

MAKING ENCOUNTERS ACROSS BOUNDARIES.

ENACTED KNOWLEDGE MOBILITY IN LAOS

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Over the last few decades, internal migration has been observed in Laos. People move from rural to urban areas and also to other rural localities as a result of the resettlement policy implemented in the 1990s and the economic attractiveness of certain regions especially when those regions are involved in road construction, hydropower development projects, agribusiness and mines. According to the 2005 Population and Housing Census, 20% of the total population migrated out their birth district. Resettlements are essentially characterized by village migration to district or provincial capitals. In the northern Lao provinces, peasant migration to urban centers began to increase in the 1990s. This rural mobility can be explained in particular by an integration policy that aimed at clustering several villages in the plains in order to form larger administrative units. It has been observed that newcomers have not historically benefitted from the most fertile lands or that some districts no longer have sufficient agricultural land, thereby forcing migrants to move to other districts or provinces. Indeed, the means in achieving growth pose great risks to local communities, which mainly depend on a substantive or semi-substantive economy .

While half the Laotian population collects food from forests, access to natural resources is increasingly under pressure. One of the greatest pressures is from Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) via land concessions and expropriations for large scale plantations, hydropower dams, and mines Many local communities are thus forced into wage-labor, and even pushed into opting for migration. Local populations do not benefit much from the economic growth of those regions whose markets are largely dominated by the Chinese. As a result of village relocations, many families lost their land and had no other professional perspective other than their physical labor. This impoverishment then forced families to operate various strategies to escape precariousness. Many young people leave their district and sometimes their province.

What do we know about the inner and intimate experiences of those migrants? How migration experiences shape their gender identities, intimacies, sexualities and new forms of conjugality? Indeed there is indeed a need to document how the modernization process of Lao society has led to changes in attitudes, social practices and gender relations. We also need to fill the gap knowledge related to migration trajectories and risk behaviors in Laos by highlighting these issues with recent data collected from a community-based approach method.

An ongoing research in Laos interrogates the links between mobilities, intimacies and infectious vulnerabilities (MIGRLAO-IRD/CRF/EF). It documents the biographical journeys of women and men who have joined peri-urban areas of industrial production in order to work in textile factories, construction sites or restaurants both in Laos and in neighboring countries.

This is a multidisciplinary community-based research program that experiments various innovative forms of knowledge mobility. It involves the participation of stakeholders (donors, developers and practitioners), community actors, activists, researchers and students at each step of its implementation: project and research protocol design, data production, results restitution and transfer of knowledge. Each is invited to turn one's gaze on a specific issue, to plan his/her field investigations in an already familiar space and where his/her own social network can be mobilized.

The qualitative component documents the biographical journeys of women and men who have joined peri-urban areas of industrial production and who work, for in textile factories, construction sites or restaurants. While enjoying financial autonomy and more freedom their experiences of "Modern life" also confront them to new forms of vulnerabilities. The epidemiological study was conducted among 664 HIV-infected patients (337 women) who are following ARV in 10 ART centers in the country.

The paper retraces this experience by paying particular attention to the specific conditions of knowledge mobility across social and cultural boundaries and to the encounters between development and scientific research domains. We describe the specific conditions of production of scientific data and the methodological adaptations required for a collection of words and facts in a context of surveillance and social control often close.

This is a creative space negotiated in an authoritarian environment. This space is born from a plurality of social ties and the social production of an enacted reflexive approach imposed by the anthropological practice itself and inspired by the professional and personal trajectory of the author.