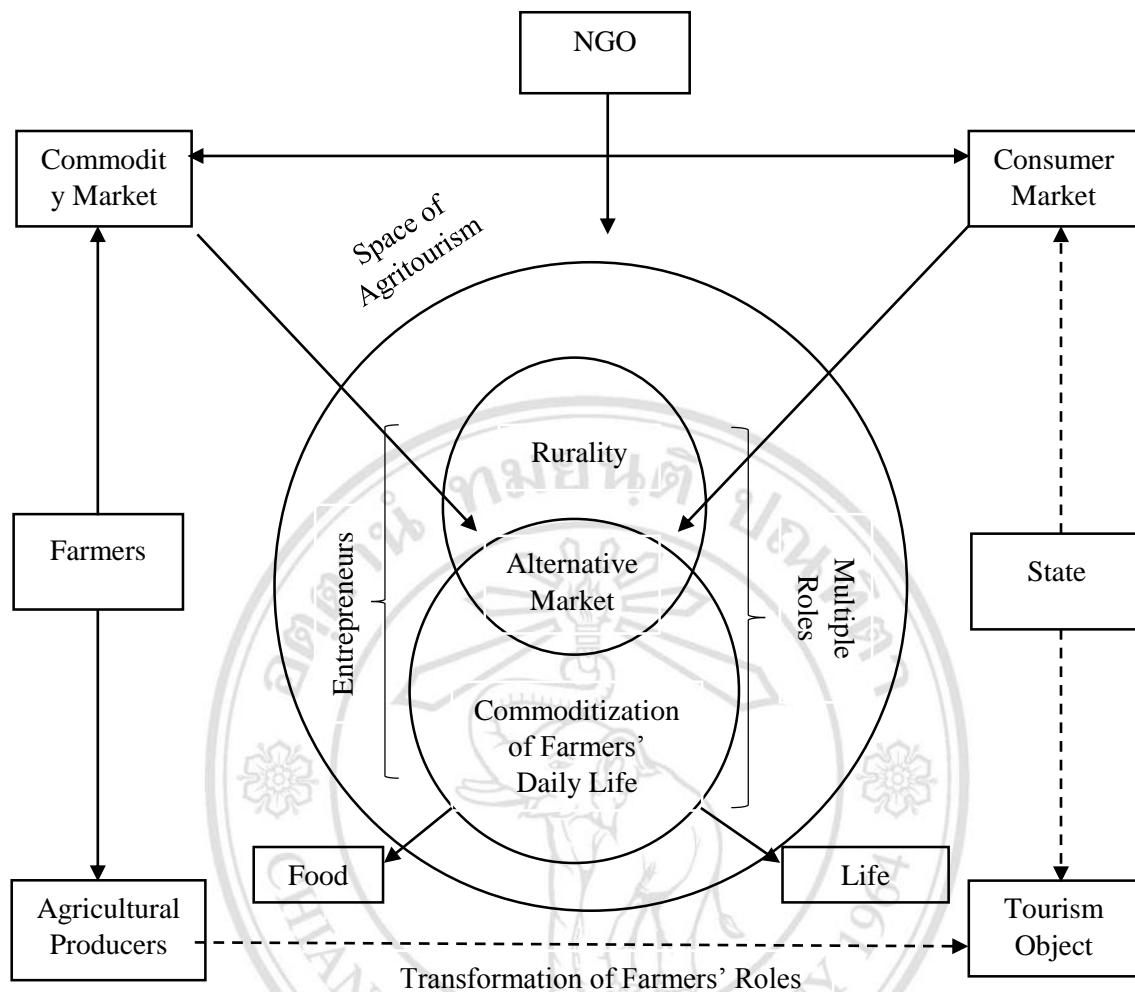


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

1.6 Research Methods

1.6.1 Research Site

An Giang province is located in the Mekong Delta and shares a 100 km border with Cambodia in the north-west. This perfect geographical location became a focal point for communication within the Mekong sub region of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. It is about 136 km from Cần Thơ, the central city of the Mekong Delta. An Giang embodies midland areas and low mountains in the Seven Mountains area –(Bảy Núi in Vietnamese) – in Tỉnh Biên and Tri Tôn district. The province has a population of 2.1 million people

within an area comprising 3.424 km². Vĩnh Tế Tunnel runs along the province's border to the west. An Giang was founded when ethnically Vietnamese migrants moved southwards in search of new land. It became a province in 1832 and has a sizable number of Vietnam's ethnic minorities including the largest one, Khmer Krom, who live beside Cham and ethnic Chinese (Hoa).

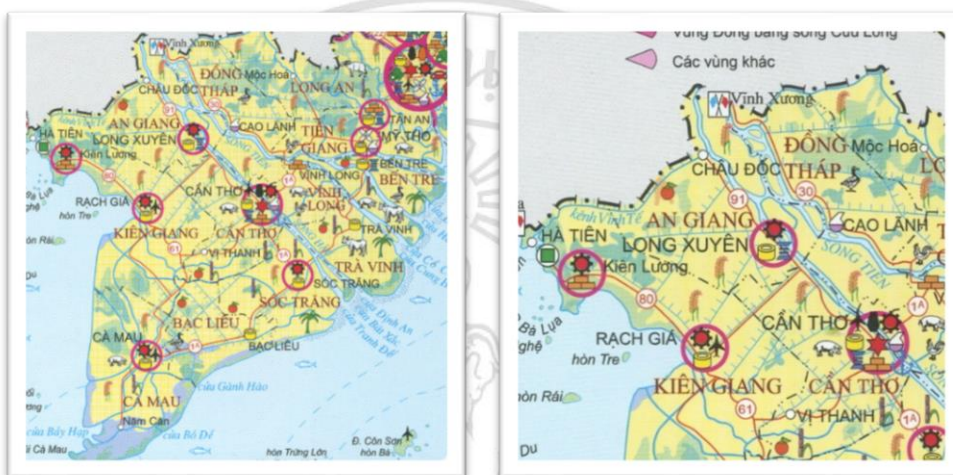


Figure 1.2 Maps of An Giang Province, Mekong Delta, Vietnam

Similar to southern Vietnam, An Giang has two main seasons: rain from May to November and a dry season from December to April. Due to these geographic and meteorological characteristics, An Giang's main product is rice along with smaller outputs of corn and aquatic products such as basa fish, shrimp, cuttle and so on. The silk industry is also part of the province's traditions. An Giang is famous for its traditional handicrafts such as Tân Châu silk, Châu Đốc fish sauce and, especially, the long-standing handicraft fabric weavers of the Chăm ethnic group. Moreover, many historical and cultural sites are also famous tourist attractions. For example, Bà Chúa Xứ, Chol Chnam Thomay, Dolta festival and ox racing are found within the province. Other sites include Sam Mountain in Châu Đốc, Cấm Mountain in Tịnh Biên, Túc Dụ Hill, the grottoes network of Thuy Dai Son, Anh Vu Son, Cô Tô and many historical vestiges. Ba Chúc is a small village bordering Cambodia. The

village suffered from a confrontation with the Khmer Rouge in April, 1978. Later on, it became a historical site that attracted tourists.

An Giang has attracted much attention from the Department of Education and Training due to their efforts computerizing the province's educational system. Information technology has become a key factor in education. Though the province has received considerable computer support, technological facilities and teachers, there has not been enough to satisfy demand. An Giang's authorities have also paid much attention to sustainable, agricultural and rural development. On April 03, 2015, the province set up a conference of regional reports on "the international integration for sustainable development – some problems set out by the localities from 2015" to discuss "the role of localities and enterprises in the intensive international integration". The conference emphasized human resource factors and enterprises in the process of integration and globalization and called for a completion of the legislation system related to investment and the business environment. An online conference on international economic integration within the branch of agriculture and rural development on April 9 was held by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. In attendance was the deputy president of the provincial People's committee together with the leaders of departments, branches and local companies. The conference highlighted the branch of agriculture and rural development in the process of international integration and promoted the comprehensive role integration can play in creating a more favorable environment. Its culmination included a call to intensify trade promotion activities, ensure safety from disease, better organize production, and further improve production by restructuring export agricultural product branches through the utilization of science-technology applications that also supply more accurate market information.

Moreover, not only business investment but also conservation projects emerged as major concerns. The An Giang Provincial People's Committee has recently approved an outline and cost estimate for a project related to

biodiversity conservation planning with an estimated investment amount of more than 1.5 billion VND up to the year 2030. “The conserving biodiversity zones attached to gradually stabilizing and improving lives for people in buffer zones through sustainable agricultural production resolutions; taking part in forest management and protection, biodiversity conservation, ecological tourism development attached to the livelihood of people in buffer zones on the basis of policy systems with assignment of responsibility and sharing of benefits between the reserve with people in task of biodiversity conservation”. In conclusion, sustainable rural development is attracting more attention from the government and local authorities. They also seek alternative agricultural production based on science technology through a process of economic integration. Tourism has been considered and developed to be one of the key sectors for economic development in the province.

An Giang province includes 8 districts, 2 towns and 1 city. An agritourism project supported by the Dutch Farmers Association was implemented in three communes: Mỹ Hòa Hưng in Long Xuyên City, Văn Giáo in Tịnh Biên District, and Tân Trung in Phú Tân District. The project, which started in 2007 and ended in 2014, was divided into two phases. The first phase was to raise farmers’ awareness of sustainable tourism and agritourism as well as tourism management. This included building facilities and transportation infrastructure. Meanwhile, the second phase’s goal was to construct a tourism management system to sustain the area. The project’s aims are to “transform the existing agro-tourist office of the provincial union (AGFU) into a rural farmers’ tourist center. The aim is to establish a viable Farmers’ Rural Tourism Centre at provincial level, which mobilizes the potential of farm households to host tourists and to generate income by agro-tourist services and job opportunities. The outreach is 15 communes and 100 households” (Interview Dutch Farmers Association 2015). Agritourism activities include participating in community activities (farming), experiencing local culture, having dinner with farm households, staying overnight in homestays and

guiding tourists through the village and local countryside. Local products such as handicrafts are promoted for sale as well.

1.6.2 Unit and Level of Analysis

Based on my objectives, this study is designed to analyze four levels of community practices. The first level deals with the individual farmer households, specifically examining those who engaged in the project while simultaneously exploring their agricultural practices and tourism-related activities. This analysis will provide me with information about their daily practices and their interactions with outsiders such as the marketing manager of the project and the international agri-agency that supported the project. It will also study their encounters with those neighbors who were not engaged in the project. This will help me analyze the farmers' interaction with insiders and outsiders in the commodity market.

The second level explores the farmers' perspectives and motivations in agritourism. In order to fulfil the Weberian model of agritourism, this level develops a picture of those actors involved in agritourism in An Giang province. I want to further understand how the farmers communicate among themselves, The Dutch Farmers Association and the Marketing Manager to engage in agritourism. Their interpretation of the concept of agritourism will help me discover their identity in regards to agritourism. This analysis will show how farmers localize the international force's ideology of their identity. The third level is about the farmers' articulation of their identity in the space of agritourism. I will examine how the farmers' identity is redefined by agritourism. In the last level, I will investigate the farmers' roles in agritourism as a supplemental market, an emergent space made through the combination of commodity and consumer markets, together identifying the possibility of sustainable agritourism.

1.6.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Since my objectives primarily focus on farmers' practices and perspectives, I employed ethnography as my main method. Ethnography helped me explore individual farmers in the space of sharing the same process, action or interaction with other actors. There are several types of ethnographies (Cresswell 2007). I focused on the "critical" approach to emancipate farmers' capacities to uncover power relations and hierarchical systems within the provinces in order to include farmers in agritourism and empower them. According to Cresswell (2007: 70), "a critical ethnographer will study issues of power, empowerment, inequality, inequity, dominance, repression, hegemony, and victimization." In this sense, this method can uncover the hegemonic term or discourse of the concept of agritourism embedded in social hierarchy. It would be useful for me to think of procedures for conducting an ethnography that could provide me with ideas for examining farmers' practices involved in the larger context of community (Cresswell 2007). These procedures include the essential use of ethnography, identifying and locating culture-sharing groups to study, selecting cultural themes, studying cultural concepts and, finally, forging a working set of rules or patterns. Accordingly, ethnography mainly focuses on cultural study. Thus, it is an appropriate method to employ in my case to learn about the major cultures, including those of the various ethnic groups.

I will use participation observation, informal interviews and documentary analysis. Participation observation will balance my views of emic and etic to describe farmers' perspectives and practices and their interactions with other stakeholders. It will also be helpful to describe farmers' practices' meanings. In-depth interviews with stakeholders provides me with their perspectives, their definitions of agritourism, and relations. My interviewees included farmers engaged in agritourism projects, farmers non-engaged in agritourism projects, communal leaders of the farmer union, marketing officials, and The Dutch Farmer Association (Agriterre). Documentary analysis draws on

historical development in the province and gives me some ideas of stakeholders' perspectives and motivations. I will employ the typology of agritourism definitions provided by Phillips et al. (2010) to examine the "contact of tourists with agriculture" and level of "contact" through the idea of "directly" or "indirectly".

1.7 Research Limitation

Firstly, due to the limitations of time, I stayed in An Giang for only two months - one week per commune - including Vàm Nao, Ô Lâm, and Tràm Forest . This did not reflect successful ethnography in terms of exploring the power relations among economically different farmers engaged in the project and their encounters with the farmers' leader or the marketing manager. Secondly, agritourism in An Giang was not an open space for tourists. Tourists came by booking tours. I only had three occasions to observe directly how farmers interacted with tourists, including two times for domestic tourists and one time for foreigners. I had in-depth interviews with seven Australian students and one teacher from their trip and one Vietnamese family. Still, this information was not representative enough to use in the research. Therefore, I solely analyzed the farmers' encounters with tourists through the farmers' interpretation of the agritourism concept. This was my greatest limitation: how to explain one-sided tourism production and consumption. I focused mainly on how farmers actively engaged in tourism production and consumption by expanding their boundaries in order to make contact with outsiders. Lastly, the project was an ongoing process that presented the farmers' identity at different levels of entrepreneurship. Therefore, it did not clearly represent the shifting identity that farmers exhibit as both agricultural producers and entrepreneurs.