Where Gendered Spaces Bend: The Rubber Phenomenon in Northern Laos

Anna-Klara Lindeborg
Uppsala University
Why rubber production in Laos?

1) Market reforms
2) Chinese economic development
3) Commercial tree planting
4) Reduction of opium production
5) Land reforms: reduction of shifting cultivation
6) Increase the forestry
7) Border region (trade, ethnicity, networks, Golden Triangle)
Karta över fältområdet (Källa: GIS - enheten, NAFRI, 2005)
Baan HatNyao
Ethnographic methods

- Stories in the field
- Participant observation
- Informal interviews
- Group interviews
- Fieldnotes
- Auto-photography
- Analysis and writing process
- Questionnaire
Auto – photography
Theoretical perspectives: Sex/gender, body-materialism

- Unseparable: both social constructions, representations, materialism and bodies
- **Body-materialistic theories**: *post-constructivism*
  Challenge the borders between sex/gender
Intersectionality

- Intersections of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic belonging, clan
- Paradoxical spaces (Rose 1993)
- Men and women are not bound to one specific space, but instead are in several different spaces at once which can differ with the situation. At the same time they are more than just men or women; they also belong to different generations, clans, as well as to the ethnic group of Hmong.
• The everyday as a way to overcome the production/reproduction divide
• Reproduction invented as ‘sister’ to production
  
  Labor is defined according to economy and production, while family is defined in relation to relationships, sex, and sexuality and thereby reproduction (Tyrkkö 1999:78).
• Everyday life, involve production and reproduction as unseparable spheres
The process of rubber production and division of labor

Planting

- Pará rubber tree
  \((\textit{Hevea Brasiliensis})\)

- Humid tropical zones

- Often earlier land for shifting cultivation

- Planting in 3 stages
Non-tapping season
(November-February)
Tapping season (March-October)

- 8 years
- Cutting/collecting
- Early morning
- Every second day
- Rubber liquid poured into containers and congeals into rubber lumps
Labour exchange

Paid labour
The marketing
4 gender contracts

- 14 households and 4 gender contracts
- Organising the labor in relation to gender and rubber cultivation, as it is dominating everyday life in HatNyao, particularly the tapping procedures
- The gender contracts should not be regarded as fixed, but continuously changing
The tapping contract with divided gender practices
The tapping contract with shared gender practices
The outside employment contract
The non-tapping gender contract
Parallel spheres in everyday life
Representations and body-materialism
Bending beyond

- Gender relations in change
- Eroding ethnic structures
- Decreasing poverty
- Vulnerability
- Increasing socio-economic differences