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ECOTOURISM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CHIANG RAI PROVINCE, THAILAND

CHUAMUANGPHAN. N. Ph.D. 2009

Ecotourism Planning and Management and Sustainable Development in Chiang Rai Province, Thailand

Nipon Chuamuangphan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
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Abstract

This study examines ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development in rural areas of Chiang Rai province, Thailand. The assessment was based on developing a new conceptual framework based on a political ecology approach to examine ecotourism and sustainable development. It drew from theoretical ideas from the Western literature and previous studies about Thailand, and it is intended to be more integrative and comprehensive than previous ecotourism frameworks because it combines environmental ideas from research on natural resource management with a broad social science perspective. Political ecology helps to understand the complex connections between environment, economy, society, ideology and politics, and it explores the relationships among local actors and between them and relevant external actors. The framework was also developed to be sufficiently broad and flexible to be applied to understanding ecotourism planning and management in different rural areas.

This framework was applied and evaluated for three case study rural areas in Chiang Rai province – Rong Born, Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit villages. The framework was used to explore relations in these villages between the economy and society, politics and administration, practices and ideologies of sustainable development, and the management of ecotourism activities. These were examined from the perspectives of different actors within the villages and also outside them. Qualitative methods were adopted and relevant primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis and fieldwork observation. The collected data were analyzed, interpreted and reported in the study using a thematic analysis method which drew on the study's conceptual framework.

The research findings focused on relations between local social relations and sustainability, the ideologies of sustainability, and the local practices of ecotourism planning and management and sustainability. It was found, for example, that in villages where there was more cultural and society homogeneity the villagers were better placed to manage ecotourism and to promote more sustainable forms of development. It was also evident that in two of the villages there was a strong focus on environmental conservation in their activities, and this has subsequently attracted tourists to see their conservation practices and community forest work. In one of the villages commercial ecotourism led to environmental degradation, and it was then that conservation concerns were given more prominence. The village leaders were also seen to have an influential role, encouraged by Thai culture which accords respect and deference to people with higher social status. This had negative repercussions for ecotourism planning as villagers often had limited understanding of their potential for participation in ecotourism policy-making. It may also have encouraged a situation where local people often received less benefit from ecotourism than did external tour operators and where external government policies for ecotourism focused on economic returns rather than community development.

The study concludes with an evaluation of the value of the conceptual framework for research on ecotourism planning, including consideration of its potential for use in other contexts and geographical areas.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge and thank a number of people without whom this research would not have been possible. First, I would like to express sincere gratitude to my Director of Studies, Professor Bill Bramwell, who provided constant guidance throughout this study. This includes his invaluable and thorough feedback to improve earlier versions of this thesis. I am also grateful to my supervisor, Doctor Nicola Palmer, for her guidance, input and suggestions through the course of this research. Indebtedness is also due to both of them for showing me different approaches to research and for their time in viewing, editing and refining my work.

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List of Abbreviations

AFIO	Armed Forces Information Office
BITECT	Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Centre
CC	Carrying Capacity
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMS	Greater Mae Khong Sub-Region
JEQC	Joint Economic Quadrangle Chambers Committee
JOIEFP	Japanese Organisations for International Cooperation in Family Planning
LAC	Limit of Acceptable Change
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NESDP	National Economic and Social Development Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIE	New Industrialised Economy
OTOP	One Tambon One Product
PAVIM	Protected Area Visitor Impact Management
PRD	People's Democratic Republic
SEA	South East Asia
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
TAO	Tambon Admistrative Organisation
TDRI	Thailand Development Reseach Institute
VAMP	Visitor Activity Management Process
VERP	Visitor Experience Resource Protection
VIM	Visitor Impact Management

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly outlines the value or importance of this study concerning ecotourism planning and management, highlighting the ways in which it differs from previous research in the ecotourism field. The overall study aim and related objectives are presented, together with discussion on their formulation and their application to the specific case study areas in Chiang Rai province, Thailand. Next, an overview is provided of the adopted research methodology to introduce the reader to the study's approach. Finally, the organization of the thesis is presented.

Ecotourism as a development option is attractive for developing countries, and it is especially appealing for more remote rural areas within these countries, because of the limited development options that are on offer in such geographical locations. Furthermore, in these locations there often exists a traditional dependency on natural resources in the day-to-day living and subsistence of local communities, and these resources may be re-valorized for tourist consumption. Such ecotourism development has the potential to be exploitative and focused on short-term gains, and more researchers and governments are now putting more emphasis on the need to ensure that ecotourism promotes sustainable development (Fennell, 2008; Wearing and Neil, 1999; Weaver, 2006; Weaver, 2008). This study is intended to offer a more holistic approach to the study of ecotourism, situating the concept within broader theories relating to environmental management, ideologies, social relations and practices. It argues that ecotourism cannot be studied in isolation from the broader social and environmental contexts within which development takes place.

1.2 Importance of the study for research on ecotourism planning and management

This study concerns ecotourism planning and management, and it seeks to add a new theoretical perspective that adds to previous research in three principal ways.

Firstly, although many researchers have explored ecotourism planning and management, the focus has been on either ecotourism impacts or on local participation in ecotourism development (Zeppel, 2006; Weaver, 1998; Singh, Timothy and Dowling, 2003). These studies have tended to concentrate on either natural or environmental science ideas or sometimes on social science perspectives, rather than combining these approaches together. This study employs the concepts and approach of political ecology in part because they provide valuable links between these environmental and social science perspectives, and it also offers a holistic and integrative perspective on change in tourism planning and management and sustainable development (Duffy, 2002; Stonich, 2003; Peet, and Watts, 2004).

Figure 1.1 shows how the concept of ecotourism may be seen to be 'nested' and linked to an understanding of the environment (and its management), sustainable development, and political ecology. The figure is intended to show how the concept of ecotourism (and its planning and management) needs to be understood and studied not in isolation but in an integrative manner with respect to these other broader concepts. This integrative approach forms a key basis of the present study.

From this perspective, ecotourism is recognized in this study to be in interactive relationships with ecology, tourism, the economy, the environment and its management, society, and sustainability. Consequently, it is argued that any study of ecotourism planning and management cannot be separated from these activities and their related concepts. Ecotourism cannot be studied in isolation. In the present study there is a normative assumption that the planning and management of ecotourism should seek to arrange and manage resources in a sustainable way – and here this is underpinned by the notion of sustainable development. Ecotourism is particularly concerned with the use of environmental resources for tourism and it is in local communities that many of the decisions need to be made as to the use of those same resources for day-to-day living. It is accepted here that there might be both positive and negative impacts arising from the development of ecotourism and/or other alternative forms of environmental management. Within much published research, too, the concept of ecotourism is tightly

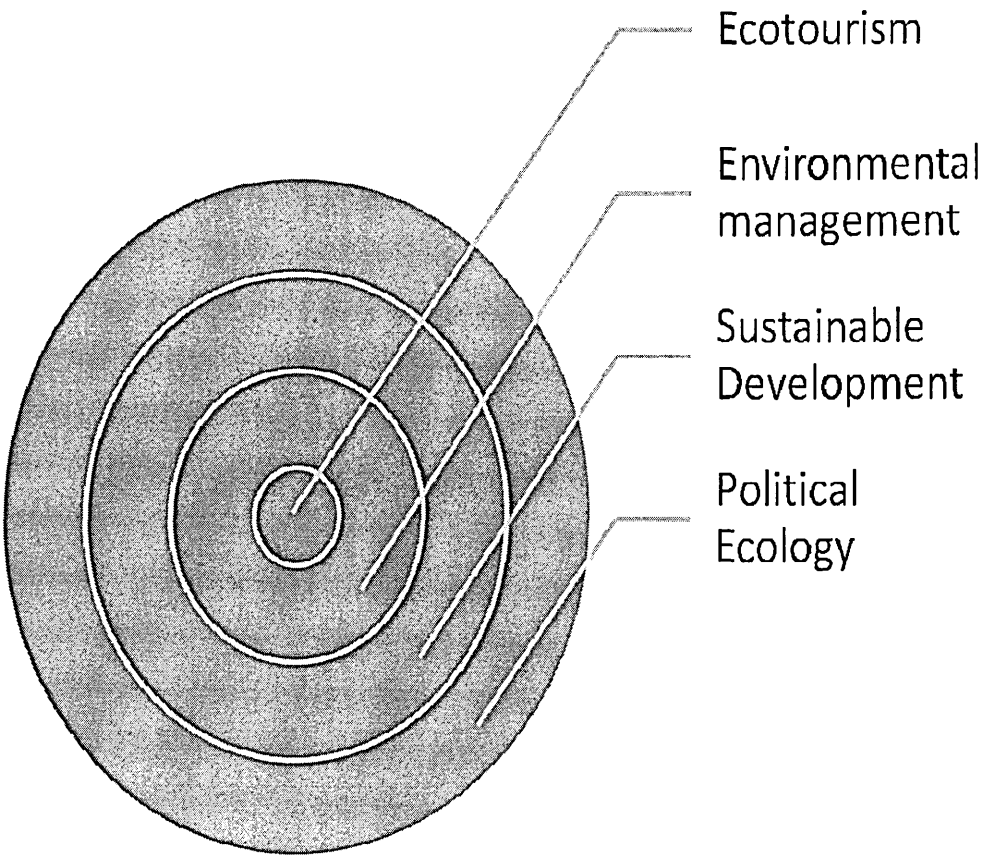

Figure 1.1: Situating ecotourism within the broader contexts of the environment, sustainable development and political ecology.

related to sustainability, and indeed ecotourism is sometimes suggested to be a sub-set of sustainable development (Weaver, 2000:27). However, in the present study, the notion of sustainability is taken to represent the smooth (yet sometimes conflicting) and transparent integration of economy, society and environment with the sustainable development of ecotourism. It involves not just an appreciation of the physical and natural environment, but also a deeper understanding of the economic, social, political and ideological systems, of which tourism is a part (Hall, 2000:25). Further, these concepts fit in this study within the specific approach of political ecology, which integrates the relations between these elements with the study of ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development (socio-economic, socio-culture, environmental concern, political and social relationships). It emphasizes the importance of the economy and of relationships between power, ideology and social interactions

and practices – relationships that have important "political" dimensions. Figure 1.1 represents one of the initial starting points for this study that influenced the research framework, and these ideas are further developed in Chapter 3, which explains the study's conceptual framework in some detail.

Secondly, this study acknowledges that social actors and their relationships to natural resources are important if one wishes to understand decisions made in relation to ecotourism planning and management. In this study, political ecology is used to connect local social relations and the discourses and values in local communities to the notions of sustainable development and ecotourism (Duffy, 2002; Stonich, 2003; Peet, and Watts, 2004). Moreover, the study also considers differing views on ecotourism and sustainability among both local actors and the national-level actors involved in those local contexts. The actors have different roles and are in different fields that intersect in the local development of ecotourism, perhaps affecting ideologies or ways of thinking about natural resource management. The study adopts an adaptive view of sustainable development through ecotourism that emerges out of the specific local circumstances and the views of the actors involved in that context. It rejects a universalistic view that there are international standards of sustainability that can be applied in all contexts, including their transfer from developed to developing world contexts. By adopting these distinctive approaches, the study differs from a lot of other research on ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development, particularly in the context of developing countries. It rejects the idea, for example, that there can be universal indicators of sustainable tourism and standard "best practice" solutions to be applied in all contexts.

The concept of political ecology is applied to this study to strengthen the overall insights into ecotourism planning and management. Political ecology enables an understanding of how social relations interact with natural resources and it also allows for an investigation of relationships with other actors outside the local society. Thus, this study recognizes that social relations around the natural environment, and the related ecotourism planning and management decisions that ensue, involve actors both inside and outside the local community. These social relations within local society and from outside it can be uneven and exploitative or they can be supporting and encouraging of more balanced exchanges (Johansson and Diamatis, 2004; Timothy and

Tosun, 2003; Scheyvens, 2003; Losurdo, 2000). These are core ideas of the political concept of political ecology, which relate to the integration of socio-economic and socio-cultural issues with the environment. This is especially relevant when applied to ecotourism planning and management which, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, is underpinned by broader sustainability concepts. The relations between a society and the natural environment may affect attitudes towards natural resources and resource usage, particularly in a day-to-day context with respect to "livelihoods". And, of course, within the context of human relations and resources there are often perceived benefits or imbalances related to the concept of "fairness". A whole variety of ideologies may be held by different actors concerning sustainability, appropriate development and "fairness". Further, it is also recognized that in any society there are important issues of power and authority and community opportunities for "participation in decision-making" (Scheyvens, 2002; Scheyvens, 2003; Sofield, 2003; Timothy and Tosun, 2003).

Thirdly, this study aims to produce and to apply an integrative framework to evaluate ecotourism planning and management in rural areas, especially in developing countries and perhaps elsewhere in the world. This framework is different from other ecotourism frameworks because it combines social relations with environmental resources, social attitudes towards sustainability in general, and power relations and decision making with respect to environmental and economic resources. This holistic focus has not yet been found in many other ecotourism studies. As explained earlier, ecotourism should be considered as a part of sustainable development and these principles fall under political ecology concepts. This framework is intended to situate the evaluation of ecotourism planning and management within the wider concept of sustainable development.

It is important to examine the interactions between ecotourism management and sustainable development in developing countries in more critical and integrative ways. Thus, this study explores these interactions in Chiang Rai province in Thailand, which represents the study's case study context. One initial reason for selecting this case study is that the researcher originates from this geographical area, he has conducted past research on environmental management and ecotourism there, and thus he possessed a high level of familiarity with this region and its society, culture and tourism industry.

Additionally, Thailand is appropriate because of the remarkable growth of its tourism industry in general, and of ecotourism in particular. The country also promotes tourism as a key sector that brings economic benefits to the country's regions (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1997). This growth has produced both positive and negative impacts. Tourism resources, both natural and cultural, are much used, for example, and this has caused harm due to resource degradation (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2005). In addition, local communities have been eager to present their natural and cultural resources as tourism products, which has created both negative and positive impacts for the communities and for individuals. For such reasons, Thailand has tried to find ways of bringing both conservation and local benefits together in tourism development. Some see ecotourism as potentially a major tool for sustainable development in the country (Ross & Wall, 1999). Therefore, ecotourism and sustainable development are being promoted in Thailand through quite energetic promotion of ideas such as local involvement in tourism planning and management, and the integration of sustainability principles into ecotourism policies at national and local levels (Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Study, TISTR, 1997).

1.3 Study aim and objectives

1.3.1 Overall aim

The overall research aim of the study is to evaluate critically and in an integrative manner the ecotourism planning and management in three case study areas in Chiang Rai province, Northern Thailand in the context of sustainable development objectives. The assessment is related to principles of ecotourism and sustainable development, and also to a new, integrative analytical framework for the evaluation of ecotourism planning and management and outcomes in the context of sustainability. This framework includes consideration of the issues of community development, stakeholder/actor interests, power and ideology, and tourism business management. These are in addition to the nature conservation issues that tend to dominate existing ecotourism frameworks in the literature. The conceptual framework used in the study has particularly focused on the following themes: social relations and sustainability;

values or ideologies or beliefs related to sustainability; and ecotourism planning and management and sustainability. The selection of these themes is discussed in-depth in Chapter 3. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the study also adopts a political ecology perspective and it develops an adaptive view of ecotourism and sustainable development. The framework is applied to the specific context of Northern Thailand, and to neighbouring case study locations there.

Three rural case study areas in Chiang Rai are the focus of the study and of the application of the integrative analytical framework (see Figure 1.2). The case study areas have differing management regimes: the first consists of a homogenous group of indigenous Northern Thai people that control their local community forest as a product for their ecotourism activities; the second is characterized by another homogenous group of tribal people (Karen tribe) that influence and control their local community forest and their diversified agriculture, as well as their local ways of life, as a basis for their ecotourism products; and the last is characterized by both a mixed group of tribal people and indigenous Northern Thai people and external tourism companies, as well as, in more recent times, by increasing local government involvement as part of a recent, Thailand-wide attempt to strengthen local government. As will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5, the variations in the three case study areas are important for the application of the integrative framework – partly to assess its adaptive nature.

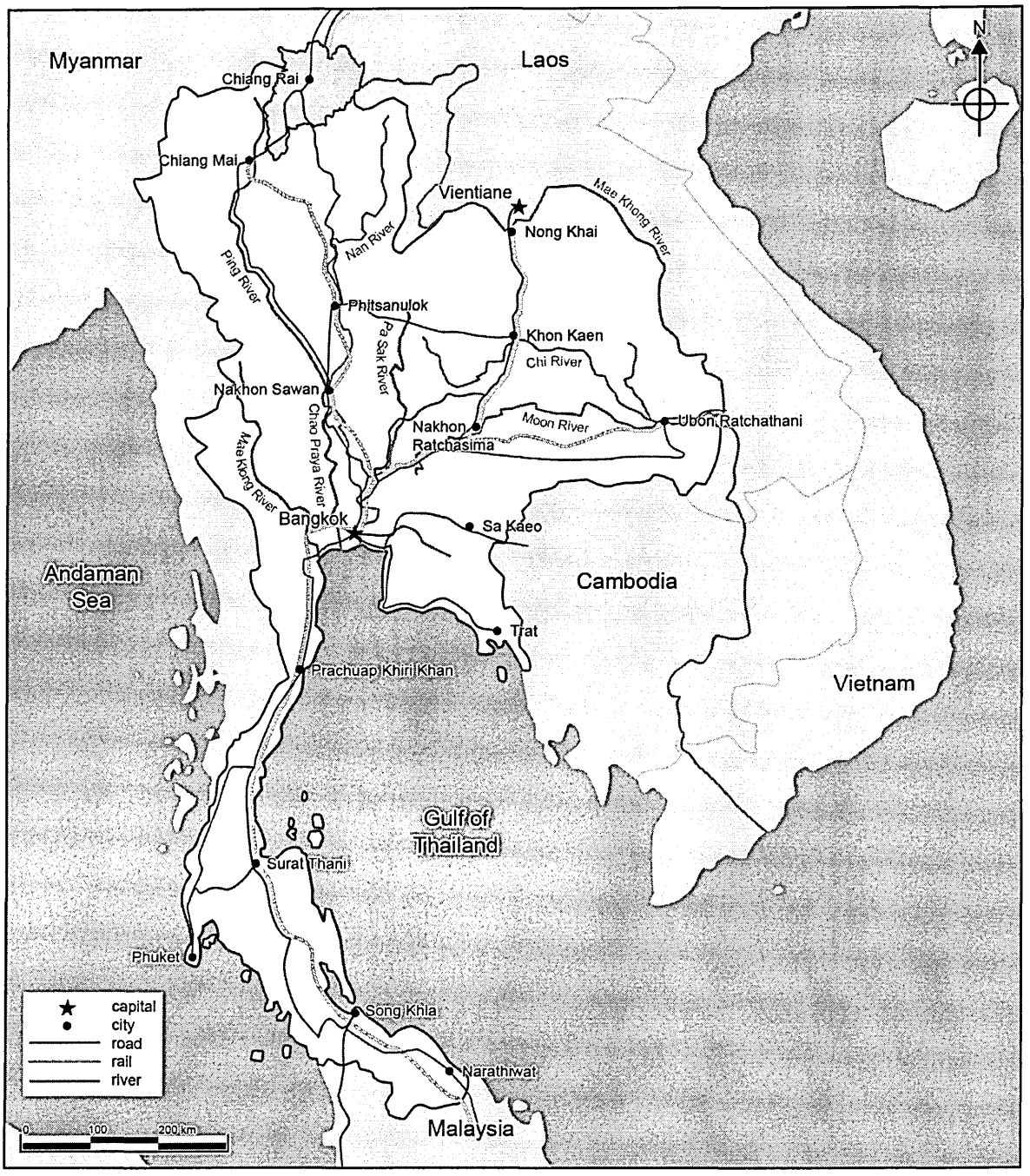

Figure 1.2: Map of Thailand and Chiang Rai Province as the case study area

1.3.2 Specific objectives

The following six objectives were developed to achieve the aims of the study:

1. To review and evaluate the literature on ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development, both in general and also in the specific contexts of developing countries and of rural areas of Thailand. Particular attention is directed to literature that adopts an adaptive perspective and that considers actors' views on sustainability and local community relations and sustainability.
2. To develop an analytical framework to assess ecotourism planning and management processes and outcomes in relation to the principles of sustainable development, with this framework striving to be more integrative and comprehensive than others previously developed by researchers.
3. To apply the analytical framework in the context of three case study areas in Northern Thailand where ecotourism is important, but where the planning and management regimes differ.
4. To evaluate the social relations and the values or beliefs or ideologies related to sustainability among the actors relevant to ecotourism management in the three case study areas and to assess their implications for ecotourism planning and management, including in relation to local empowerment and community development.
5. To develop and apply the new analytical framework, use a political ecology approach, and develop an adaptive perspective to the specific Thai contexts, as well as to assess their wider implications for other researchers interested in ecotourism elsewhere in the world.
6. To identify practical implications of the study for the planning and management of ecotourism and sustainable development in Chiang Rai province and, more generally, in Thailand.

1.4 The case study context

1.4.1 Thailand and its tourism development

Thailand covers an area of 515,000 square kilometers, which is about the same size as France (http://www.thailand.world-guides.com 20/01/2009), and it has a

population of 63.39 million (http://www.populationworld.com 20/01/2009). The population density of Thailand was 106.3 persons per km^2 and 118.1 persons per km^2 in 1990 and 2000 respectively. At regional level, the population densities in descending order were as follows: Bangkok: 4,028.9 persons per km^2, the Central Region: 137.8 persons per km^2, the Northeast Region: 122.9 persons per km^2, the Southern Region: 113.9 persons per km2, and the Northern Region: 67.0 persons per km^2 (http://web.nso.go.th 1/03/2009). Thus, the case study province in this study is amongst the least densely populated areas in Thailand.

Thailand has traditionally relied on an absolute monarchy as the basis for its political system, a system that has managed to avoid Western colonialism. Yet political power and representative government in Thailand are currently being tested by a variety of socio-political forces. During the Rattanakosin era (1249-1932), Thailand was associated with strong feudalistic practices and even slave service. This influence on the country has left a legacy of a highly hierarchical society. This means that Thai people are still attached to the importance of power and leadership personalities (Spark, 1998; Krongkaew and Kakwani, 2003). In 1932, Thai governance changed from a system of absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy combined with an elected representative government (McCargo, 2002). This encouraged the growth of a powerful Thai middle class of business people, politicians and the nouveau riche. Much of the country's economic planning and development has been controlled by these powerful people.

During the 1980s, and in the 1990s before the 1997 Southeast Asia economic crisis, Thailand was viewed as a country with a rapidly growing economy, and it became known as a new 'Tiger' (Phongpaichit and Baker, 1995). The government attempted to develop the country through a New Industrialised Economy (NIE) system and, as a result, the country was rapidly transformed with market-led integration, technical revolutions in production, and improved transportation and communication (Falkus, 1995). It, however, depends heavily on foreign economic aid (particularly from the United States of America, Japan and the International Money Fund), military hardware and financial investment (Wicks, 2000). Under the impacts of these forces, Thailand is clearly divided between urban and rural societies, and by a legacy of tensions derived from the country's traditional socio-cultural dimensions. This includes

rising gaps between the two extremes in Thai society. Thai rural society implies low labour productivity and low income (Jumbala, 1992), whereas people in urban areas have higher incomes (Kulick and Wilson, 1993). With increasing rural out-migration, there are problems of urban poverty, low paid unskilled labour, insufficient investment and dire infrastructure (Ruland & Ladavalya, 1993; Dixon, 1999). Thai society is becoming more divided, urbanised, industrialised and materialistic, with less regard to traditions and religion (Karunaratne, 1998). Buddhist teachings are no longer pivotal, with Western materialist values becoming more prevalent.

Taking into account the economic and social problems in Thailand, the Eighth national Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) presented two new priorities potentially to resolve the continuing problems. These were: 1) The establishment of good governance. This was to involve the strengthening of relationships between the government and people through more collaborative and participatory efforts in society, the provision of guarantees for freedom, human rights and equity, and the settlement of conflicts between stakeholders. 2) The reform of practical plan implementation processes, which were to be based on the area approach. It focused on the integration of functions and participating stakeholders, the improved efficiency of public government agencies at the central level and more direct participation in management, together with the development of indicators suitable for monitoring and evaluating development. The development paradigm was shifted toward emphasizing 'human development'. This was to ensure that development of all people in society, with regard to their potential and their ways of thinking, were to be shifted from a compartmentalized to a more holistic process. This was considered to be a means to achieve people's aspirations and also the strategic objectives, rather than as an end for national development.

The Thai government uses tourism as one tool to tackle the country's economic problems, creating jobs for people as well as increasing income for the country. Tourism has been strongly emphasized as a potential source of economic wealth for all geographical areas, particularly after the Asian economic crisis in 1997, and especially with the recognition that tourism can earn foreign currency more quickly than other sectors. Furthermore, tourism has been recognised since the Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP), 1977-1981, as having substantial potential

benefits (Rattanakomut, 1995), and currently it is a major export industry for national and regional economic development. The Thai government recognised tourism as a means of assisting in development processes and in earning hard currency. Tourism has subsequently surpassed rice as the leading earner of foreign exchange for the country and cornerstone of its economy (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1997). From 1997 the decline in economic growth, and in traditional exports in primary production and manufacturing, resulted in growing indebtedness and a serious balance of payments deficit. Yet tourism receipts have risen from £8,601.40 million (430,070 million Baht) in 1998 to £18,563.98 million (928,199million Baht) in 2007 (http://www2.tat.or.th 6/6/2008).

Tourism is regarded as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, tourism contributes to economic growth and can raise the income of individuals and nations. On the other hand, it produces many adverse impacts on host societies and their environments (Ondicho, 2000; Buckley, 2004; Price and Smith, 1996; Tribe et al., 2000). Due to the negative impacts of tourism on society and the environment in the country, the Thai tourism industry nowadays places emphasis on the concept of ecotourism and sustainable development. The Tourism Authority of Thailand recognises that it is essential to ensure that the regular visits of tourists are maintained and that tourism resources retain their integrity in order to maintain attractiveness (TAT, 2001). Consequently, ecotourism is seen as a possible solution to the deterioration of the resources and it is used as a contributor to the conservation of the environment, society, and culture of the destination areas. In practice 'ecotourism' is used as an umbrella term in Thailand for nature tourism, cultural tourism, and historical tourism.

Development is a highly complex and contested idea, although it is widely considered to be virtually synonymous with progress, implying a positive transformation or change (Thomas, 2000). Sharpley et al. (2002) argue that it is useful to understand development in terms of development by whom and for whom, and who it is that ultimately benefits. Differing actors will having diverse views on what development is, on what represents appropriate local development, and on who benefits most from the local development process. Communities in local areas are obviously key participants in the development process, and different actors in the community will have varying views on the process and its outcomes. In this research, attention is

directed to people's views both inside and outside the community about development that is both appropriate and sustainable, because there exists interaction between community and non-community members and all actors interact with the environmental resources.

Sharpley et al. (2002) note that although tourism is an important potential vehicle for economic development, sustainable tourism development also focuses on societal changes and natural resource conservation as well as on economic impacts. Sustainable tourism development is also often seen as requiring local community participation and involvement. In this study, sustainable development through tourism is evaluated in relation to the planning and management of ecotourism (a concept that may be seen as part of sustainable development). Actors' views are presented on the perceived appropriate patterns of social relations and the associated resulting patterns of resource use. As part of the focus on 'insiders' or community actors, the study additionally considers community acceptance of the ways of making a living or 'livelihoods' from natural resources, and the types and levels of participation and involvement in the development process. Consideration is also given to the extent to which planning and management for tourism development per se and ecotourism, in particular – in both local and relevant national frameworks – reflect all actors' views about these issues.

1.4.2 Case study area

Chiang Rai province is located in Northern Thailand, and one reason for its choice as the geographical basis for the case study areas in this study was because the province combines strong agricultural and ecotourism sectors, with both being important for rural socio-economic development. Chiang Rai province marks the northernmost borders of Thailand, with natural walls of high mountains surrounding the province and separating it from Myanmar and Laos. The abundant and relatively unchanged mountains and forests are home to several ethnic minorities, such as Thai Yai, Karen, Yao, and other tribal groups. The province has many ecotourism resources, with 3 national parks, 9 forest parks, one arboretum and 31 designated forest areas (http://www.chiangrai.go.th 23/7/2008). Both domestic and international tourists are

attracted by the ecotourism resources and activities in the province, such as the many forests, nature trips, and trekking trails. The national and provincial governments recognize the importance of ecotourism for the economy and there are many policies for growth in the sector and also for sustainable development. For example, the province has a plan for their future to be the 'Gateway to Indochinese countries'. The province has become a second destination for tourism in the north of Thailand after Chiang Mai province (Chiang Rai Provincial Office, 2006), and the province has a boundary with Chiang Mai and other neighbouring countries, such as Myanmar, Laos PDR and inner China through Yunnan and Sichuan.

Three rural areas in Chiang Rai, Northern Thailand are used as case studies. They are: Rong Born village, which is made up of a homogenous group of Northern Thai people; Yang Kham Nu village, which consists of a group of tribal Karen people; and Ruammit village, which is composed of a mix of tribal and indigenous Northern Thai people living together in the same village. The three areas are distinctive in that their communities are made up of indigenous Northern Thai and hill-tribes, but there are also differences between the three areas in terms of their tourism resources and cultural patterns or ways of life. Within these communities, there are likely to be rather different forms of social relations and ideologies related to development that will have affected their views on appropriate (sustainable) forms of development and their approaches to ecotourism. The intention was to apply this study to three different contexts where the patterns and processes could be evaluated, as this would allow for greater confidence in the wider conclusions that are drawn from the research. The patterns and processes of ecotourism planning and management in these three rural areas are examined in this study with a strong focus on these differing local contexts.

1.5. Overall research methodology

The methodology of this study is explained in Chapter Four, which presents details of the specific approaches, techniques and methods that were employed. To understand the relationships between actors and their interactions around environmental resource usage, their values, beliefs and ideologies regarding sustainability and also their relations and interactions with ecotourism planning and management in the case

study areas were explored. In order to evaluate these beliefs and interactions, this study utilizes a constructivist paradigmatic approach. Constructivism can assist in understanding these relations and perspectives. Ontologically, this perspective involves a focus on the social constructions of the mind, and it is predicated on the belief that there exist as many such constructions as there are individuals (Creswell, 2003; Gergen, 1994; Burr, 2003). Epistemologically, this approach proposes that the findings of the study exist because of the interaction between researcher and research issues and because of the researcher's attempts to understand the views of others and then to interpret them. Guba and Lincoln (1989: 43-44) elucidate that methodologically the adopted view involves a hermeneutic and dialectic process between the observer and observed, with the observer searching to create the constructed reality of the observed and to achieve their own appreciation of it. In other words, the study findings and their analytical realities are reconstructed through the perceptions of the actors being studied.

A deductive approach was adopted in this study, notably including the development of the deductive conceptual framework, which was informed by the theories and key concepts discussed in the literature review, and this was then applied to the case study areas. The use of this conceptual framework suggests a deductively-driven research study, but the intention was to use the framework only as a loose guide for the research, and not as a more rigid set of theories to be examined. The study uses a case study design based on three different broad themes around ecotourism resources and the related society in order to gain "deeper" insights and understanding of the phenomena being studied, including their relations; values, beliefs and ideologies; and the interactions in ecotourism planning and management of local people, local government, national government and the private sector. The framework only suggests broad relationships and connections, and it allows for further adjustment and revision based on actual experiences and findings.

Qualitative research methods were used to critically examine ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in the three case study areas in Thailand. The methods included in-depth interviews with different groups of actors that are related to this study. These interviews were important for the research aims and also because the research relates to social reality processed and socially constructed by the actors themselves (Saratakos, 2005; Bryman, 2008; Ryen, 2009). The actors

interviewed for this study included representatives of local communities, local government, national government and the private sector. Relevant documents and archival records were also used for the analysis. All these sources were analysed and interpreted through the use of a constant comparison approach, which means that their interpretation was analytic, iterative and flexible. The method of thematic analysis was also used to evaluate the interview transcripts for their content. All research findings are presented and explained in Chapters Six to Eight.

1.6. Organisation of the thesis

This study is divided into nine chapters. Chapter One has presented an overall introduction to the thesis and it explained the context for the research, the study aims and objectives, the research process and the thesis organization. Chapter Two provides theories, key literature, and previous research in the field from the collection of academic literature used in this research. It presents a selective, critical review of published research related to the issues under investigation. Chapter Three discusses the conceptual framework, which was developed from key literature and adapted for the study, and which is subsequently applied and evaluated in the results chapters and the final chapter. It identifies specific key concepts and interpretations that guide the research. Chapter Four identifies the research strategies and methodology used in this study to achieve the research aims and objectives, the approaches taken to the fieldwork, and the strengths and limitations of the research design and methods. Chapter Five reviews the general context to the case study, and it specifically focuses on three different characteristics of ecotourism planning and management in Chiang Rai province, Thailand.

The three results chapters then follow. Chapter Six examines social relations and sustainability in ecotourism management, with a focus on the relations amongst the various actors in the case study areas, as well as on their beliefs about ecotourism planning, management and sustainability there. It also considers resource use, resource management and the deliberations undertaken within communities concerning resources. Further, the assessment of political issues focuses on power and governance relating to the balance of power for the communities, including issues around power and

their leaders, and power in relation to external relations and actors. It also considers issues around control in the villages. Moreover, the internal and external relations are assessed in order to see the connections between the villages and their relevant activities, incorporating internal and external involvement in ecotourism management and sustainability. Chapter Seven considers the respondents' ideologies, that is, their beliefs and values about sustainability in ecotourism management. The chapter discusses three main themes in relation to the actors' views about sustainability in ecotourism planning and management. The first theme concentrates on villagers' opinions about "appropriate livelihoods" for local people, which relate to their ideas and beliefs about the management of their resources and their ways of life. The second theme focuses on local people's notions of "fairness" in the use of their resources and in the distribution of the benefits from tourism. The third theme examines the actors' views about the appropriate levels and types of participation in local policy decision-making. It seeks to establish whether and how local people wanted to get involved in ecotourism management in their own area, and it also elucidates how the locals might get better results from the involvement, and especially so in ways that are "fair" to both local people and the environment. Chapter Eight evaluates respondents' answers about ecotourism planning, management and sustainability related to their ideologies and relationships in tourism planning and management. The discussion about planning and management in the chapter also elucidates the balance between the actors' relations with, and their ideas about, the use of their resources. The actors in this chapter refer to both local people living in the three case study areas and also those who are from outside but affect the village. The outcomes of the analysis provide a deeper understanding of the potential future of ecotourism planning and management in the areas, and it focuses on aspects of ecotourism and sustainability in these. Finally, the overall conclusions of the study, and their wider implications, are discussed in Chapter Nine. This conclusion chapter provides a synopsis of the research findings, discusses the value of the conceptual framework developed for the research, explores the adopted research perspectives on ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in developing countries, and identifies some future research directions. The organization of this thesis, as discussed here, is presented in summary form in Figure 1.3.

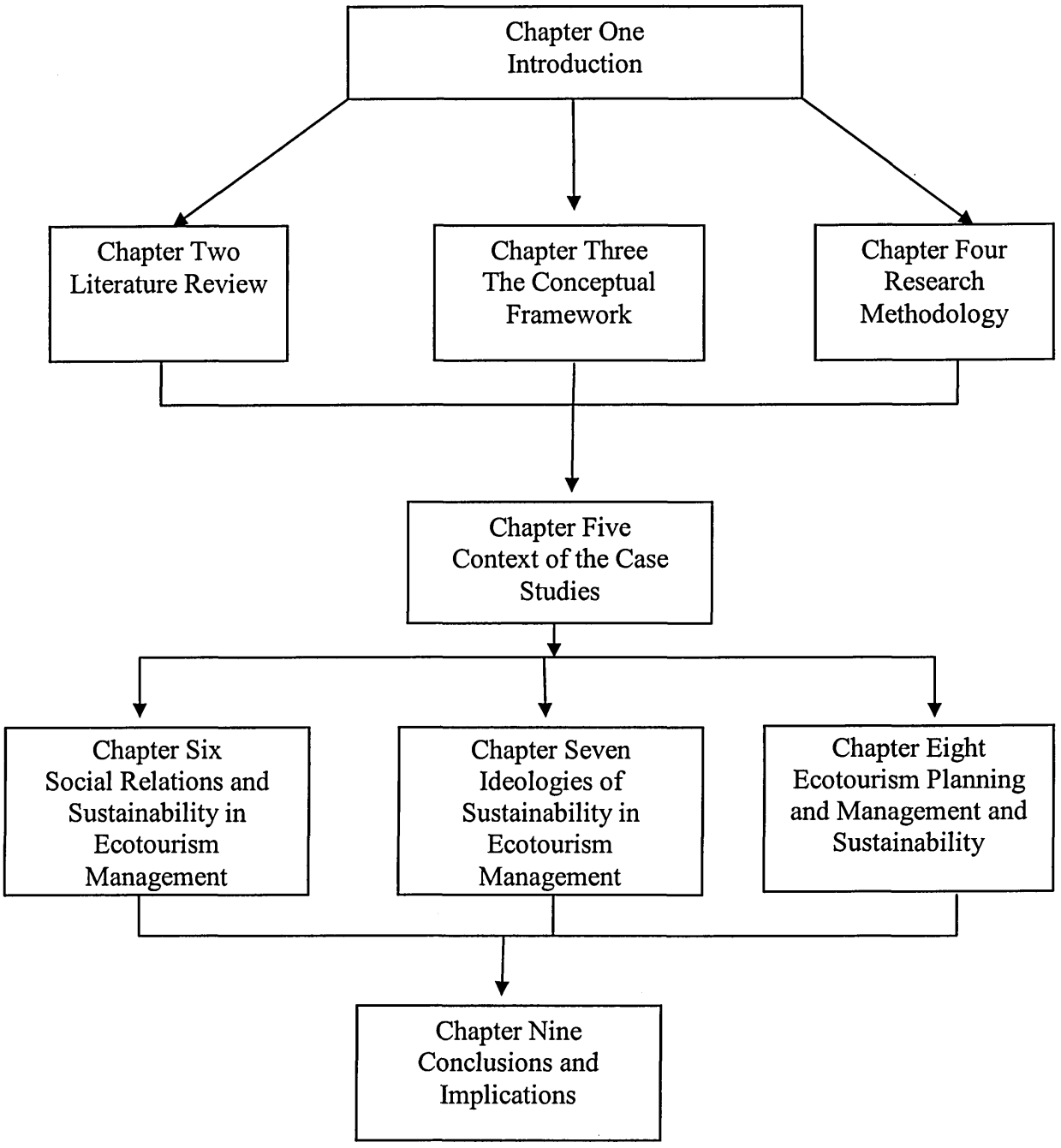

Figure 1.3: The Thesis Structure

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced both the academic and practical contexts within which this study is situated. First, the chapter reviewed the study contexts, the various academic theories upon which the study is based, and the importance of this study for research on ecotourism planning and management. Second, it has explained the overall aims and the specific objectives of the research. As the study is based on one geographical region, this chapter also reviewed the relevant contexts to Chiang Rai, Thailand and it touched on some reasons why this province was chosen for the study. After this brief overview of the thesis, the next chapter reviews the key concepts, literature and theoretical ideas related to the study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review examines key approaches and concepts used in the study. The study examines the patterns of social relations and the discourses or ideologies related to ecotourism management and planning and sustainability. These are examined for Thailand as an example of a rapidly developing country. Therefore, the literature review begins with a discussion of development theories that help in an understanding of development processes, and also of tourism development in developing countries. The review then considers the concepts of ecotourism and sustainability, including differing views about related principles. The review then focuses on frameworks that are used either to critically evaluate or to manage ecotourism, notably frameworks based on the underpinning ideas of a carrying capacity or of limits to acceptable change, as well as other more recent potential frameworks. These reviews of critical or management frameworks are intended to assist with the development of a framework to be used in the present study. And this framework is intended to aid the critical evaluation of practice and, after evaluation and adjustment, to assist with critical assessments and practical management in other contexts.

The literature review also evaluates the political ecology approach, with this approach used subsequently in the framework developed to examine the patterns of human relations associated with sustainability issues in the case study areas. The approach focuses on both natural environmental and social science dimensions. The political ecology perspective behind this approach assists in understanding the relationships between local communities, society and the development processes. Social relations, values and beliefs and discourses or ideologies are considered to be key linkages between the local community and sustainability in each destination. Attention is directed to the importance of local social relationships, including the discourses or ideologies of sustainability, in research on the connections between ecotourism and sustainable development. The review also examines ecotourism policies at national and local geographical levels and their links with sustainability at local levels. Finally, the

review investigates literature related to ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development. This is relevant to the subsequent evaluation of the connections between ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in the three rural case studies in Thailand, with this country chosen as an example of a rapidly developing country.

2.2 Development, tourism, tourism development and developing countries

2.2.1 Development

The definition of development, classified as a normative term, has long been debated. The term has had several meanings including economic growth, structural change, autonomous industrialization, capitalism or socialism, self actualization, and individual, national, regional and cultural self-reliance (Harrison,1998). These ideas refer to a process by which a society moves from one condition to another, and also to the goals of that process. After the Second World War, the idea of development was conceived narrowly as economic growth, and social and cultural factors were only recognized to the extent to which they facilitated growth. Development was later thought to incorporate social, moral, ethical and environmental considerations as it came to deal with human betterment and fulfillment through the expansion of choice (Ingham, 1993). In short, development can be thought of as a philosophy, a process, the outcome or product of the process, and a plan guiding the process toward desired objectives (Sharpley et al,2002). Thus, development is a complex, multidimensional concept which not only embraces economic growth and traditional social indicators, such as healthcare, education and housing, but it also seeks to confirm the political and cultural integrity and freedom of individuals in society. It is, in effect, the continuous and positive change in economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions, of the human condition, guided by the principle of freedom of choice and limited by the capacity of the environment to sustain such change. Todaro (1994) contends there are three core values (sustenance, self-esteem and freedom) and three objectives of development. The first objective is to increase the availability and distribution of basic human needs, the second is to raise the standard of living, which involves higher

incomes, better education, the provision of more jobs and greater attention to cultural and humanistic values, thereby promoting greater individual and national self-esteem. The last objective is to expand the range of economic and social choice so that individuals and nations are not dependent on other people or countries.

It is widely acknowledged that the subject matter of development is vast and that there is a variety of ways to categorize development. This research follows Telfer's classification of the main paradigms within development theory: modernization, dependency, economic liberalization, and alternative development. Each paradigm represents an approach to understanding or interpreting development and each can be viewed, in part, as a reaction against the theories which preceded it. Telfer's classification highlights how development is a highly contested notion influenced by a wide range of social, political, economic and environmental perspectives, each with its own set of values.

Modernization theory was based on the assumption of a dualism between the underdeveloped and developed world, with the latter supposedly occupying superior status to which the former should aspire. It further espoused that inputs of capital, technology, and knowledge were needed from the Western countries in order to kick-start development in the Third World. Once economic growth started to occur, it was assumed that any benefits would trickle down to improve the quality of life of the majority of a country's population (Scheyvens, 2002). The theory has been defined as socioeconomic development which follows an evolutionary trend from a traditional to a modern society. There is a shift from agriculture to industry and from rural to urban, and the financial service sector plays an increasingly central role. It posits that traditional society is both an expression of underdevelopment and also a cause of it. Modernization theorists would have no regrets about a convergence towards western capitalism, believing that the sooner the world was modernized the sooner world poverty would be alleviated (Sharpley et al, 2002). It has been contended that tourism has an important role in modernization as it has changed the socio-economic conditions in particular economic contexts. Thus, Pi-Sunyer (1989) argues that tourism has been promoted as a development strategy to transfer technology, increase employment, generate foreign exchange, increase GDP, attract development capital and to promote a modern way of life with western values.

However, critics have challenged the unidirectional path of development suggested by modernization ideas and also the assumption that traditional values are not compatible with modernity. It is also questioned by critics such as Frank (1996) and Wallerstein (1974) as being too historical and an apologia for colonialism. They believed that western societies force their superiority and capitalist models on supposedly inferior institutions of traditionally-oriented societies, and that this accounts for their structure of underdevelopment (Sharpley et al, 2002). Modernization theorists have also been criticized for a high level of abstraction (So, 1990). They have also come under attack from those in the post-modernism camp who argue that large-scale, top-down meta-theories no longer apply universally across a diversity of environments.

The dependency theory paradigm gained prominence in the 1960s as a critique of modernization theory. Proponents argued that developing countries have external and internal political, institutional and economic structures, which keep them in a dependent position relative to developing countries (Todaro, 1997). Blomstrom and Hettne (1984) proposed refinements to dependency theory based on its weaknesses in terms of the analysis of local or specific situations and of its failure to address specific political and social relations. His refined concept of dependency includes examination of global forces which influence local events as well as the study of the organization of local residents in response to these forces and in order achieve their own goals. The concept of dependency has also been applied to culture. Desjeux (1981) illustrates the potential influence of western philosophy and organizational structures behind a development project on local culture: the development project can attempt to normalize social behaviour on the basis of rules, the scientific organization of work, or Western organizational models. The integration of local culture into development projects also becomes difficult because people who are removed from and do not participate in the local culture often make decisions on development in the host's local culture.

In relationship to tourism and dependency, it has been argued that tourism is equivalent to a new type of plantation economy. It is suggested that the needs of metropolitan centres are being met by developing countries, and that the wealth generated is subject to transfer from the colony to the motherland (Mathews, 1978). Some advocates of dependency theory go as far as to claim that tourism is another form

of colonialism or imperialism (Harrison, 2001). Keller (1984) highlights some of the criticisms of tourism development: that the destinations ultimately receive only a fraction of the money spent by visitors; that a high percentage of goods consumed by the tourist are imported; that there is considerable leakage of capital and profit received from tourism; and that over time the destination is likely to lose control of decision-making processes governing the industry's development. Therefore, development often leads to the tourism industry in developing countries being controlled, managed and possibly exploited by the developed industrial regions.

Economic neo-liberalism was a reaction against the policies of strong state intervention, including those promoted by structural dependency theorists, but this paradigm has received less attention than the others. Neo-liberalism draws on neoclassical economic theory which treats people as atomistic individuals who are bound together only through market forces (Brohman, 1995). It also calls for minimalist state involvement in economic transactions, that is a "laissez-faire" approach. It supports supply-side macroeconomics, free competitive markets and the privatization of state enterprises. The belief is that it is endogenous factors that serve as impediments to development and not exogenous factors as is argued by dependency theorists (Telfer, 2002). This theoretical perspective has been criticized for its financial strategies and for the fact that it is dominated by western societies. In addition, it is suggested that improper linkages to the democratic process have resulted in neo-liberalism strengthening national and transnational elites in the new economic order. It has also been criticized for its neglect of socio-cultural and political relations and of environment and sustainability issues.

The alternative development paradigm is a pragmatic, broadly based approach, which arose out of criticisms of these earlier models. Many indigenous theories of development are promoted as they incorporate local conditions and knowledge systems, and increased local involvement is proposed (Edwards, 1989). The various alternatives to the earlier meta-narratives and largely economic models are centred more on the people and on the environment. The focus of alternative approaches to planning, for example, is often from the 'bottom up' as distinct from 'top down'. However, it is argued by some that alternative development is small-scale and in the long term may impede economic growth, which depends on global capitalism. There might also be

barriers to the success of alternative processes; for example, political changes, barriers to local participation, lack of accountability, and lack of integration and funding sources.

But it is not necessary to rely on only one of these development theories, as each may offer ideas that are of value, and various hybrid interpretations may well be useful. The development theories that are most closely associated with the perspectives adopted in this study are dependency theory, and also modernization and alternative development perspectives. The dependency approach, for example, addresses external political and social relations that can affect local development, whereas the alternative development paradigm provides a valuable focus on local sustainability, local initiative and local adaptation. Clearly it is important to understand the relationships between development paradigms and tourism and to appreciate how those understandings can help to identify appropriate and sustainable approaches to local tourism development. And, as outlined by Wall (1993), it is important to recognize that site-specific contexts and issues must be given full attention.

2.2.2 Tourism development and developing countries.

The term 'developing countries' is used synonymously with terms such as 'less developed countries', 'poor countries', 'the South' 'the Third World', and these sorts of terms are often used interchangeably (Dickenson, 1996; Harrison, 1998; Tosun, 2000). Lea (1988) uses the term 'centre' or 'metropolitan' to refer to the core western democracies of North America, Europe, Japan, and Australasia, but at that time (1988) excluding the Eastern European socialist states. The remaining countries are often collectively described as 'Third World', 'periphery', or 'developing countries'. Although they are all attempts at grouping a large number of countries into two or more categories, this is often done knowing that the reality is quite different and the countries are heterogeneous. In essence, they tend to include the same countries with a few deviations depending on who is conducting the classification. Consequently, many studies deal with a heterogeneous yet hierarchical and inegalitarian structure of capitalist states, each with increasingly polarized internal class divisions (Cliffe &Seldon, 1991). And it has been acknowledged that developing countries differ from

each other, economically, culturally and so on, and that they exhibit no single common defining feature. Thus, it seems difficult to provide a comprehensive definition of the terms 'Third World' and 'developing countries' to everybody's satisfaction (Tosun, 2000). In practice, the terms are adopted according to the researcher's preferences and their views on appropriateness for the project being studied. However, they are all based on similar meanings.

Because of the richness of their natural resources, such as beaches, fauna and flora, many developing countries focus on tourism as a key development option. Lea (1988) and Brohman (1995) consider tourism as a low-cost development option in situations where there are abundant cultural and natural resources. Brohman (1995) suggests that developing countries should uniformly specialize in primary exports rather than attempt to develop more sophisticated industrial sectors through state intervention that would not conform to their economic comparative advantages based on factor costs. Thus, based on complex natural resources, developing countries have often identified tourism as one of their major export or foreign exchange prospects. Tourism is regarded as a development tool by most developing countries, and it has become seen as an important political as well as a social, economic and moral issue in these countries (Harrison, 1992). Tourism can often involve a rapid speed of economic growth for developing countries because international tourism trends are characterized by increasing tourist visits from developed countries to less-developed countries. In addition, expansion in domestic tourism has brought significant changes and associated problems for many developing countries. Both international and domestic tourism have at times led to excessive tourist numbers in certain areas, an increased commoditization of cultural and social life, changes in social structure and values, and they have even affected the political environment and political stability (Harrison, 1992).

Cooper et al (1993) and Weaver (1998) argue that the tourist is a source of lucrative revenues, derived directly through tourist expenditures and taxes and also indirectly through the operation of the income multiplier effect as linkages are developed with agriculture and other complementary sectors of the local and national economy. Tourism can also induce a growth in jobs and opportunities for local or indigenous people in an area. However, tourism also brings negative impacts to destination areas, for example, natural and cultural changes (Lea,1988; Harrison, 1992;

Weaver, 1998). There is increasing recognition that tourism development focused on the appreciation of environmental and social features could provide a new alternative tourism based on sustainability. Ecotourism is perhaps rather naively thought to represent a clearly more sustainable approach to tourism development in many developing countries. Yet such countries as Costa Rica, Kenya, Nepal and Thailand have focused on the better protection of socio-cultural and environmental features in particular national parks and protected areas. And some issues such as carrying capacity and local participation have been integrated in tourism planning in some of these countries (Weaver, 1998).

The earlier review of development theories shows that societal change and values and sustainability concerns feature in particular in dependency and alternative development theories. The present study is concerned with connections between development paradigms, the nature of development and of tourism development, and underlying societal relations. Thus a key question then becomes: what role can tourism play in meeting development processes? As Burns (1999) suggests, one issue is whether the policy taken on tourism is one of 'Tourism First', which focuses on the industry, or 'Development First', whereby planning is framed by national and local development needs. There are also organizational issues around the control of the tourism development process, such as whether it is in the public or private sector, and around who can wield most power. Another set of relevant issues relates to whether ecotourism does indeed help to promote sustainable development. And issues are important for evaluations of tourism planning and sustainable development in developing countries.

2.3. Ecotourism and sustainable development

The notion of ecotourism is discussed and evaluated next. While many authors suggest varied definitions of ecotourism, there are often common elements or principles. Cater (1997), Blamey (2001) and Orams (2001) indicate that the concept relates to nature based tourism that promotes environmental education and that is managed for sustainability. Similarly, Fennell (2003: 25) suggests that ecotourism "is a sustainable form of nature resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and

learning about nature, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented (in terms of control, benefits, profits and scale). It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to conservation or preservation of such areas". That definition adds a locally oriented dimension. Lascurain (1996: 20) similarly defines ecotourism as "Environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying features – both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficial, active socio-economic involvement of local populations". This definition also provides some emphasis on local benefits for residents.

Because of the many different definitions of ecotourism provided by authors there is much debate about the term. Yet some would contend there are five core principles which are fundamental. These are the principles of ecotourism being nature-based, ecologically sustainable, environmentally educative, locally beneficial, and generating tourist satisfaction (Page and Dowling, 2002). The first three principles could be considered to be essential for a product to be viewed as 'ecotourism', while the last two might be regarded as being desirable for all forms of tourism, including ecotourism.

Ecotourism can substantially contribute to the local economy, especially when local residents are involved in its management and operations (Lindberg et al., 1996; Holland et al, 2004). These potential local suppliers are key players if the economic and social benefits associated with ecotourism are to contribute effectively to local rural development (Wall, 1997). But, despite the potential benefits associated with ecotourism, businesses in the ecotourism sector often struggle to survive because of scarce resources and owners' lack of business experience, particularly tourism-related experience (McKercher & Robbins, 1998).

The principles of ecotourism are increasingly identified with those of sustainable tourism in natural or rural areas, with Weaver (2000: 27) calling ecotourism "a subset of sustainable tourism". Sustainable tourism is itself inextricably linked with the broader concept of sustainable development, so that sustainable tourism represents those forms of tourism that assist in promoting a more sustainable development path for places

where tourism occurs (Wearing and Neil, 1999). Cater (1993) identifies three key objectives for sustainable tourism: meeting the needs of the host population in terms of improved living standards both in the short and long term; satisfying the demands of growing numbers of tourists; and safeguarding the natural environment in order to achieve both of the preceding aims. Farrell (1999) highlights the sustainability trinity which aims at the smooth and transparent integration of economy, society and environment. Hall (2000: 205) concludes that the meaning of sustainable development for tourism is "not just an appreciation of the physical environment but also a deeper understanding of economic, social, political and physical systems of which tourism is a part".

Sustainable development and ecotourism are often discussed as if they are universal concepts that ought to be understood and applied uniformly in all locations. However, some commentators distinguish between "hard" and "soft" sustainability (Bramwell and Sharman 2000), and Hunter (1997) argues that sustainable tourism should be seen as an adaptable approach that can entail different approaches to tourism according to local circumstances and needs. The scale of development and its character that is considered sustainable may well vary according to the level of prior development and the views and priorities of local communities. Thus, 'hard' and 'soft' options may be preferred in different circumstances. Similarly, there is increasing concern about the uncritical application of concepts and approaches developed in developed countries in the "West" to situations in less developed countries with very different socio-cultural histories and development needs. There are indigenous needs and perspectives, and the uncritical application of principles and "standards" developed elsewhere can represent external dominance and ideological control (Robbins, 2004). Thus, it follows that ecotourism as an approach to sustainable development probably needs to be adapted to the specific circumstances of the area being considered, particularly given the uneven patterns of development between developed and developing countries, and also within these countries.

2.4. Management frameworks for ecotourism

Over the last two decades, a number of frameworks have been developed for the planning and management of visitor use of natural areas, often with a focus in some way on sustainability. While they are often emphasize practical management steps, they can also be used to critically evaluate management practice and impacts. All of these frameworks aim to protect the natural environment, while providing desirable opportunities for visitors (Cole & Stankey, 1997). They are usually premised on the idea that management frameworks for ecotourism need to be based on the concepts of carrying capacity, limits to acceptable change, and/or a spectrum of recreation opportunities. Over the years many studies have attempted to determine a numeric carrying capacity for natural areas, generally without success because of the considerable difficulties in identifying actual capacities. Yet the research continues, perhaps because it provides at least some measure of a maximum amount of tourism that can be planned for. The limit to acceptable change (LAC) concept was established to provide an alternative approach to the vexed issue of determining capacity, and it is based on avoiding a situation where the conditions of an area are considered unacceptable. It requires the identification of levels of change that are considered acceptable to certain decision-makers or other stakeholder groups. Providing a spectrum of recreation opportunities forms the basis of another framework, and it also underpins several other approaches (Newsome et al, 2002). More recent frameworks, such as the Visitor Activity Management Process (VAMP) and Visitor Experience Resource Protection (VERP) scheme, use opportunity classes to influence the selection of geographical zones for different uses. All of the frameworks follow the steps of rational planning; that is, of objective setting, data collection, collation and analysis, the development of policy alternatives and of a final plan, and the recognition of implementation as a crucial last step (Hall, 2000). However, the planning frameworks are not mutually exclusive. As noted by Boyd and Butler (1996), this field has been evolutionary rather than revolutionary, and a number of frameworks have common features and, indeed, at first glance the differences between them may not be fully apparent, and there is often scope to combine elements within them.

A key concept behind many of these management frameworks is that of carrying capacity. It is widely regarded as the maximum level of use an area can sustain as

determined by such natural factors as food, shelter and water (Stankey et al., 1990). The objective is to manage tourism within its carrying capacities (Butler, 1997; Getz, 1983). It was in the recreation field that the carrying capacity concept first gained widespread use, and at first the focus was on biological and ecological issues. Its early origins were based on the hypothesis that increasing numbers of visitors would cause greater environmental impacts, which could be measured though biological indicators (Manning et al., 1996). But, arguably, the carrying capacity concept has failed to generate practical visitor use limits. There are many reasons for this: such as because different tourism experiences have different carrying capacities; the impacts on biological and physical resources do not in themselves help establish a carrying capacity; and because strong cause-and-effect relationships between the amount of use and impacts do not exist. These arguments are emphasized by McCool and Patterson (2000) and Lindberg et al., (1997), who instead focus on understanding desired conditions, on impacts that are considered acceptable and unacceptable, and on the goal of actions. Such a refocusing is clarified by rephrasing the question from how much use is too much? to how much change is acceptable or what are the desired conditions of change? Thus, researchers in this field are beginning to focus on critical dimensions of carrying capacity that are related to human values, and they are also starting to recognize that the cultural and social aspects of the visitor experience have to be accounted for (Manning et al., 1996).

Ecotourism is often considered to require a means of environmental impact assessment and it has also been developed as a tool for sustainable tourism management. The planning and managing frameworks for ecotourism have been developed over time so that increasingly they include a wide range of considerations about the appropriate management of tourism resources. Ecotourism management frameworks have often simply used existing environmental management frameworks, such as Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC), Visitor Impact Management Framework (VIM), Protected Area Visitor Impact Management (PAVIM), Visitor Experience Resource Protection (VERP), and Visitor Activity Management Process (VAMP). As has been shown, these frameworks were developed to identify recreation and tourism opportunities, to assess human use-impact relationships, to provide managers with specific steps to determine acceptable conditions, and to identify management strategies

to achieve desired resource and social conditions (Farrell and Marion, 2002). And, to varying degrees all of them are based on the carrying capacity concept.

All these ecotourism decision-making frameworks provide a structure for organizing information and thoughts, and therefore they can assist managers in making rational and defensible tradeoffs between resource protection and visitor access to tourism resources. Such frameworks do not discard the concept of carrying capacity, but rather the emphasis has tended to shift from the idea of fixed resource capabilities and amount of use to the notion of achieving desired conditions (Stankey et al., 1985). Yet these frameworks give far more emphasis to physical and natural resources rather than to social, economic and cultural concerns. By contrast, this present study attempts to develop an alternative, new framework for ecotourism evaluation and management that brings together environmental and socio-economic concerns and integrates natural environment science and sociology perspectives.

Planning is crucial if natural area tourism is to be made more sustainable. Such planning allows for impacts to be recognized and managed. The focus for most recent ecotourism assessment and management frameworks is on how to manage acceptable change rather than to try to determine how much use is too much. Adaptation is now seen as crucial. For example, visitors want different experience when they travel to a natural area and different sites can offer varying activities and experiences (Newsome et al, 2002). More consideration needs to be paid to the specific management constraints and distinctive needs of people living in particular areas in developing countries. Future management frameworks need to consider both natural science and social science perspectives and diverse socio-cultural, economic and political issues. Thus the present study will use a political ecology perspective to assess the development and planning and management of ecotourism, because this allows for a broad integration of perspectives and issues, notably by allowing consideration of the socio-cultural, economic and political consequences of different ecotourism pathways. In particular, it allows for assessments of winners and losers as a result of ecotourism development in local areas in developing countries and also of the views of the various affected actors.

2.5 Political ecology and tourism

While there are many definitions of 'political ecology', some common concerns emerge in the literature. Robbins (2004) concludes that political ecology consists of three key dimensions: political economy, institutions and environment change. Watts (Robbins 2004: 6) suggests that the approach involves attempts "to understand the complex relations between nature and society through a careful analysis of what one might call the forms of access and control over resources and their implication for environmental health and sustainable livelihoods". This is similar to Blakie and Brookfield in Robbins (2004: 6), who claim that the term "combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy. Together this encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and also within classes and groups within society itself". From a political ecology perspective political economy ideas are used to evaluate the use of environmental resources and the social relationships that underpin those patterns of resource use. Those social relations often take place through various institutional arrangements, so there is a focus on understanding the operation of those arrangements. The key concern for differential access to resources in order to secure sustainable livelihoods points to the importance of power in the social relations between different actors, including power that affects how people think about and talk about their access to those resources. Thus, Scott and Sullivan (2000: 2) argue that political ecology involves "a concern with tracing the genealogy of narratives concerning the environment, with identifying power relationships supported by such narratives, and with asserting the consequences of hegemony over, and within, these narratives for economic and social development, and particularly for constraining possibilities for self-determination."

Political ecology applies the approaches and methods of political economy in ecological contexts and, in short, it might be understood as the study of ecological distribution-based conflicts. It seeks to understood and encompass the full complexity of human-environment interactions linked to alterations in the environment, and this can include alterations associated with ecotourism development (Blaikie, 1995; Bryan, 1997). The net of social relations examined in political ecology extends to international, national, regional and local actors, who all can have an influence at the interface of local environmental, economic, social and political change. Political

ecology has provided new insights into how the policies and practices of local resource use can be driven by national and international political, social and economic institutions. The varied local and non-local actors are studied in relation to their intersections in specific local contexts, and which also have their own distinctive histories. Political ecology focuses on the actors' interests and influence, and on their values, beliefs and discourses in order to understand their roles in the observed developments in specific contexts (Gossling, 2003). In this way, political ecology has proved to be a powerful tool to understand the conflicts and compromises that surround environment issues.

Political ecology often considers the power related to different types of knowledge. Thus, Peet and Watts (2004) argue that a sophisticated political ecology must contain a phenomenology of nature, that focuses on differing understandings of natural and social resources. This means, for example, that environmental problems can be perceived in a variety of ways, and that there can be conflicts over these differing understandings (Blaikie, 1985). In problematizing environmental knowledge, political ecology has identified a number of issues. First, there has to be a recognition that environmental knowledge varies and that this is unevenly distributed within local societies. Second, it should be emphasized that existing knowledge about patterns of resource use are not necessarily right or best just because they exist. And, third, traditional or indigenous knowledge can be very important, but it should be recognized that in fact it may often be a relatively recent invention. Indigenous knowledge is given much priority in research using political ecology perspectives, but it is actually a tricky idea because most knowledge is not simply local but rather it is a complex hybrid drawing upon all manner of knowledge simultaneously, possibly including ideas based on modern technologies and external value systems (Peet and Watts (2004).

In general, analysis based on political ecology consists of an integrative explanation of human-environment interactions linked through different spatial scales from the international/global to the local; its centers on the relative power of various social actors (stakeholders) in relation to their access to, and management of, natural resources; and it links these actors within and among levels through their various power relations and interactions (Blakie and Brookfield in Robbins (2004). Essential elements of a political ecology analysis encompass: the ideologies that direct resource

use and influence which social actors benefit and which are disadvantaged; international interests, such as donor agencies and private investors, that promote particular patterns of natural resource use; the function of the global economy in promoting particular patterns of resource use; the role of the state in determining and implementing policies that favour the interests of contain social actors over those of others; the relations of class and ethnic structures with conflicts over access to productive resources; the interrelations among local resource users and groups in society that affect resource use; and the diversity in the decisions of local resource managers (Stonich, 1993).

Stonich (2003) also points to a number of important characteristics associated with the expansion of tourism in developing countries that need to be central elements of an analysis based on political ecology. These include: the major part played by development assistance from multilateral and bilateral donors; the interconnection among excessive foreign ownership, vertically integrated transnational tourism corporations, and foreign exchange leakages (Britton, 1987); the importance of Third World states in promoting tourism development as a means to improve and diversify economies through increased foreign exchange and investments; the linkages among different social actors at various levels of analysis; the relative costs and benefits of tourism development along with the creation and exacerbation of existing social and spatial inequities (Brohman, 1996; Tsatas,1992); and growing social conflicts between stakeholders over control of local resources (Brohman, 1996; Poirier and Wright, 1993).

In tourism research, a number of studies informed by political ecology have concentrated on the impacts of tourism development on environmental quality, including the effects related to diminished biodiversity, erosion, pollution, and the degradation of natural resources (Linberge,1991; Wall, 1982). And a small number of tourism studies have focused specifically on the linkages between tourism development, tourism resource quality and human health. For example, Stonich (1989) has examined the relationships between tourism development, water quality and environmental health in the Bay Islands, Honduras. She uses a political ecology approach to evaluate human-environmental interactions in three neighboring communities. The study shows that, while the islands' fresh water, land, and marine resources have been jeopardized by unchecked tourism development, the adverse affects are not distributed equally among the various social actors on the Bay Islands. This study demonstrates the value of a

political ecology approach to evaluate ecotourism management and sustainability, including its potential to differentiate the consequences between the various social actors. The present research will apply a political ecology perspective as part of the evaluative framework used to examine ecotourism in Thailand from both natural and social science perspectives.

2.6 Social relations and sustainability

A social relationship represents the existence of a probability of social interaction between two persons. In social relationships the probability of interaction is increased if the two persons view themselves as members of a common collectivity. Social relations involve complex social roles among social actors (McCall et al., 1970). In this study the social relations that are of interest relate to the planning and management of ecotourism and sustainability and to how people use and relate to their natural and cultural resources that can be useful for tourism development. Attention is directed to how actors use and feel about the use of resources for tourism development, and to their opinions about the concepts of appropriate and sustainable development in relation to resource use for tourism.

In tourism research, local social relations in a community are often viewed largely as resources for tourism, notably as a hospitality resource. Clearly this is a restrictive view of local community, which understood more holistically is a much more complex concept. Sproule and Suhandi (1998) refer to a community as a group of people, often living in the same geographic area, who identify themselves as belonging to the same group. According to Aas et al (2005), a community can also be defined most usefully for tourism purposes in terms of a geographical area in which a group of people have shared origins or interests. The community within a local area often also involves the people's cultural attributes, and this can be vividly expressed through language, dress, cuisine, festivities, settlement types and life styles. Because communities have become a tourist destination product (Singh et al, 2003), there needs to be consideration of the impacts of tourism on the community relationships, which may be positive or negative and can vary according to people's level and type of involvement in the industry.

Communities are actually made up of a range of actors with differing interests, power relations and goals. Mitchell and Reid (2001) suggest that in most communities in tourism destinations there are at least two major groups of actors: the public and the private sectors, and in some places there are also actors in the non-profit or voluntary sector. The first group includes the policy makers, planners, government agencies, and regional and local authorities, and they operate in a predefined institutional system. The second group, the private sector, comprise entrepreneurs, corporations and petty entrepreneurs in the resident population. Finally there is the voluntary/non-profit sector, which in the context of tourism might include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and various community groups in civil society (Boyd and Singh, 2003). These different groups have varying characteristics and roles that need to be evaluated and understood in relation both to tourism and more general development processes. Jones (2005) considers that the degree of connectivity and the quality and quantity of social relations in a given population, or the social relations that lead to constructive outcomes for a group, can be seen as social capital. It is a social resource that may aid development and made facilitate community-led approaches to that development. Harpham et al. (2000) make a valuable distinction between the structural and cognitive components of social capital. The structural component is depicted as including the networks, roles, rules, precedents (Krishna and Shrader, 2000), and the intensity of associational links or activity, and it is considered to relate to what people do. The cognitive component, by contrast, covers people's norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and it relates to people's perceptions of likely mutual support, reciprocity, sharing, and trust. Therefore, it relates more to what people feel and believe. Both the private sector and government see the value in social capital for development, including tourism development, and this is one reason why there may be policies promoting community development for tourism and also tourism for community development.

Along with other influences on change over time, tourism often contributes to the spread of market relationships, and thus tourist-receiving societies must inevitably adapt. How such changes are interpreted by those they most affect cannot be predicted in advance, however, even if the disadvantages seem obvious to outside observers (Harrison, 1992). Butler (1980) suggests that tourist regions tend to develop in complex ways over a series of stages, but the community responses to these changes are not

easily predicted. Where tourist development has been most intense, the more extensive and expensive facilities are often taken over by transnational companies, perhaps in partnership with the state, leaving the smaller and less profitable part of the market to local entrepreneurs. But, while a few entrepreneurs can wield considerable influence, local people may not view this solely as a bad development (Parnwell, 1993). This is because many will recognize that the changes have brought socio-economic benefits in terms of economic growth, money, income and job opportunities to the areas. At the same time, however, residents may have to pay more for their food and local services and for some this may reduce the quality of their lives.

The balance of benefits and costs for local society are complex and can often lead to differing and ambiguous responses. Thus, on the one hand, few jobs in tourism are well paid (Harrison, 1992), and in the context of a colonial history, work in tourism may be a sensitive issue and lower and higher skilled workers may be reluctant to serve in the industry. But, at the same time, in most developing countries tourism jobs probably pay more than jobs in traditional industries such as agriculture (Liu, 1994). Other complex repercussions relate to changes in family structure. Tourism can lead to changes in the roles and status of the traditional elders and of men and women in society; for example, the industry can assist younger people and women to gain more economic and political power. The industry can also promote the breakdown of family life and even mental health problems (Meyer, 1988). In such ways, internal changes in the social structure within families and villages can change or influence broad relationships in society and the external linkages with outside actors and institutions.These changing social relations also have important consequences for local attitudes to resource use, to appropriate ways of making a living, and to what represents sustainable development.

In many developing countries, tourism has been developed and controlled by large, multinational companies that have little regard for local socio-cultural and economic conditions (Timothy, 2002). Most community members also lack significant amounts of wealth and political power, and the constant focus on basic subsistence and long history of limited political involvement can make them prone to view tourism decision-making as something that is completely beyond their own control. Thus, Mitchell and Reid (2001) suggest that local people and their communities have too often

become the objects of development rather than the subjects of that development. In recent years there has been much debate about the concept of sustainable tourism and about tourism development planning and consumption that promotes the enduring quality of cultural and natural resources (Mowforth and Munt, 1998). And these concerns have increased the level of interest in the notions of community involvement in planning for sustainable tourism and of grassroots empowerment. There is greater interest in approaches to tourism development that are in harmony with the needs and aspirations of host communities, that is, in ways that are acceptable to them and that bring them substantial benefits. Nonetheless, a variety of levels of community involvement exist, and some might promote sustainability and some may discourage it. For example, France (1998) provides a taxonomy of levels of tourism participation. She suggests that resident involvement ranges from an exploitative position on one end of the spectrum to one of self-mobilization, characterized by independent initiatives where local people are strengthened socially and economically by their involvement. In the present research there is a focus on the power and authority of different actors involved in ecotourism development, on the differing views of actors on their own participation in tourism, on their own involvement in decision-making, and on their securing a fair proportion of tourism development benefits.

The tourism planning literature on empowerment is often stronger on rhetoric than on the evaluation of the extent to which it occurs in specific contexts and of the potential and of the constraints affecting it in practice (Brass 1994; Sofield and Birtles 1996). While it may be fairly easy to gain very modest changes, it is likely to be difficult to secure substantial devolution of power so that communities are free to set their own agendas based on proactive forward planning and real power to implement their own decisions. In practice, tourism development and planning tends to be dominated by top-down approaches and any agendas for community consideration are usually set by outside professionals, politicians, planners, investors and other stakeholders. This is especially the case in developing countries with a long tradition of top-down planning, weaker patterns of local democracy, a history of patron-client relations in politics and economic development, widespread deference to authority, limited economic resources in local communities, and restricted educational levels.

As with sustainable development, so empowerment as a concept rests on a philosophical base: the acceptance of the principles of equity and social justice. The presence of these elements in empowerment thus introduces ethical considerations: what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad. Thus, empowerment is also about political power just as development is about political power: who get what, where, how and why. In such ways empowerment and development often coincide, and hence the contention that empowerment needs to be incorporated into the definition of development if the implementation of policies and plans are to be effective and if sustainable development is to be achieved (Sheyvens, 2002).

The notion of communities being involved in planning in general and tourism planning in particular has provided the basis for normative models of destination community tourism planning. One model that is advocated takes the acronym PIC (Participatory, Incremental and Cooperation/Collaboration), and it reflects the three broad strategies recommended in community planning literature: participation, incremental development and collaboration. Each of these comprise principles that are considered by researchers and practitioners to be necessary for effective planning (Timothy and Tosun, 2003).

The study draws on a number of contested concepts. This applies to development, sustainability and empowerment; and sustainable tourism development is widely considered to be but a subset of the contested broader concept of sustainable development. Community is also an ambiguous and much-debated term. This study has set out to understand the varied and differentiated community views about options for tourism and sustainable development, taking as its point of departure the concept of community empowerment. The issues of community beliefs and discourses as well as empowerment go beyond the study of tourism impacts to consider processes that may be best understood using approaches based in sociological and political theory. It is argued that this expanded concept of empowerment constitutes a useful standpoint from which to consider community/tourism development relations (Sofield, 2003). By focusing on the social and political values, beliefs and relations involved in ecotourism and sustainable development, it is intended that the research will assist in a broader understanding of the socially constructed character of ecotourism management and sustainability. It seeks to situate the interpretation in the daily practices, beliefs and

relations in local communities in rural Thailand in order to develop an adaptive view of ecotourism and sustainable development. In effect it considers local community views on sustainable community development through tourism, but in the context on social interactions between national, regional and local actors.

2.7 Ideologies and values of sustainability

Ideologies represent the underlying basis of our ideas and beliefs, a basis that gives them validity and credence (McCellan, 1986). The term is used in relation to beliefs that sustain existing relations, but it also applies to beliefs that challenge existing relationships. Ideologies often support the power of dominant economic and social groups but they can also be opposed to the prevalent bases of power and can be used to pursue changes in those power relations. They are related to how relationships of power are unavoidably interwoven into the production and representation of meanings that serve the interests of particular social groups (Mowforth and Munt, 2003). In this context, sustainable development itself represents an ideological construct that it is largely derived from First World experiences and priorities and that has become mobilization as a global notion. It is now associated with global environmental issues, but it can be argued that the concept as it is often depicted tends to serve the interests of the First World. One reason why it may favor the First World is that it can hold back economic development and this can be thought to favor those nations that already have achieved reasonable levels of economic well-being. The First World nations were also able to secure their early economic growth without the environmental and social restraints that the sustainability concept entails. The power implicated through a universalistic First World view of sustainable development has led increasingly to the charge of eco-imperialism and eco-colonialism. This charge may be less appropriate if sustainable development is defined and negotiated within the local communities within the developing world itself in order to better reflect their situation, values, beliefs and imperatives. This is a key premise of the present study.

Another key concept that underpins the political ecology paradigm is that of discourses, with these being intimately connected to the notion of ideology. Discourses can be considered as complementary to ideology because discourses are used to express

ideology. They are related to who is saying what, to whom, and for what purposes (Eagelton, 1991). One notable approach to discourses was developed by Foucault (1980; Mowforth and Munt, 2003), who suggests that discourses express how issues and beliefs can be conveyed in different ways, and he indicates that the language used in discourse to convey these issues or beliefs can influence our opinions about them, such as whether a view is true or false. Foucault concludes that knowledge is produced by competing discourses. Discourse, therefore, is a useful concept to help to understand how a certain subject or topic, such as sustainable development, is thought about and talked about, and how it is represented to others. Most importantly, discourses are part of the way power circulates and is contested, with discourses being used to convince people about different ideas, and they regularly come into conflict.

Inevitably, there will be differing views or discourses related to the benefits of tourism for development. Some adopt a narrow economic perspective and only consider the impacts for themselves or their immediate family, while others may consider the range of economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits and relate those to the wider needs of the whole community. A more holistic approach to sustainability would require that the continuing social, cultural and economic well-being of the whole community is an integral consideration (Richards and Hall, 2002). Community-led sustainable development requires an understanding not just of the relationship between local communities and their environment, but also of the political, economic and cultural tensions within communities. Such tensions within the community itself mean that there are often important differences in views and discourses about appropriate development among local residents (Richards and Hall, 2002).

One key contested value or discourse related to local sustainable development concerns people's opinions about appropriate livelihoods or ways of making a living based on the actual or potential stock of local resources. The concept of sustainable livelihoods is used in academic work on local sustainable development. Rather less work has been done on people's own views about what comprises an appropriate livelihood. According to Bingen (2005: 1), the academic concept comprises three interrelated components: "(1)some combination or portfolio of capabilities, assets (including physical, natural and social resources or capital) and activities, (2) that enable

people to deal with events and trends as well as develop various strategies to pursue desired livelihood outcomes, (3) while maintaining or enhancing their capabilities and asserts over the time" (Bingen, 2005:1). Bingen explains that his 'sustainable livelihood approach' (SLA) can help in programs for poverty eradication and for the enhancement of poor people's livelihoods. The approach can assist in evaluating local capabilities and assist in capacity and institution-building to promote these capabilities. The categories of institutions include, for example, familial institutions, communal (community) institutions, social institutions, collective institutions and policy/ governance institutions. These institutions tend to be seen at specific points in time, and they are important in supporting people's livelihoods throughout their lives. Such institutions are an important consideration in the present study.

Another contested notion is that of appropriate levels and types of participation in policy decision-making. Again there is academic literature which relates to the value of such participation. Many studies have argued that community participation can enhance ecotourism policy-making and management. For instance, Mitchell (2001) indicates that the degree and nature of community integration can influence whether or not ecotourism and sustainable tourism are successful. Other research suggests that local participation helps to raise appreciation of the values of ecotourism, and that success depends on securing consent for ecotourism development from the community (Garrod, 2003). But Scheyvens (2002) indicates that, while choices are available to the community, residents are usually encouraged to follow the government's recommendations. It is often difficult to secure genuine participation and empowerment. Thus, Ryan (1999) contends that strategies for creating genuine participation cannot be uniformly applied across national boundaries, especially between developed and developing countries, because there are marked differences in values and beliefs and in people's consequent behavior in decision-making processes. Adjustments will need to be made according to the socio-cultural climate, the local institutional arrangements, and local barriers hindering the power sharing process. Sofield (2003) notes, for example, that empowerment of communities around tourism development is more likely to occur in democratic countries than in dictatorships, military regimes and centrally controlled economies.

Two potential objectives behind promoting participation and empowerment that are discussed in the literature are especially pertinent to the present study. First, such involvement might encourage residents to make decisions that protect the environment. And, second, it might lead locals to start small tourism businesses, which can secure greater economic benefits for the community and retain those benefits locally. In such ways, political empowerment can be accompanied by social and economic empowerment (Schyvens, 2002).

In relation to tourism development, community participation tends to fall significantly short of empowerment. Indeed, often the purpose of tourism consultations is actually to persuade residents of the benefits of tourism rather than to empower them to make their own decisions (Sofield, 2003). Pearce et al (1996) identify the concept of social representations as a means to understand how different community groups think about tourism, and they suggest that the results of such analysis can then be taken into account in the tourism planning process. But the frameworks proposed by researchers to understand the differing views about tourism within the community tend to be focused more on the process rather than on the outcome of community empowerment.

Grassroots empowerment is widely regarded as a fundamental of sustainability in tourism. As people become more empowered in decision-making processes, and as they become more involved in the entrepreneurial side of development, then their level of stewardship may increase: that is, stewardship of the environment, local culture and the destination community in general (Timothy et al, 2003). This places the responsibility for upholding the principles of sustainability squarely in the hands of destination residents and other local stakeholders. The values, ideologies and discourses of sustainable development inevitably relate to ideas about local benefits, and these need to be reflected in planning for ecotourism.

2.8 The philosophy of ecotourism

Early thinking about ecotourism saw it as a tool for environmental protection (Buckley, 2004), particularly through it offering an alternative to mass tourism (Fennell, 2003). At that time there was a strong reaction among some researchers against mass tourism's potentially adverse impacts on the environment, society and culture, and it

was expected that ecotourism would eliminate or reduce such adverse impacts (Page and Dowling, 2002). Since then, the concepts and philosophy of ecotourism have developed very considerably, with a range of alternative perspectives. As explained in section 2.3, ecotourism can be thought of as management for a more careful use of scarce resources, as eco-cultural management, as institutional management and as the management of power relations (Ganjanapan, 2000). While ecotourism is defined in many different ways by various authors, as explained in section 2.3 one idea they tend to have in common is that ecotourism relates to nature based tourism that promotes environmental education and that is managed for sustainability (Cater, 1997; Blamey, 2001; Orams, 2001).

Almost all of the more well-known definitions of ecotourism, as reviewed in section 2.3, have been developed by Western academics, and they tend to concentrate on the idea that ecotourism denotes nature tourism with a normative element. It should, for example, have responsible management, provide education, satisfy visitors, and not neglect the local people. The World Ecotourism Summit (WES), held in Quebec, Canada for the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) 2002, for example, suggested that "ecotourism embraces the principles of sustainable tourism, concerning the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism" (WTO, 2002).

This research agrees with the philosophical perspective that ecotourism should focus on environmental and resource conservation, and it considers that this should be a key concern for all relevant actors, including those who are internal and external to local contexts. However, the researcher also believes that one of the most effective ways to conserve the environment and promote ecotourism is to integrate environmental concerns with a strong focus on social, socio-economic, socio-cultural and political relationships. This philosophical position is central to the study's conceptual framework, which has drawn from ideas in ecotourism, sustainable development and political ecology.

The position taken in the study also draws on current thinking about ecotourism in Thailand. In that context, ecotourism is seen as especially relevant for local rural communities that have close economic and cultural relations with their natural resource base. Thus, in his study of ecotourism in Thailand, Santasombat (2001) frames this

concept in particular around economic, political and environmental structural change; around humans based in the same ecosystem and their relationships with each other and with nature; around culture and social development; and around sustainable rural development and the conservation and rehabilitation of the natural environment. These relations underpin the broad environmental and social philosophy used in this study to connect ecotourism with local communities and their social and political relations. In Thailand, the process of ecotourism development is also considered to be a learning process with the objective of sustaining environmental and ecological values, and of promoting local participation in tourism development. Indeed, some of these ideas are even included in the Government of Thailand's own National Ecotourism Policy (this explained in Chapter 5): "Ecotourism is responsible travel in areas containing natural resources that possess endemic characteristics and cultural or historical resources that are integrated into the area's ecological system. Its purpose is to create awareness among all concerned parties of the need for and the measures used to conserve ecosystems, and as such it is oriented towards community participation as well as the provision of a joint learning experience in sustainable tourism and environmental management" (TISTR, 1997).

2.9 Ecotourism policy, planning and management

The fundamental requirement for effective ecotourism management is to have an appropriate and realistic policy and planning framework. Policy can simply be defined as a course of action that is adopted and pursued by the government (Fennell et al, 2000). Policy provides the broad guidelines that are intended to shape the development of particular sectors in a way presumed by the relevant authority to be desirable. The clear position of tourism policy and planning as a government prerogative, however, does not mean that implementation is a simple or taken-for-granted task. There is the problem of achieving compromise among all the stakeholders who constitute the tourism sector within a particular planning jurisdiction. Beyond this internal context, tourism policy can be pursued concurrently and in an often contradictory way by authorities at a local, regional, national and international level, each of which often can assiduously attempt to expand its own sphere of influence. Ecotourism policy makers and planners must contend not only with potentially incompatible external sectors, such

as the forestry and agriculture industries, but also with tourism activities that may interfere negatively with ecotourism, such as hunting and mass, beach-based tourism (Fennell et al, 2000).

Fennell et al (2000) identify relevant regional patterns in ecotourism policies. They found that Australia stands out for the relative sophistication of its ecotourism policy and planning, these being expressed in action plans which list the actions, with linked responsibilities and time frames. Environmental protection and management planning were linked, and so were product development and marketing and promotion. Approaches to community involvement were divided into local tourism development and general community development. By contrast, Asian engagement in ecotourism planning and management was more tentative and more likely to involve NGOs rather than national government tourism agencies. Some of the funding was also from the NGOs. In North America, ecotourism policy tended to have a liberal connotation, with jurisdictions such as Manitoba and Florida including consumptive activities such as fishing under this rubric. In Canada and the USA there was less leadership for ecotourism policies from the national level, and more from regional government. Accreditation, and the regulation and monitoring of operators were themes that featured prominently in North America. By contrast, ecotourism in Latin America tended to be defined more narrowly, to be administratively independent, and to rely more on national directives for that administration. In Europe, ecotourism policy was seldom explicit, but was usually embedded within broader tourism policies through reference to nature-based tourism, rural tourism and sustainability. State-level structures are also giving way to sub-state and super-state frameworks as the drivers of tourism policy, suggesting a development that may occur in other regions when they reach a similar level of geopolitical integration. Finally, African ecotourism policies are often similarly oblique, usually being situated within a broader framework of wildlife, protected area and community participation. In all parts of the world, the actual implementation of ecotourism policies was impeded by the reality that ecotourism is relatively new, and hence its influence was relative weak in terms of both local communities and influence on environmental policies. Much depends on the character of the relations and authority between government, the private sector and other local actors.

Ecotourism policies can relate to local and national levels, and ideally these need to be integrated. But the pattern of centralized administration in many countries, especially in the developing world, can mean that policy is focused on the national rather than the local levels. In the present study the emphasis is on the local level, and on the extent to which local community actors see ecotourism as enabling them to improve their general quality of life, such as standards of health and education, without having to sell off their natural resources or compromise their culture (Drumm, 1998). Consideration needs to be paid to the local points of view and to any gaps between them and national government policies and priorities for ecotourism.

2.10 Conclusion

The review of relevant research literature has examined some of the most important theoretical concepts that are fundamental to this research on ecotourism planning and management and sustainability. It is argued that political ecology can be used as a natural and social science framework to evaluate ecotourism, including consideration of the social relations and ideologies and discourses of various stakeholders.

Chapter 3 The Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the conceptual framework developed for this study. The framework was built based on the literature review concerning ecotourism planning and management, sustainable development, and political ecology. It investigates the interactions among actors regarding their relations with, and ideas about the use of, resources for ecotourism. It explores relations within their local communities and also with outsiders in the context of ecotourism planning, management, and sustainability. The framework is intended to help evaluate the influences on ecotourism planning, the character of that planning and the integration of that planning with sustainable development objectives.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section explains the initial development of the conceptual framework, which was influenced by the research aim and objectives and key issues in ecotourism planning and management. The second section elucidates the conceptual framework's elements or themes. The three main themes of the framework concern patterns of social relations relevant to sustainable development, ideologies relevant to sustainable development, and the practices of ecotourism planning and management associated with sustainability. These themes are discussed in relation to the study's theoretical basis, and it will be shown how they link together in ecotourism management, development and sustainability. The last section discusses the application of the conceptual framework, and it shows how the interaction of the three themes was applied to the case study areas to create a workable framework to study ecotourism planning and management.

3.2 Theoretical basis of the conceptual framework

The conceptual framework was developed to evaluate ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development for three case study villages in Chiang Rai

province in Northern Thailand: Rong Born village, Yang Kham Nu village, and Ruammit village. The focus on ecotourism planning and management for the researcher stemmed from the rise in adverse consequences from ecotourism and the frequent deficiencies in the practice of ecotourism planning and management (Weaver, 1998; Tosun, 2000). The study focuses on three key concepts: ecotourism planning and management, sustainable development, and political ecology. It is maintained that these three key concepts are interconnected and that they can be developed to offer an analytical framework to explain ecotourism planning issues in rural areas, including in rural areas in developing countries. These three concepts have been explored in depth in the previous chapter, in the review of related literature. The three case study areas have some differences in terms of community characteristics, and it is suggested that the framework is sufficiently flexible to help in understanding those differences and in considering their implications for ecotourism planning. Rong Born village is home to a homogenous group of indigenous Northern Thai people, while Yang Kham Nu also consists of a homogenous group, but this is of tribal people called the Karen. In contrast, Ruammit is a mix of tribal and indigenous Northern Thai people living in the same village. Despite these sets of differences, the analytical framework used in this study is considered sufficiently broad and adaptable to assist in assessments of ecotourism planning and management in all three study areas.

The framework has been developed from concepts in three fields of study, namely ecotourism planning and management, sustainable development and political ecology (see Chapter Two). The last two groups of concepts are related in the framework to the principles and theories of ecotourism planning and management and to the social relations of planning and management. All the ecotourism sites examined in the study include notable local differences in resources, communities and actors. Thus, the framework was developed to be sufficiently broad and flexible to be applied to understand ecotourism planning and management in all of the study areas.

As discussed in the review of literature in Chapter 2, the ecotourism planning and management concept views ecotourism as relating to natural areas, and it suggests that tourism development should contribute to the conservation of those areas (Newsome et al., 2001; Page and Dowling; 2002). Ecotourism planning should also promote low visitor impact and provide for the beneficial, active socio-economic

involvement of local people in the destinations (Lascurain, 1996; Fennell, 2003). This concept also suggests that ecotourism must involve local people as key actors, and also local resources as key ecotourism products in the area. The concept has often been linked in the past with the much used principle of carrying capacity. The origins of the carrying capacity idea were based on the hypothesis that increasing numbers of visitors would cause greater environment impacts that could be measured though biological indicators (Manning et al., 1996). This study argues that a new, alternative framework is needed to understand ecotourism planning that considers not only the environmental impacts in the natural sciences, but also the social and socio-cultural issues from the social sciences. This is because ecotourism relates to both natural science (resources and environment) and social science (local people in relation to their community, people from outside the locality, and to resource exchanges between these groups). This became one of the underpinning approaches behind the new integrative framework developed for this study.

The new framework also focuses on the idea of sustainable development, as discussed in Chapter 2. Weaver (2000: 7) calls ecotourism 'a subset of sustainable tourism', which itself is linked with the broader concept of sustainable development. So, it was important to review the sustainability concept, especially its development and its relations with ecotourism. Hall (2000: 205) concludes that the meaning of sustainable development for tourism is 'not just an appreciation of the physical environment but also a deeper understanding of economic, social, political and physical systems of which tourism is apart'. Thus, it is accepted here that the concepts of ecotourism and of sustainable tourism encompass issues from both the natural and social sciences. From this perspective of sustainability it is necessary to find out how the locals have adapted their way of living from time to time through particular developments so that it offers appropriate ways to make a living and for a healthy local environment. The study focuses on sustainable development for communities, with the sustainability trinity aiming at the smooth integration of economy, society and environment. Both ecotourism and sustainable development are also linked to an approach called 'political ecology', which relates to the integration of socio-economic and socio-cultural issues with the natural and man-made environment. In the literature review in Chapter 2 it was shown that political ecology endeavours to understand the complex relations between nature and society through a careful analysis of what might be called the forms of

access and control over resources and their implications for environmental health and sustainable livelihoods (Peet and Watt, 2004). Political ecology analysis consists of an integrative explanation of human-environment interactions linked through different spatial scales, from the international and global to regional and the local. It centres on the relative power of various social actors or stakeholders in relation to their access to, and management of, natural resources, and it links these actors within and among differing spatial scales of levels through their various power relations and interactions (Blakie and Brookfield, 1987). Thus, ideas from this political ecology approach guided the research focus on the connections between social interactions and the environment which are associated with ecotourism planning and management and also sustainable development. It also guides the concern with different social actors, their relative power, and the interactions between actors within the villages and also with actors at other spatial scales outside these villages.

Thus this conceptual framework draws on relevant groups of theories and concepts, combining the concepts and approaches of political ecology, ecotourism planning and management, sustainable development, and environmental concerns. These relations between relevant groups of theories are shown in Figure 3.1, and they form the basis of the conceptual framework developed for this study, as will be discussed subsequently. The new conceptual framework is arguably more integrative and comprehensive than other existing ecotourism frameworks because it combines environmental ideas from the natural sciences with a strongly social science perspective. Figure 3.1 shows how the study's conceptual framework broadens the research perspectives taken on ecotourism planning and management. At the centre of the diagram is the focus on ecotourism planning, which is related in most studies to the environment (the next circle). This assessment widens this perspective to also consider ecotourism's relationships with sustainable development (the next circle from the centre), which can enhance environmental, socio-economic, economic, socio-cultural and political considerations. The present study, however, concentrates on both environmental and sustainable development perspectives on ecotourism, and it also emphasizes the integrative perspective of political ecology (the furthest circle from the centre), which considers the relationships between socio-economic and political issues and also the environment.

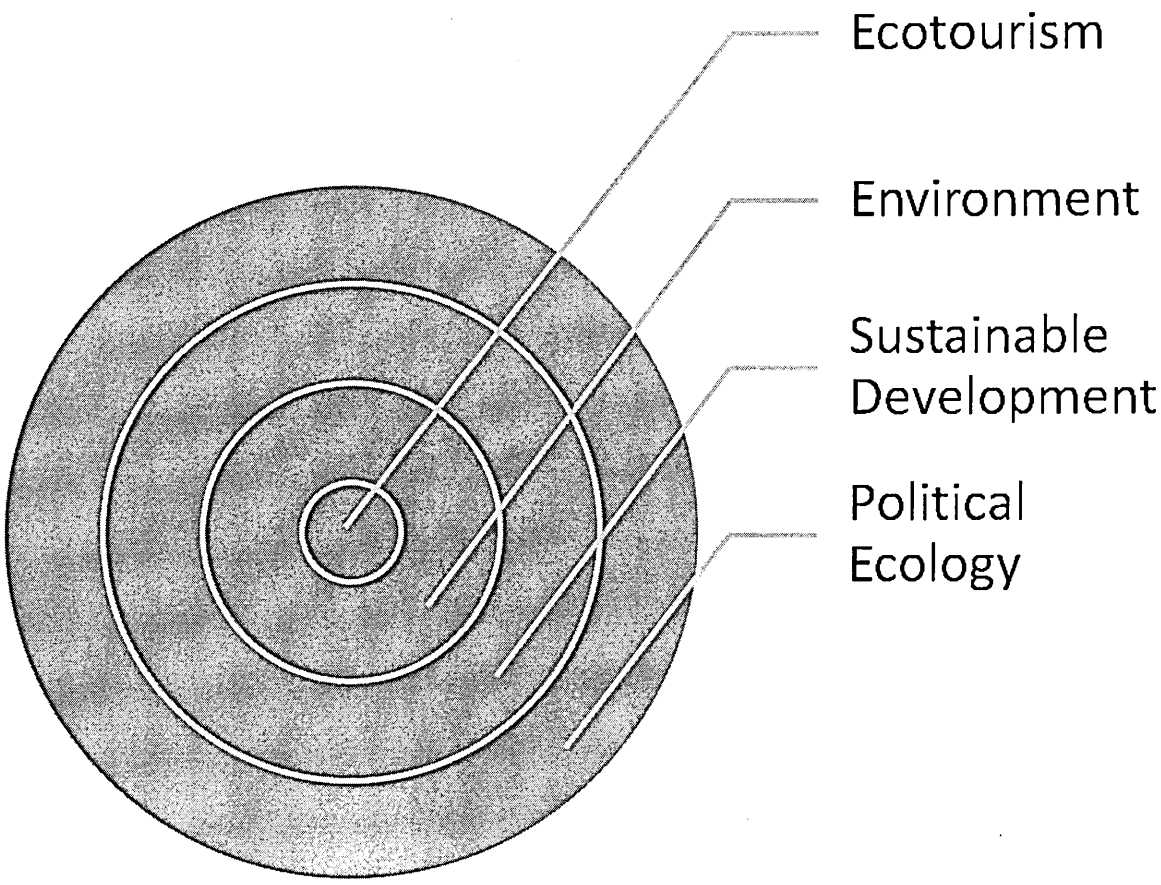

Figure 3.1: The broad research perspective that underpins the study's conceptual framework of ecotourism planning and management

3.3 The conceptual framework

Three key concerns relevant to ecotourism planning and management are highlighted within the framework: the patterns of social relations relevant to sustainable development; the values and discourses of different actors about sustainable development, and the policies and practices of ecotourism planning and management that may be relevant to sustainability. It should be emphasized that the framework is not intended to be a rigid, pre-determined analytical framework, but rather it is intended as a broad, and fairly loose integrative framework that links together social processes and environmental issues that affect sustainability. It also serves as a tool to guide the themes for the interview schedules used in the study fieldwork. It, therefore, provides a

means of ensuring that the semi-structured interviews focused on issues that are relevant to the study aims and objectives. The framework also aided comparability between the actor interviews, which were adapted according to actor education levels and their degree of familiarity with conceptual language, to ensure that similar issues were examined by the different respondents.

Figure 3.2 shows that the first theme in the framework is social relations and sustainability, which explores the actors' interactions as they relate to the use of resources and environment, and to the local ecotourism products. Within this theme are seen more specific sets of social relations and sustainability elements. These elements highlight key factors, beginning with the actors, the resource uses, and continuing with the influence of different resource management regimes, of power and authority, of networks of social relations, of patterns of governance, and of internal and external relations that occur with actors both inside and outside the local villages. These elements are discussed in more detail in the next section. The second main theme in the framework (Figure 3.2) concerns ideologies of sustainability, which relates to the values or beliefs about sustainable development held by the different actors. This theme concerns the nature of actors' ideologies about sustainability and this affects their uses of environmental and other resources and their approaches to ecotourism planning and management. Four significant sub-themes of ideologies of sustainability are also identified here, namely the actors' differing notions of sustainable development, of "appropriate livelihoods", of "fairness", and of "appropriate participation" in policy decision-making.

The first theme, social relations and sustainability, and the second theme, ideologies of sustainability, have reciprocal arrows with the study's main overall theme, that of ecotourism planning and management and sustainability. The arrows highlight the ongoing dynamic and dialectical interplay between the three themes, as it can be said that the interactions between social relations and sustainability, the ideologies, values or beliefs about sustainability and ecotourism planning and management are manifested in each other and are so intimately inter-connected that they cannot and should not be separated from each other, and should not be seen in isolation from each other. The third key theme in Figure 3.2, of ecotourism planning and management and sustainability, is in the centre of the framework because it is the study's overall focus, it

guides the direction of the analysis and it is derived from the two previously discussed themes. Therefore, the ecotourism planning and management decisions reflect the actors' social relations and their values and ideas about sustainability. Within this broad theme, there are two sub-themes with different focuses, these being the ecotourism planning and management processes as a whole, and the management of specific ecotourism products.

Below the central box in Figure 3.2 is the practice or implementation of ecotourism planning and management, which is the result or outcome of the general ecotourism planning and management processes and of the management of specific ecotourism products. Again this is linked to the other elements of the conceptual framework by reciprocal arrows to emphasise the continuing interactions between all elements, with the practical ecotourism planning and management itself in turn affecting actors, beliefs and values around their patterns of interactions with other villagers and with outside actors. Finally, Figure 3.2 also shows the eventual resulting patterns of resource outcomes, that is the patterns of winners and losers from the ecotourism planning and management regime. And again, those resource outcomes feed back in dialectical ways into the other elements of the conceptual framework.

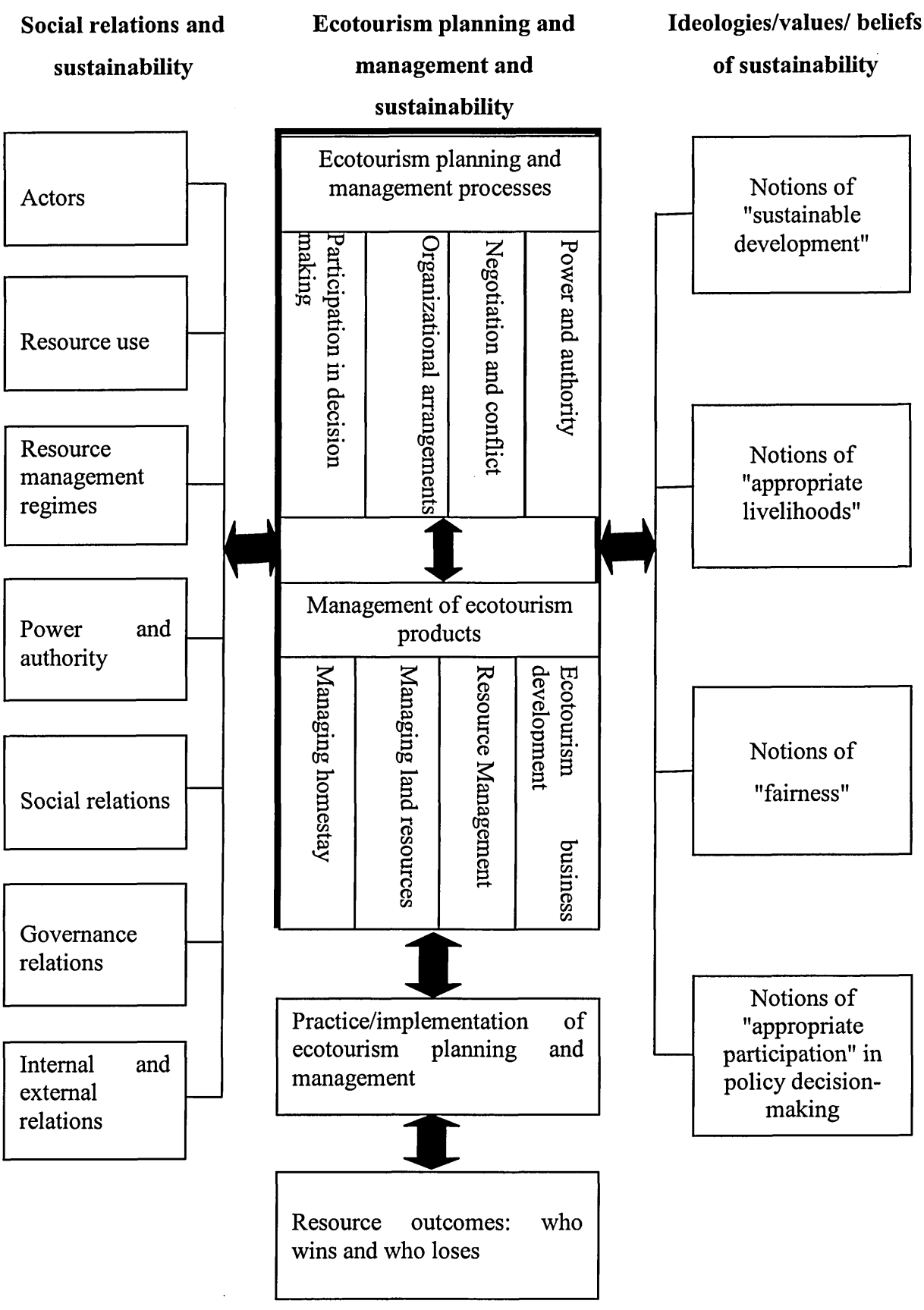

Figure 3.2: Conceptual framework to evaluate ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development in the three case study areas in Chiang Rai province, Thailand

3.4 The specific elements of the conceptual framework

3.4.1 Patterns of social relations relevant to sustainable development

In order to investigate the patterns of social relations relevant to sustainable development, the following inter-connected themes are examined: the actors, the patterns of resource use, the resource management regimes, the relations of power and authority, the networks of social relations, the governance relations, and the internal and external social relations for the villages. These themes link back to the literature review (Chapter 2) and are identified in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.2). These themes help us to better understand the ways in which resources are managed within the context of developing countries, and also the extent of community participation in decision-making about resource utilization. They also allow for the identification and analysis of local development needs and of influences on local ecotourism development and on ecotourism planning. Within social relations and sustainable development, there are three broad sub-themes. The first involves resource use, resource management, and the deliberations undertaken within communities concerning resources. The resources refer both to resources that support local ways of life and also to resources that more specifically support ecotourism in the area, such as community forests, local ways of life and indigenous culture, wildlife and national parks, and protected forest areas. The second sub-theme considers power and governance. It examines matters relating to the balance in power relations for communities, including issues around the power of local political leaders, as well as power in relation to external relations and actors. It also considers issues around socio-economic and political influence and control in the villages. The third sub-theme examines internal and external relations, notably the connections between village actors and the activities and actors involved from outside. This includes external investment in tourist facilities, the role of external tour operators, and internal and external involvement in the processes of ecotourism management and sustainability.

It is important to identify the different actors involved in ecotourism decisions as well as their interests and interactions in relation to sustainable development. These actors hold different perspectives and these may potentially affect resource usage. The

actual levels and types of resource use may differ according to the case study area, for example, according to the respective dependence on landscape resources, which includes dependence on local community forests and on wildlife in adjacent national parks and protected forest areas. Issues of power and authority underpin resource use decisions and management regimes. They also underpin the nature of social relations between actors, the governance relations, the internal and external relations, and, ultimately, the resource outcomes in terms of winners and losers in the sustainable development process. The review of previous research in relation to social relations and sustainability highlighted a lack of consideration of how ecotourism might help to promote sustainable development (Cater, 1997; Page and Dowling, 2002). By exploring the themes relating to social relations and sustainability, it is anticipated that the research will assist in providing a more comprehensive understanding of ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in developing countries, in this case in Thailand.

3.4.2 Ideologies relevant to sustainable development

One key issue for this study is that the scale and type of development considered sustainable may well vary according to local circumstances and to perceived local needs. When examining developing countries such as Thailand, it is important to avoid uncritical acceptance of concepts, approaches, standards and principles developed in the West, including ideas relating to the ideologies of sustainability. The literature review (Chapter 2) found that it was considered essential to focus on local beliefs, norms and values related to development and also to sustainable development (Richards and Hall, 2002). In particular it was considered important to examine local notions of "appropriate livelihoods", of "fairness", and of "appropriate participation" in policy decision-making (See Figure 3.2). These notions may vary from place to place over time, and also between individual actors and groups of actors. All of these sophisticated key notions interlace with ideas within the community regarding ecotourism management and sustainability.

The perspectives of actors within the case study areas need to be gained with respect to their views about sustainable development, and about appropriate livelihoods,

that is their attitudes to ways of making a living based on actual or potential stocks of local resources. It cannot be assumed that actors in developing countries will hold similar notions of fairness to actors in the West, and instead these notions should be seen to be the complex consequences of ideological norms often developed and sustained by particular political regimes. Nor can it be assumed that there will be agreement amongst public sector, private sector, and community actors in relation to their notions of fairness. The issue of appropriate participation in policy decision-making is similarly complex. Only by gaining the perspectives of actors based within the case study areas can these issues be explored, and the involvement of local people in ecotourism planning, management, and sustainability will be analyzed with respect to ecotourism's ability substantially to contribute to local economies and ways of life.

3.4.3 Practices of ecotourism planning and management relevant to sustainability

As discussed in the review of literature in Chapter 2, ecotourism, as a tool for sustainable development in developing countries, requires examination of organizational issues concerning control of the development process. The practical issues of ecotourism planning and management and sustainability are intimately connected with the above themes of social relations and sustainability, and of the ideologies of sustainability. Social relations and the ideologies of sustainability profoundly affect the development of ecotourism planning and management, and these feed back into those relations and values. Local ecotourism planning and management may be directly influenced by what are considered appropriate processes according to local community perspectives. It may also be affected by relations of influence and power in the community. Therefore, it is important to focus on issues such as: power and authority, negotiation and conflict, organizational arrangements, and participation in decision-making (see Figure 3.2). This also facilitates consideration of who is able to wield the most power between the public sector, the private sector and the NGO sector.

The practice or implementation of ecotourism planning and management requires consideration of how strategies are converted into action around the development of land and other resources, around tourism business development, and around the organisation of homestays at a local level (see Figure 3.2). Linked to this,

there is the issue of local level strategies around employment and the sharing of benefits. These local level strategies must accommodate, or at least acknowledge, the local ideologies of sustainability as well as local social relations and sustainability. Ecotourism planning and management and sustainability need to incorporate actor views on sustainability if ecotourism is to be able to truly promote sustainable development, as is often assumed by the governments of developing countries when ecotourism is selected as a development option.

The intension of this study is to demonstrate the utility of the framework for the study of ecotourism planning and management. It does this by critically exploring the relationships among actors and people's ideas and beliefs about ecotourism planning and management within local areas in the specific context of Thailand. The framework is broad, integrative and flexible and it is argued that, if it applies in three case study villages with different local characteristics, then it may well have relevance for research elsewhere in Thailand and possibly also in other developing countries. The hope is that the framework will also encourage further thinking, discussion, research and study about ecotourism planning in its wider socio-economic and political context.

3.5 Conclusion

The study's conceptual framework has been developed to provide a better understanding of ecotourism planning and management in a developing country such as Thailand. The framework has been influenced by three key theories (ecotourism planning and management, sustainable development, and political ecology), and this theoretical underpinning was related to relevant themes (social relations, ideologies of sustainability and ecotourism planning and management) and also other sub-themes in the study's conceptual framework. It worked as a guide for the whole study, and it influenced the research methodology, data analysis, interpretation, and thesis structure, and it also helping to generate the research conclusions and implications. The framework is intended to help one understand and study ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in a holistic, integrative manner which relates ecotourism to its socio-economic, political and environmental relations. The conceptual

framework played a significant role in the design of the research methodology used in this study, it influencing the selection of research tools, the specification of the interview questions and the data interpretation. The research methodology is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and justifies the research methodology and techniques used in the research. It explains the chosen research approach, methods of data collection, and data analysis in order to understand the methodological decisions made in the investigation. Furthermore, the practical limitations of the research and also the reflexive approach used are reported in this chapter. This study uses a qualitative approach and techniques in order to evaluate the three case study areas in Thailand, and it is based on the constructivist and critical realist paradigms. It also collects material from multiple data sources to realise the research aim of understanding the interactions between society, resources, and environment in ecotourism planning and management, using the conceptual framework developed in the previous chapter (Chapter 3).

The explanation of the research design process starts with the philosophical considerations behind the research methodology. There is then an explanation of the research strategy and design and the use of the case study approach, followed by consideration of specific qualitative research techniques that were adopted. There is a discussion of ethical issues related to the preparation for, and implementation of, the field work through site visits and the use of observation, secondary data, and document analysis. The use of triangulation and the limitations of the research are discussed in the last section.

4.2 The research philosophy

This research philosophy section discusses the ontological, epistemological, and methodological philosophies underpinning this ecotourism research. Ontology concerns one's view of the nature of reality and being (Ponterotto, 2005), while epistemology relates to ways of knowing and learning about the social world and it focuses on the

basis of our knowledge (Snape and Spencer, 2003:13). Methodology, in contrast, concerns how to put the approaches to ontology and epistemology into practice.

It is widely accepted that philosophies have an important and at times ambivalent relationship with research. Patton (2002) suggests that good philosophy does not necessarily produce good research, nor necessarily help to make effective researchers, but it can enhance our ability to understand the social world. May (2001) mentions that philosophy and social theory inform our understanding of issues which, in turn, assist researchers to make research decisions and to make sense of the world around us. They both influence the adoption of research strategies and the conduct of research, as well as how the findings are interpreted (Delanty and Strydom, 2003). An awareness and consideration of how these relate to the research process are therefore of critical consequence. The specification of research questions (to find out the aims and objectives of the research) underlying the selection of research methodologies, strategies and methods has often been lacking in tourism studies (Dann and Cohen, 1991) There is a need for tourism researchers to be more explicit in what they do (Pearce and Butler, 1993: 6). Tourism researchers should not take for granted the methods, concepts, or data that they use, but rather examine these critically: exploring, appraising, setting out and justifying underlying research questions, theoretical considerations, technical factors and limitations in use (Pearce and Butler, 1993:6).

The two fundamental philosophical approaches adopted in this study are constructivism and critical realism. This research has developed a conceptual framework that focuses on the underlying socio-economic processes and power relations behind ecotourism planning and management, but it also puts considerable emphasis on the subjective values and perceptions of the various actors involved in ecotourism planning, or that are affected by it. Critical realism is considered to be an appropriate ontological position from which to evaluate the structural processes of changes in the world. It is based on the idea that there exists an objectively knowable, independent reality, while it also acknowledges the roles of perception and cognition in understanding that reality (Archer, 1998:192). Thus, we learn about the structural changes in reality, and we interpret them with our knowledge. It suggests that the subjectively knowable and independent reality should be evaluated critically so as to uncover the structures which underpin societal change. On the other hand,

constructivism is an epistemological position that can help us to understand subjective beliefs and perceptions and also the 'agency' of the actors related to ecotourism planning. It assumes that people have the ability to produce, reproduce, recognize, interpret, and understand the world. The constructivist believes that meaning comes into existence only through the engagement of the knower with the world (Schwandt, 1994: 220). The terms and forms by which we achieve an understanding of the world and ourselves are socially constructed and are the products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people (Richardson, 1998:126). Thus, constructivism is based on the idea that reality is understood and interpreted through social actors' interactions.

Viewed as 'structure' and 'agency', critical realism and constructivism can be understood as having a dialectical relationship, but they are not necessarily contradictory. Critical realism never collapses structure and agency, subject and object, or the conscious and the unconscious, rather it seeks to frame our explanations of structures as the product of the interactions of social actors (Archer, 1998). It suggests that structure only becomes meaningful when it is interpreted through actors' social actions. Critical realism helps us to understand that the structural properties we see are based on the relational developments of actors (Archer, 2000). In addition, structural changes can also lead to changes in actors' relationships. However, constructivism focuses more on the idea that social actors construct the structures and interpret the meanings of structures. It suggests that people develop concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of their experience and to continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience (Schwandt, 1994:126). Echtner (1999) suggests that actors are the creators of structures and that the 'reality' is defined from these structures through actors' interpretations. While there are tensions in combining critical realism with constructivism, they are not necessarily contradictory.

Critical realism and constructivism can be understood as in a dialectical relationship. There is a growing recognition of the need to challenge binary oppositions, whether between developed and developing, social agency and structural determinations, necessity and contingency, holism and individualism, or local and global (Murdoch, 1997). Dualistic thinking is problematic in social theory because it trends to cleave theoretical perspectives into two district and incommensurable parts,

thereby polarizing whole fields of concepts and leading to a fractured view of the world. The relations between these opposing binaries can be "re-imagined". It is contended that entities do not have separate and distinct essences, and that they achieve their meaning through their complex interconnections. Those interconnections can be better understood through relational or dialectical thinking. This involves seeing social systems as complex wholes or systems of relations, and examining them and their inherent oppositions or contradictions (Hook, 1962). This helps to understand the relevance of combining the apparently contradictory approaches of critical realism and constructivism.

For similar reasons, another philosophical position adopted by the study is the idea that both appropriate forms of ecotourism and also sustainable development may take different forms in different contexts and circumstances. To some degree they are adaptive concepts that need to be adjusted to the specific society and environment and to the values of people in that particular context. They are not fixed concepts, but are flexible and also relational according to the specific socio-economic and environmental context. The appropriateness of ecotourism and sustainable development will depend on people's beliefs and values, which may be explored through a constructivist perspective, and they will vary be the social relations and interactions between humans and the environment, which may be explored through a critical realist lens.

The methodology and methods used in the study are explained in this chapter. Cohen and Manion (1994) describe methodology as the process of selecting methods; throwing light on their strengths and limitations; clarifying their presuppositions and consequences; and relating their potentialities to develop new knowledge. It is different from method, as method is concerned only with a particular technique or developed routine for approaching a research question (Tribe, 2001). Methodology thus concerns how the various methods relate to the ontological and epistemological considerations. Ontology defines an overarching framework relating to how reality is to be understood, whereas epistemology identifies what there is to be known, and what questions can be posed. The methodology adopted by the researcher defines the approach that is taken to answer these questions and therefore to achieve the research objectives.

The study's overall philosophy influenced the approach to methodology. In accordance with the constructivist and critical realist paradigms, for example, the study used a case study approach. This is seen in its focus on the specifics of the developing world context, its attention to the particular circumstances found in Chiang Rai, Thailand, and its detailed assessments of the ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in the three case study areas. Yin (2003:13) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context". A case study approach allows for an in-depth account of individuals in their setting and of their reactions and views in relation to that setting, and of the structural constraints and opportunities that also operate there. The case study approach allows for consideration of agency and structure and choices and constraints within the distinctive situation, of the complex multivariate conditions found in those situations, and of the multiple relevant sources of evidence (Yin, 2003). This study focused on the structural dimensions of the social relations within local communities, and between those communities and actors outside, in relation to ecotourism planning and management, and it also considered what the actors felt about those relations and their way of life.

4.3 The research approach

Qualitative research approaches are used in this study to assess and evaluate ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development. The intention of the study is to evaluate the interpretations that people have of themselves and others and also of their social situation, notably the views within the local communities in rural Thailand and from other related actors about ecotourism and sustainable development in that context.

The approaches are also used in the study in order to capture the various actors' perspectives on ecotourism management and sustainability. According to Silverman (2000), before conducting research it is important clearly to set out the overall research approach, as well as the related concepts, theories, methodologies and methods. In the first place, the overall research approach provides a framework for how we look at reality (Silverman, 2005:79). This research will draw strongly on ethnomethodology because it examines actors' social relations and their responses to the role of ecotourism

development within their local social context. Ethnomethodology, as an overall approach, encourages us to look at people's everyday ways of producing orderly social interaction. Using this constructivist strategy, this study will focus on human activities and experiences as based in the social relations, values and discourses surrounding ecotourism and sustainability. A concept is an idea derived from the overall research approach and a theory is a set of concepts used to define and/or explain some phenomenon. According to the theoretical positions identified by Jennings (2001), the present study adopts an ethnographic research approach because ethnography focuses on understanding questions of values, beliefs, and the psychology and culture of individuals and groups.

Decisions on the overall research strategy are important for the whole research. The strategy here draws on Long's (2001) proposals for a social constructionist mode of analysis focusing on the making and remaking of society through the ongoing self-transforming actions and perceptions of the diverse and interlocking worlds of the actors. This perspective considers that phenomena are made up of constructed and emergent realities, and it is principally concerned with understanding the processes by which specific actors engage with and co-produce their personal and collective social worlds. This strategy examines human agency and also how agency is itself hedged in by various limiting discourses, power relations, and institutional constraints. Based on this constructionist strategy, this study will focus on human activities and experiences as based in the social relations, values and discourses surrounding ecotourism and sustainability. The study seeks to understand the perspectives of the various local actors and their views on ecotourism and sustainability. It will focus on how different groups of actors hold differing views about these issues and how these are shaped by the individuals and also by the constraints of the social context.

The research is also guided by a broad but loose conceptual framework (see Chapter 3) that was derived from the overall research approach and from the literature review. This is conceived as a flexible ordering of varied interconnected issues that are relevant to an assessment of the views of actors about ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development. It points to various areas of questioning in the interviews and was not conceived as a rigid, pre-determined analytical framework. It highlights three sets of concerns that are considered important: the patterns of social

relations relevant to sustainable development, the ideologies, values and beliefs relevant to sustainable development, and the policies and practices of ecotourism planning and management relevant to sustainability. In Chapter 5 to 8 this framework is applied to three case studies in Chiang Rai province, Thailand, and its utility is then evaluated.

4.4 Qualitative or Quantitative methods ?

In social research like this study, there are two kinds of research that are linked to the methods used. They are quantitative and qualitative research, which are well known terms among researchers. Quantitative methods produce results in broad terms. These methods have been described as entailing the collection of numerical data; exhibiting a view of the relationship between theory and research that is often deductive; having a predilection for a natural science approach; and having an objectivist conception of social reality (Bryman, 2004:140). In other words, they are generally concerned with counting and measuring areas of social life. However, qualitative methods are more concerned with producing discursive descriptions and exploring social actors' meanings and interpretations (Blakie, 2000:232). Therefore, it can be concluded that qualitative methods tend to be concerned with words rather than numbers (Bryman, 2004).

Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretative and usually emphasises words in the collection and analysis of data. The interpretive process involves cycling back and forth from data collection and analysis, to problem reformulation, with the simultaneous activities of collecting, analysing and writing up data also combined with this iterative process (Cresswell, 2003). The method includes ethnography, case studies, in-depth interviews, and participant observation , all of which were used in this study (Cook and Reichardt, 1979). In contrast, quantitative research can be construed as a research strategy that emphasises quantification in the collection of data, as well as entailing a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, in which the focus is placed on testing theories, incorporating the practices and norms of the natural scientific model and of positivism, and embodying the view that social reality is an objective external reality (Bryman, 2004). Researchers have come to think of qualitative methods as the techniques of randomised experiments, quasi-experiments,

paper and pencil "objective" tests, multivariate statistical analyses, sample surveys, and the like (Cook and Reichardt, 1979). Miles and Huberman (1994: 40) compare qualitative and quantitative research as shown in Table 4.1.

As this study aimed to discover descriptions and to explore social actors' meanings in society, the study applied a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach was employed as this was an interpretative study of specified issues or problems, with the researcher being central to the interpretation. Compared to quantitative research, this qualitative approach has the following advantages. First, qualitative research is concerned with describing social groups or situations so as to gain an understanding of how and why the participants function and behave as they do within their cultural context (McQueen and Knussen, 2002). This clearly applied to the study of the views of villagers, tourism businesses and government officials in the case study villages in Thailand. Second, qualitative research permits the collection of open-ended, emerging data, which is important when the primary intent is to develop themes from the data rather than to 'test' pre-determined themes against the data. Third, qualitative approaches are appropriate in situations where the topic is new or has not been applied previously to a specific sample group, or where the researcher is unsure about what are the important variables (Creswell, 2003). Again this applied to the application of a political ecology perspective to ecotourism planning, which has not been attempted previously in the way developed here. So, qualitative methods were used for this study to collect data which was applicable to the research.

Furthermore, qualitative research is exploratory, and it is useful when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine. This type of approach may be needed because the topic is new, the topic has never been addressed with a certain sample or group of people, or existing theories do not apply with the particular sample or group under study (Morse, 1991). Several of these characteristics apply to this study, so that a qualitative research approach was most appropriate here. On the other hand, a quantitative survey approach was considered much less appropriate for this study since the intention was to gain in-depth insights in a natural setting, based on understanding the entirety of the given phenomenon and situation, and there was very little intention to seek representativeness (Denscombe, 1998).

Qualitative	Quantitative
The aim of qualitative analysis is complete, detailed description	In quantitative research we classify features, count them, and construct statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed
Recommended during earlier phases of research projects	Recommended during later phases of research projects
Researcher may only know roughly in advance what he/she is looking for	Researcher knows clearly in advance what he/she is looking for
The design emerges as the study unfolds	All areas of the study are carefully designed before data is collected
Researcher is the data gathering instrument	Researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires or equipment, to collect numerical data
Data is in the form of words, pictures, or objects	Data is in the form of numbers and statistics
Qualitative data is more 'rich', time consuming, and less able to be generalised	Quantitative data is more efficient, able to test hypotheses, but may miss contextual detail
Researcher tends to become subjectively immersed in the subject matter	Researcher tends to remain objectively separated from the subject matter

Table 4.1: Features of qualitative and quantitative research

Source: Miles and Huberman (1994:40)

As Bryman (1998) describes, a fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its commitment to viewing events, actions, norms, and values from the perspective of the people who are being studied. Thus, it was reasonable and important for this research of ecotourism planning and management. This pattern of research takes the view of social reality as processual and socially constructed by the respondents themselves. A semi-structured strategy rather than a highly structured approach was used which produced data that was rich and deep in nature, and through which theories and concepts tended to emerge. Qualitative study involves close contact with the actors being studied. The field of study here is not an artificial situation in a laboratory, but the practices and interactions of the subjects in everyday life in different villages in rural Thailand (Flick, 1998). This permits a penetrating account which explored the aims and

objectives of the study in great detail and illuminated the full extent of the subjects' accounts of a variety of phenomena. Qualitative research, therefore, was the right method for this study, particularly because it aimed to view social relations and actors' values in relation to sustainability in ecotourism planning.

Qualitative research is grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly 'interpretivist', in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced (Mason, 2002). It is based on data generation which is flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced. It is also based on methods of analysis and explanation building which involve an understanding of complexity, detail, and context. It aims to produce rounded understanding on the basis of rich, contextual, and detailed data. Overall, it allows more open design methods that do justice to the complexity of the object under study. This approach takes into account how the respondents' views and practices vary because of the different subjective perspectives and social backgrounds related to them (Flick, 1998). This current study mainly deals with actors' (both people from inside and outside the case study areas) perceptions, which often varied considerably and were very complex. There are very few previous studies on the perceptions of ecotourism, on the social construction of the related actors' relations, values and beliefs, or on their ideologies in a developing country context. Furthermore, in previous studies of ecotourism there has sometimes been a lack of coherence and subtle appreciation about the overall study context. Consequently, these are the reasons why qualitative methods were used for this study.

4.5 The research ethics

Ethical issues are highly regarded amongst academic institutions. Ethical issues are concerned with the morality of human conduct, and are especially relevant in relation to research. Their vital role is to protect the rights of human subjects. Ethics is becoming an increasingly prominent issue for all researchers across the western world. This comprehensive and accessible guide introduces students to the field and encourages knowledge of research ethics in practice (Israel and Hay, 2006).

This study's ethical concerns involved five aspects. First, the interview questions were carefully designed and translated, with extreme care taken in consideration of the possible consequences for the study. Along with these interview questions, introduction letters were carefully prepared to provide interviewees with clearly stated information about the interests of the researcher and the confidentiality of the data used for the research. Second, a pilot was done to help ensure that the interview questions did not include any inappropriate questions or elements that offended the interviewees. It was hoped that any such issues had been addressed before the questions were presented to the interviewees. The third issue was related to the beginning of each interview, when the researcher clearly stated the study's main aims and the content of the interview. The researcher carefully used the phrase 'conservation tourism' as the focus of the interview, especially with local people, instead of 'ecotourism'. This is because the word 'ecotourism' is quite difficult and too new for the local people to understand, and because in Thailand the phrase 'conservation tourism' was used before changing to 'ecotourism' (this is discussed in the next chapter). Subsequently, they were told that the interview covered certain aspects of ecotourism, which was important in order to gain proper 'informed consent' (Kvale, 1996:112). In addition, before the interview, the interviewees were told that the information they provided would be confidential and used only for research purposes. This was to assure them about confidentiality.

The fourth consideration concerned the role of the researcher. It is suggested that researchers need to have two attributes: sensitivity to identify an ethical issue and responsibility in order to feel committed to acting appropriately in regard to such issues (Eisner and Peshkin, 1990:244). Great attention was paid to remaining faithful to these two attributes during this research. The fifth ethical issue involved ensuring that ethical considerations were attended to throughout the whole research process, including during data transcription and analysis and during the research study write up and production.

4.6 Data collection

This research used several methods from qualitative research for its data collection. They are: document analysis, individual interviews (semi-structured interviews) and participant observation and observation.

4.6.1 Document Analysis

Relevant documents data were sometimes collected in order to identify issues for discussion in the interview data collection phase. The documents often provided secondary data on ecotourism planning and management and sustainability. Their analysis paid due attention to the fact that these materials were produced, shared and used in socially organized ways, and that they reflected the prevailing values, beliefs and ideologies, with these being important concerns for this study. Thus, the analysis of this evidence formed a key part of the study, representing important qualitative research in its own right (Yin, 2003). It was important to establish a methodological framework for the analysis of documentary realities, and this was informed by the conceptual framework outlined earlier.

Yin (2003) identifies that the analysis of document has a number of strengths. This is that they are: stable, and could therefore be reviewed repeatedly; unobtrusive, as they were not created for the study; exact, because they contained exact names, references, and details of an event; and can provide broad coverage, as they often covered a long span of time, many events and many settings. The most important use of documentation and archival records here was to corroborate and augment evidence from the other data sources, and they played an explicit role in undertaking the case study research.

The documents collected were relevant to ecotourism and development, and they induced national and local government plans and reports, official statistics, local ecotourism documents, other local political-related documents, newspapers, and various promotional materials. After a systematic search, this broad variety of documents was incorporated into the study, this being considered a vital type of source (Yin, 1994:81). The government documents were from different levels of their economic development and ecotourism organizations. The selection and analysis of these data also accorded with the research topics and with the various local socio-economic situations. Both Thai and English newspaper articles (including online newspaper articles) were also downloaded and collected on a daily basis during the research period. Other types of documentation used in this case study are summarized in Table 4.2. The researcher also examined the files of key organizations being studied, including some documents in

storage that provided detailed information on relevant events. Sources were also found in local libraries and other reference centres, and these provided further evidence for triangulation which was very useful for this study.

Type of documents	Details of the documents
Plans and policies	Official planning documents, agendas, announcements, minutes of meetings, conference reports and other reports related to ecotourism and sustainability in Chiang Rai, Thailand, and in the three case study areas.
Administrative documents	Administrative documents, such as proposals and progress reports related to the case study areas and to ecotourism, and also other internal documents.
Books and academic papers	Books, academic papers and research studies in relation to ecotourism planning and management in local areas.
Newspapers	Newspaper articles in relation to ecotourism planning and management in rural areas in Thailand, including the case study areas.
Websites	Website items related to ecotourism planning and management in local areas, especially in relation to the case study areas in Thailand.

Table 4.2: Types of documents used in the study

Documents were mostly collected from central, provincial and local governments, such as organizational charts, budgets and their planning and policy documents, local chronologies and survey data on communities and ecotourism. Provincial and local census records were also consulted. Some of these sources were the focus of intensive retrieval and analysis, but others were merely of passing relevance. Whereas these documentary sources were often easy to collect and provided other perspectives on the issues, it was important to be aware of the specific purpose for their original compilation and their intended audiences, so as to avoid potentially misleading use of these sources (Yin, 1994:82). In this study, some of the documents were collected

before the fieldwork through the websites, personal contacts and local officials, but most of them were collected during the fieldwork period from February to May 2006, through visits to the research areas and local libraries, to government and local census bureaus, and to the private sector and NGOs.

4.6.2 Participant observation

There are many definitions of ethnography and participant observation. Both draw attention to the fact that ethnographic participant observers immerse themselves in a group for an extended period of time, observing behavior, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and with the fieldworker, and asking questions (Bryman, 2004). More particularly, participant observation involves observing communication and interaction in an unstructured and natural manner, where the design is developed and modified while observation is carried out, in face-to-face relationships and in an open and flexible way. It provides information when other methods are not effective and it employs a relatively less complicated and less time-consuming procedure of subject selection (Sarantakos,1998). The observation included consideration of potential ways in which the participants' interventions may alter the normal behavior and activities. In the field work rural areas, the local actors sometimes met up in village meetings, and the researcher attended at least one of these meetings in the case study areas (Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit village), except for Rong Born village because there was no meeting there during the period when the data were collected. In the villages the researcher spent much time observing the villagers' behavior. In the village meetings the intention was to evaluate the roles of the participants and the processes of participation. Field notes were kept, and occasionally photographs were taken, as permitted. In the village meetings the proceedings were digitally recorded.

4.6.3 Interview data

The semi-structured interviews for stakeholders were intended to assist with understanding the specific social relations, ideologies and values and beliefs that impinged on sustainability and the practices of ecotourism planning and management in the three rural areas (see Chapter 3). The semi-structured interviews were basically semi-standardized, with a structure but with opportunities for more open discussion (Sarantakos, 1988). The technique allowed for the gathering of supplementary information about the topics being studied, by providing clear topics but also by allowing for subsequent questions to be improvised during the conversation. The method also permitted respondents' sufficient freedom of response to reflect more deeply on their views. Another advantage of the semi-structure interview was its flexibility. It allowed the interviewer to ensure that a common understanding was achieved of the concepts used in the questions (Wengraf, 2001). The interviews normally lasted between one hour to ninety minutes for each respondent. The intention was to interview about 72 people, and eventually 72 people were interviewed and these interviews were digitally recorded. All the questions were based on the conceptual framework shown in Chapter 3, and related to ecotourism planning and management and sustainability. The interviews were all digitally recorded.

4.6.3.1 Desk Research

Many secondary resources were collected and reviewed through desk research. The desk research began in October 2005. Two different types of desk research were conducted, with the first lasting from September to November 2005, and this continued from June 2006 to January 2007. This involved a review of relevant books, journal articles, tourism-related reports and conference proceedings. It also involved the daily collection of website-based information on the research areas in Thailand, both in English and Thai. This was a knowledge-building process which facilitated refining the research area, developing the overall research aim and related objectives, devising the preliminary theoretical framework, developing the research strategies and methods, refining the interview questions, and relating the research to wider theoretical debates and to specific research implications.

Another type of the desk research took place between December 2005 and February 2006 and this involved an internet search with respect to the identified three themes from the conceptual framework (social relations of sustainability, ideologies, values and beliefs of sustainability; and ecotourism planning and management). Crucial information was gained from Thai government websites at national, provincial and local levels and also from the Tourism Authority of Thailand website, online local newspapers, and also web-pages of private sector tourism organisations and of NGOs. Particular attention was directed to the legislative and practical details of national and local regulations, policies and planning issues related to ecotourism planning and management and development and sustainability, and local ecotourism planning and policy documents. Through this search, organisational charts and lists of relevant stakeholders and office-holders were also obtained prior to the field visits, and these helped in pinpointing organisations and individuals to contact to obtain relevant documentation, and in selecting interviewees and a reserve list of interviewees. These sources also helped the researcher become familiar with the legislation and related practical issues prior to the field visits. At this stage, a number of letters were sent and telephone calls made to relevant organisations in order to verify or update a list of potential interviewees and to make initial contacts with key interviewees.

4.6.3.2 Sampling Technique

Fundamentally, sampling theory is concerned with the ability to generalise the properties found in a sample to the population from which the sample is drawn. In qualitative research it is unlikely that the population size can be known by the researcher with precision or certainty, and the sample size will generally be relatively small (Denscombe, 1998). But qualitative research offers the potential advantages of comprehending issues in relation to the full complexity of the given situation. This research involved selecting potential interviewees from a large population, which involved the identification of key people, or representatives of different groups or factions. In order to apply a sampling technique, it was necessary to clarify the concepts of population and sample. A population is an aggregate of all cases that conform to some designated set of criteria (Blaikeie, 2000: 198). The sample is the segment of the

population that is selected for investigation (Bryman, 2001: 85). The method of selection may be based on a probability or a non-probability approach.

As this research is a qualitative study, a purposive sampling of key informants was used in order to obtain rich information on the topic being studied. The selection of these respondents was shaped by the information gleaned from the literature review and desk research, including from literature on stakeholder analysis in ecotourism research. This technique identified representatives of stakeholder groups that were decision-making groups or who had other close relationships with ecotourism planning and management in Chiang Rai, Thailand, especially within the three case study areas. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover and gain insights and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998:61). The power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases where one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the research purpose (Patton, 1990, cited in Merriam, 1998). Previous ecotourism researchers have identified various stakeholder groups that are often relevant in ecotourism areas, including government agencies, residents in local communities, ecotourism organizations, and non-government organizations (Wearing and Neil, 1999; Murphy and Murphy, 2004; Bramwell and Sharman, 1999; Gossling, 2003; Stonich, 2003) Purposive sampling therefore was adopted broadly to reflect the population, but there is no certainty that it is representative in the sense used in quantitative research with much larger samples.

There were three stages to this study's sampling design. Firstly, the assembling stage, which involved grouping together relevant bodies with similar duties and roles into the same category. Secondly, there was a geographical and ethnic group stage because the sites were different in terms of ecotourism products and activities, and in particular ethnic groups (one was home to indigenous Northern Thais, the second to a homogenous group of tribal people, and the last to a mixture of tribal groups and indigenous Northern Thai people). It was important to investigate the views of stakeholders based on these geographic and ethnic differences, thereby avoiding possible bias between particular areas. However, the prime intention was to gain high quality data rather than to focus on whether each geographic and ethnic area was equally represented. Third, was a numbering stage. After gaining an understanding of

the roles, duties, groupings and geographic and ethnic locations of the relevant stakeholders, an initial numbered list was drawn up of potential respondents who were considered to be of most direct relevance for the research aims and objectives.

Respondents were selected from different case study areas, which included specific stakeholder groups and also the general public. The aim of choosing different stakeholders and members of the general public in the villages was to gain responses from different people involved in or affected by ecotourism planning and management in the case study areas. The first group of respondents was the National Government. These were people involved with ecotourism planning and management, including area plans and projects in ecotourism management, including in the three case study areas. Two were from the National Park Department in the Bangkok central office, one was from the ecotourism planning and development department of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in Bangkok, and one was an ecotourism planner in the Ministry of Sport and Tourism in Bangkok. The second group comprised respondents concerned with ecotourism planning and management for the province. They were a tourism planner from the Chiang Rai Provincial Office, a provincial administrator of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (Chiang Rai office), and two leaders of National Parks in the three case study areas. The third group considerated of non-governmental organisations, including a representative of Chiang Rai Chamber of Commerce with responsibilities for tourism in the province, a President of the Chiang Rai Tourism Association, and two NGO representatives in the province who ran tourism activities for two villages in the case study areas. The fourth group was local government, including tourism planners from TAOs in the case study areas, and two planners from the two District Offices involved in tourism and community development. The fifth group comprised tour operators within the province who ran ecotourism businesses related to the case study areas, with two of them listed by the TAT in Chiang Rai and one being based in Bangkok.

The sixth group of respondents constituted an important sample because they were local people living in the villages in the case study areas. They were village leaders, representatives of farmers, representatives of elderly and young people, some of the shop owners in the villages, representatives of accommodation service providers (homestay service), representatives of religion leaders and representatives of the

housewives' club in the village. This process used quota sampling as it was the basis for selecting respondents, with the focus somewhat less concerned with how representative the sample was. While there is a concern to secure a reasonable spread of respondents relevant to the research issue, the respondents were from groups selected because they were key groups who were familiar with the issue and would have specific views and responses to it. In other words, they were key informants and the sampling was purposive. The samples were identified in part in advance, based on the researcher's considerable local knowledge and also the themes of the research. But there was scope for adjustment and for adding respondents based on snowball sampling. It was assumed that local people would have a good awareness of the people who were most relevant to the issue and who might offer a distinctive response and unique insights (Sarantakos, 1988). This is especially important since the study is focused on community definitions of appropriate development. The selected respondents had different roles and were in different fields that intersect in the local development of ecotourism. These people were selected from their relations and activities related to ecotourism planning and management within their communities. However, some of them might not be concerned directly with ecotourism activity such as farmers, but they are villagers, and it was assumed that they should be concerned with ecotourism activities and ecotourism planning and management within their village, so this study selected them to be parts of the samples of interviewees.

In practice, the selection of respondents was made according to their level of knowledge of, or involvement in research issues, which was that they had significant interests in ecotourism planning and management and the sites. A final consideration was the targeted number of interviewees regarding each area. There was no fixed rule on how many interviews were conducted, other than that sufficient data were needed so as to explore and document a range of themes. The overall number was influenced by both the significance of the people actually involved in the three selected areas and the time involved in collecting and analysing the in-depth interviews. Initially, 68 interviewees were targeted, but this was later increased to 70 people, through the snowball process. A total of 4 national, 4 provincial, 4 non governmental organizations (2 of them were non-governmental offices and other 2 were NGOs), 5 local governmental officials (2 were from 2 districts and 3 were from 3 TAOs), 3 tour operators and 50 local people from the three villages were targeted. A summary of the

numbers of interviewees is shown in Table 4.3. Having completed the interviews with the selected interviewees, it was found that both the depth and the scope of the information were sufficient to understand a range of opinions of the different actors about the specific topics or questions.

Scale of the interviewee	**Number of people in the sample**			
	1. Rong Born Village	**2. Yang Kham Nu Village**	**3. Ruammit Village**	**Overlap between 1,2 and 3**
National official				4
Provincial officials				4
district & TAO officials				5
Non - governmental officials				2
NGOs				2
Tour operators				3
Local people	12	12	26	
Total				70

Table 4.3: Numbers of interviewees of this study

Before the interviewing was carried out or before the field visits had been done, correspondence and requests for all interviews were made in advance of the fieldwork. The request and covering letter were sent through by post and e-mail, and contact was also sometimes made by telephone. The requests began to be sent out in late February 2006 and most responses were returned before the interview date agreed. There was one case of unavailability, but this person was replaced by people who were nominated by themselves or their organisations.

4.6.3.3 Interview questions

The research had been conducted using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were semi-structured in order to facilitate comparative research as different respondents answer the same common questions, although there was scope to probe and explore the specific responses provided by individuals. The flexibility of a semi-structured interview allowed for the interview to develop in unique ways for each respondent. This allowed each interviewee to relate the issues to their own 'life–world' and their own values and beliefs, and to use their own language and to organize these around their own ideological frameworks or knowledge (Wengraf, 2001). There were some variation in the questions to also reflect the activities, issues and experiences of different groups of respondents. The interview schedule was designed based on the themes and issues identified in the conceptual framework. Attention was directed to the connections between the themes in the conceptual framework, notably their relations with ecotourism planning practices, rather than just to the separate themes or topics.

The interview questions designed for this study mainly focused on background information and 3 groups of thematic questions (Table 4.4). The questions probed interviewees' perceptions about ecotourism in relation to issues of "social relations and sustainability", of "ideologies, values and beliefs of sustainability", and of "ecotourism planning and management". The development of the interview questions went through a number of stages. Initially, 86 questions were developed, covering numerous elements of the broad issues in the conceptual framework and important issues related to the specific case study areas. These were later reduced to 74 questions by carefully considering the likely similarity and duplication in the questions and replies. Attention was paid to creating more general questions in order to allow the participants to express their opinions and ideas, as well as to avoid very short responses. By keeping the questions somewhat general, this meant that in practice the responses covered other specific questions. Next, the careful use of language was further considered and a professional opinion was sought on this, especially in relation to maintaining generality and also neutrality so that both positive and negative responses would be encouraged. The intention was to ensure that the wording was open to every kind of response, and notably to ensure it did not necessarily assume there were gaps between policy intention

and implementation. Following this, all the developed questions were double checked with the conceptual framework and its elements as well as with the research aim and objectives. At this stage 3 introductory questions were also developed in order to generate general information about the respondents, including about their involvement in ecotourism planning and management. These questions were placed at the beginning of the interview so as to help put the interviewees at their ease.

Some of the interviewees could not respond to all questions, as some could only answer some of them due to limitations in their duties and job descriptions. Thus the questions presented in Table 4.4 are categorized into four categories that were answered by different groups of interviewees. The questions answered by each of four categories are indicated with a capital letter in Table 4.4. "E" represents questions which were relevant to all interviewees. "O" was for the optional questions. These questions were asked or not asked depending on the interviewees' duty and background. "NG" were questions for the national level government officials, and "LG" questions were for local government officials.

Table 4.4: Interview questions

Total of 74 questions. 50 questions with optional questions
R= Rong Born, Y= Yang Kham Nu and RM= Ruammit villages

Introductory Questions

1. Personal information
    - 1.1 Please describe what you do in your job? (E)
    - 1.2 Please describe your position in society? *(O = only for elderly and young* people)
    - 1.3 Do you have any involvement in tourism activities in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (E)
    - 1.4 Do other members of your household have any involvement in tourism?(O)
    - 1.5 Do you employ any other people in tourism-related activities? (O = only for private sector)

1.6 Do you own any farming land and, if so, approximately how much? *(O*=only for farmers)

Theme 1: Social relations of sustainability

2. Resource use and management (Ethnic, cultural, land, environmental, tourism)

2.1 What do you consider to be the most important local resources that support the local way of life in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas. (E)

2.2 Who do you consider is responsible for the management of these important local resources? (O=not for NG)

2.3 How is the management of these important local resources operated in practice? Please give any examples you can think of. (O=not for NG)

2.4 To what extent are these important local resources valuable for tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (E)

2.5 Who do you consider is responsible for the management of these important local resource for tourism? (E)

2.6 How is this management for tourism operated in practice? Please give any examples you can think of. (E)

2.7 Is the management of these important local resources for tourism fully effective? (E)

3. Internal and external social networks

3.1 Approximately how many generations of your family have lived in R,Y,RM? *(E)*

3.2 Are all people living in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas from just one tribal group? Would you please tell me about this? (O=not for NG)

3.3 Do certain tribal groups in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas tend to be more likely to work in tourism activities than others? (E)

3.4 Do you consider that all people living in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas are equally wealthy? (E)

3.5 If there are differences in wealth, what are they, and why are there these differences? (O=not for NG)

3.6 If there are difference in wealth, are more wealthy people more likely to own tourism business than others? (E)

3.7 Do all people who own tourism businesses in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas also live in R,Y,RM or the areas they take the tourists to? (E)

3.8 Do you consider that most of the decisions about the development of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas are made by local people within D R,Y,RM or those areas? (E)

3.9 Do you consider that most of the decisions about the development of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas are made by people who live outside R,Y,RM or those areas?(O=not for NG)

4. Power and governance

4.1 Have certain groups of people had more influence than others on the development of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas?(O)

4.2 Do certain groups of people have more influence on the decisions about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (E)

4.3 Where do you think most decisions are made about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (E)

4.4 Outside of R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, where do you think most decision are made about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM or those areas? (E)

4.5 Within R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, where do you think most decision are made about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM or those areas? (E)

4.6 Can you think of any specific decisions that have been made about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas over the past 5 years or so? (O=not for NG)

4.7 Who is involved in decisions that are made about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (E)

4.8 In relation to village meetings in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, can you think of any specific decisions that have been made over the past five years or so about the planning and management of tourism there?(O=for villagers only)

4.9 In relation to village meetings in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, who is involved in decisions that are made about the planning and management of tourism here/there? (E)

4.10 Can you think of any examples of disagreements about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas over the past 5 years? What were they about? (E)

4.11 If there have been any disagreements about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, have they been resolved or reduced, at all? (O=not for NG)

4.12 In general are you happy with the decisions made about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM and Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (O=for villagers only)

4.13 Are there specific examples of where you have been unhappy about how decisions have been made about the planning and management of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (E)

Theme 2: Ideologies, values and beliefs of sustainability

5. Notions of sustainable development and appropriate livelihoods

5.1 What sorts of development over the past decade do you think have been most appropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any?(O=not for NG)

5.2 What sorts of development over the past decade do you think have been most inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any?(O=not for NG)

5.3 What sorts of tourism development over the past decade do you think have been most appropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any? (E)

5.4 What sorts of tourism development over the past decade do you think have been most inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any? (E)

5.5 What sorts of development over the next 20 years do you consider would be inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any?(O = not for NG)

5.6 What sorts of tourism development over the next 20 years do you consider would be inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any? (E)

5.7 What sorts of changes in employment opportunities over the past decade do you think have been most inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any? (E)

5.8 What sorts of changes in employment opportunities over the next 20 years do you consider would be inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any? (O=not for NG)

5.9 What sorts of changes in local ways of life over the past decade do you think have been most inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any? (E)

5.10 What sorts of changes in local ways of life over the next 20 years do you consider would be inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any? (O=not for NG)

5.11 What sorts of changes in the local environment over the past decade do you think have been most inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any? (E)

5.12 What sorts of changes in the local environment over the next 20 years do you consider would be inappropriate for R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if any? (O=not for NG)

6. Notions of fairness

6.1 Are there any shared community benefits from development in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (O=not for NG)

6.2 Do you consider that some people gain more than their fair share of benefits from development here/there?(O=not for NG)

6.3 Are there any shared community benefits from tourism development in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (E)

6.4 Do you consider that some people gain more than their fair share of benefits from tourism development here/there? (E)

6.5 Who do you consider should benefit most from development in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if anyone? (O=not for NG)

6.6 Who do you consider should benefit most from tourism development in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas, if anyone? (E)

6.7 Do people based outside or else inside the village/s benefit too much or too little from tourism development in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai's ecotourism areas? (E)

6.8 In terms of fairness, do you think that communities in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai ecotourism areas are fully satisfied with the benefits they receive from tourism development? (E)

6.9 Do you consider that there should be changes in the management of tourism so that the benefits of tourism development are distributed more fairly in R,Y,RM or the Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? (E)

6.10 If yes, why and also how might this be achieved? (E)

7. Notions of appropriate participation in policy decision-making

7.1 In what ways at present can members of the local community participate in policy-making affecting the development of R,Y,RM or the Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? (E)

7.2 In what ways at present can members of the local community participate in policy-making affecting the development of tourism in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? (E)

7.3 Have you ever participated in any policy-making affecting the development of R,Y,RM or the Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? If yes, please explain. (O=only for the villagers)

7.4 Have you participated in any policy-making affecting the development of tourism in R,Y,RM or the Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? If yes, please explain. (E)

7.5 Would you personally like to participate more in tourism policymaking for R,Y,RM or the Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? (O=only for the villagers)

7.6 Do you consider that the local community would like to participate more in tourism policymaking in R,Y,RM or Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? (E)

7.7 If there were more opportunities for the local community to participate More in tourism policymaking, do you consider the local community would take part more in practice? (E)

7.8 If you consider more opportunities should be made available for the local community to participate more in tourism policymaking, how do you think this could be best achieved? (E)

7.9 If the local community participated more in tourism policymaking what differences, if any, do you think this would make for tourism in R,Y,RM or the Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? (E)

Theme 3: Ecotourism planning and management

8. Homestay tourism

8.1 Are you familiar with the term homestay tourism? If yes, would you describe what the term means for you. (O=not for NG)

8.2 Do people providing homestay tourism get sufficient income from this activity? (O=only of villagers and LG)

8.3 Do you consider that homestay tourism is one of the most or least beneficial types of tourism in the local community in R,Y,RM or the Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? Please explain your answer. (E)

8.4 Does the planning and management of tourism do enough to help homestay tourism in R,Y,RM or the Chiang Rai ecotourism areas? Please explain. (E)

9. The practice or implementation of ecotourism planning and management

9.1 On balance do you consider that the ecotourism planning and management in R,Y,RM or the Chiang Rai ecotourism areas is effective or ineffective? Please explain your answer. (E)

9.2 Please explain what you consider to be the best aspects of the ecotourism planning and management. (E)

9.3 Please explain what you consider to be the worst aspects of the ecotourism planning and management. (E)

9.4 Please explain how you feel it might be improved. (E)

9.5 Please explain how you feel it might be improved to benefit the environment and the local community. (E)

Some slight variability in the wording of questions was also essential so that the questions were still relevant for people from different sectors and with different knowledge and experiential levels of specific areas. The interview questions were also designed specifically to avoid particularly sensitive matters, which was important as the research potentially touched on political issues that were highly sensitive. Due to the sensitive nature of some topics, the questions were phrased in rather general ways so as to avoid potential awkwardness and confrontation, notably to avoid direct questions on these sensitive topics.

4.6.3.4 The interviews

During the fieldwork period from the middle of February to the end of May 2006, and additional visits to the case study areas in May 2007 and in April 2008, data from a target of 70 respondents were collected. The list of interviewees and their details, together with the geographical scale of their interests, the location of the interviews (their offices/homes), and the type of organization are shown in Table 4.5. A total of 4 national, 4 provincial, 4 non-governmental organisations, 5 local governmental officials, 3 tour operators and 50 local people from the three villages were targeted.

Table 4.5: Key informants interviewed according to geographical scale of their interests

No.	Geographical Scale of their interests	Interviewee	Location	Type of Organisation
1	National	Director of Local Participation and Sustainability Development Project, National Park, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation division	Bangkok	Official
2	National	Vice-director of Planning Department, National Park, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation division	Bangkok	Official

No.	Geographical Scale of their interests	Interviewee	Location	Type of Organisation
3	National	Director of Tourism Planning and Development, Tourism Authority of Thailand	Bangkok	Official
4	National	Chairman of Planning and Development, Office of Tourism Development, Ministry of Sport and Tourism	Bangkok	Official
5	Provincial	Chairman of Planning and Strategy of Chiang Rai province	Chiang Rai	Official
6	Provincial	Vice-director of Tourism Authority of Thailand, Chiang Rai office	Chiang Rai	Official
7	District	Vice- district Officer in Planning and Development, Muang district, Chiang Rai	Muang, Chiang Rai	Official
8	District	Vice- District Officer in Planning and Development, Phan district	Phan, Chiang Rai	Official
9	Provincial	Chairman of Chiang Rai Chamber of Commerce	Chiang Rai	None-government official
10	Provincial	Chairman of Chiang Rai Tourism Association	Chiang Rai	None-government official
11	Other	Manager of Kra Jok Ngao	Chiang Rai	NGO
12	Other	Manager of Mae Kok Farm Foundation	Chiang Rai	NGO

No.	Geographical Scale of their interests	Interviewee	Location	Type of Organisation
13	National	Manager of a tour operator	Bangkok	Travel agency
14	Provincial	Manager of a tour operator	Chiang Rai	Travel agency
15	Provincial	Manager of a tour operator	Chiang Rai	Travel agency
16	Provincial	Chairman of Doi Luan National Park (Rong Born village)	Chiang Rai	Official
17	Provincial	Chairman of Lam Nam Kok National Park (Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit Villages)	Chiang Rai	Official
18	Local	Vice Chairman of Tourism Planning, Mae Yao TAO (Ruammit Village)	Chiang Rai	Official
19	Local	Chairman of Doi Hang TAO (Yang Kham Nu Village)	Chiang Rai	Official
20	Local	Vice Chairman of Muang Kham TAO (Rong Born Village)	Chiang Rai	Official
21	Local	Village leader of Ruammit Village	Ruammit Village	Village
22	Local	Akha tribe leader at Ruammit Village	Ruammit Village	Village
23	Local	Hmong tribe leader at Ruammit Village	Ruammit Village	Village
24	Local	Manager of Ruammit Elephant Camp	Ruammit Village	Village

No.	Geographical Scale of their interests	Interviewee	Location	Type of Organisation
25 & 26	Local	Two homestay providers	Ruammit Village	Village
27	Local	Religious leader	Ruammit Village	Village
28	Local	Chairwoman of the Housewife Club at Ruammit	Ruammit Village	Village
29	Local	Chairman of the Youth Club at Ruammit	Ruammit Village	Village
30	Local	An elderly person at Ruammit	Ruammit Village	Village
31 & 32	Local	Two restaurant owners	Ruammit Village	Village
33 & 34	Local	Two noodle shop owners	Ruammit Village	Village
35 & 36	Local	Two grocery shop owners	Ruammit Village	Village
37-40	Local	Four farmers	Ruammit Village	Village
41-44	Local	Four souvenir shop owners (one Karen, one Akha, one Hmong, and one Lizu)	Ruammit Village	Village
45 & 46	Local	Two mahount (elephant trainers)	Ruammit Village	Village
47	Local	Village Leader at Yang Kham Nu	Yang Kham Nu Village	Village
48	Local	Religious leader	Yang Kham Nu Village	Village

No.	Geographical Scale of their interests	Interviewee	Location	Type of Organisation
49	Local	Chairwoman of the Housewife Club	Yang Kham Nu Village	Village
50	Local	Chairman of the Youth Club	Yang Kham Nu Village	Village
51	Local	An elderly person	Yang Kham Nu Village	Village
52	Local	A noodle shop owner (the only one in the village)	Yang Kham Nu Village	Village
53	Local	A grocery shop owner (the only one in the village)	Yang Kham Nu Village	Village
54 & 55	Local	Two Homestay owners	Yang Kham Nu Village	Village
56-59	Local	Four farmers	Yang Kham Nu Village	Village
60	Local	Village Leader at Rong Born Village	Rong Born Village	Village
61	Local	Religious leader	Rong Born Village	Village
62	Local	Chairwoman of the Housewife Club	Rong Born Village	Village
63	Local	Chairman of the Youth Club	Rong Born Village	Village
64	Local	An elderly person	Rong Born Village	Village
65 & 66	Local	Two grocery shop personnel (one is private owner and another one is a co-operative community shop in the village)	Rong Born Village	Village

No.	Geographical Scale of their interests	Interviewee	Location	Type of Organisation
67 & 68	Local	two expected homestay service operators (who visited homestay services at another site as there was no homestay service in this village)	Rong Born Village	Village
69-72	Local	Four farmers (two of them joined tourism activities regularly, but the other two rarely joined	Rong Born Village	Village

During the fieldwork period (February to May 2006), the interviews took place in four locations related to the research issue examined in the study. Those places included the capital city of Thailand (Bangkok) and the three case study areas in Chiang Rai province: Rong Born village, Yang Kham Nu village and Ruammit village. These field visits were prepared well before the interviews were made, as contacts were made in advance both by letter and telephone.

Some of the interviewees were local people who were farmers. They worked on their farms during the day and it was difficult to do the interviews while they were working. The interviewer requested and did the interviews at their homes in the evening and all of them were happy to take part in the interviews at night. However, some of them allowed questions at their farms after their break time. All conversations and questions for those interviews went smoothly and all questions were answered.

During the interview, there was a short conversation at the start which was used to put the respondents at ease, to reiterate the objectives of the research, and to assure the respondents again about confidentiality issues. This was important because this conversation helped to establish a mutual understanding between the interviewer and

the interviewee (May, 2001). All of the interviewees accepted and allowed the interviews to be recorded as voice recordings.

In summary, the average length of each interview was around one hour. The shortest was 45 minutes and the longest was 210 minutes. Moreover, note taking was done during the interviews. It was to record the circumstance of the interview, any reluctance or other concerns shown by each interviewee, and the likely openness and reliability of the responses.

4.7 Data analysis and interpretation

This research was a qualitative study, with case study research that involved detailed descriptions of the settings and the individuals, followed by analysis of the data for chosen themes and issues (Stake, 1995). This qualitative method utilized the interviews and observations that took the form of a large corpus of unstructured textual material which was not straightforward to analyse. This research was designed to encompass whether the analysis was conducted from transcripts or from interviews, including the social contexts in which the interviews were conducted. It was found that it was helpful to consider the extent to which the major focus was on the language used by the interviewee or on the interaction between interviewee and the interviewer. Not only was the language used by the interviewees considered, but also their social context. For example, the position of the interviewees was considered to explore whether the interviewees were speaking more openly or in some official parlance. Full transcriptions were made so that it was much easier to undertake the analysis, even though they were very time consuming to produce.

After completion of the fieldwork, the full data analysis and interpretation process started in July 2006. The data was analysed using content analysis, a technique that provides new insights and increases the researcher's understanding of particular phenomena. The approach to content analysis used here was thematic analysis, where the coding scheme was based on categories designed to capture the dominant themes present in the text (Franzosi, 2004: 550). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes with data. The process starts with the analyst looking

for and noticing patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data. The endpoint is the reporting of the content and the meaning of patterns or themes in the data, where "themes are abstract constructs the investigators identify before, during, and after analysis" (Ryan and Bernard, 2000: 780). The six phases of analysis are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	**Description of the Process**
Familiarizing with the data	Transcribing the data (if necessary); reading and re-reading the data; noting down initial ideas
Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set; collating data relevant to each code
Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes; gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set; generating thematic 'map' of analysis
Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis reveals; generating clear definitions and names for each theme
Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis: selecting vivid, compelling extract examples; conducting final analysis of selected extracts; relating the analysis back to the research questions and literature; producing a scholarly report of the analysis

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006:87)

Thematic analysis has some phases that are similar to the phases involved with other forms of qualitative study, thus these stages are not necessarily unique to thematic analysis. Patton (1990) considers it important to recognize that such qualitative analysis guidelines need to be applied flexibly to fit the research questions and data. Moreover, analysis is not a linear process of simply moving from one phase to the next. Analysis involves a constant moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data, and the analysis of the data. In this research, the study findings and the study's theoretical framework were closely interlinked and related. Since the framework was integrated, flexible, and interactive, it was adopted as a key guide for analyzing relevant data, including for the organization of the qualitative data derived from the semi-structured interviews and also for their coding analysis.

As processes of analysis on this studying were based on the research questions and also relied on Braun and Clarke's phases of thematic analysis, the data analysis of this study took the following steps. First, the researcher read through all transcriptions and at the same time took notes or marked ideas for coding. Second, initial codes were produced from the data. Codes identify a feature of data that appears interesting to the researcher, and refer to "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomena" (Boyatzis, 1998: 63). The researcher worked systematically through the entire data set; gave full and equal attention to each data item; and identified and coded possibly interesting aspects in the data. A little of the surrounding data was kept if relevance, since a common criticism of coding is that the context can be lost (Bryman, 2004). In the third step, the different codes were sorted into potential themes and all the relevant coded data extracts were collated within the identified themes. Some initial codes went on to form main themes, whereas others formed sub-themes, and still others were discarded. Nothing was discarded at this stage, as it was uncertain whether the themes were to remain as they were, or whether some needed to be combined, refined and separated, or discarded.

The fourth step focused on refining and naming the themes. During this step, the candidate themes were refined so that they formed a coherent pattern. If the candidate themes did not fit, re-coding took place as coding was an ongoing organic process. Sub-

themes were identified as part of the refinement. Then the final refinements of the themes were applied, and the researcher analysed the data within them. The final analysis and write-up of the thesis was the last step of this process. Furthermore, at every stage, the coding was subject to modifications to ensure its appropriateness, accuracy and coherence, with this process continuing through to the end.

4.8 Triangulation

A strategy of triangulation was used to increase the likely trustworthiness of the interpretations emerging in this study. The types of triangulation used here combined multiple theories, methods, and data sources to add analytical rigor and depth. The use of a triangulated approach is seen as a major strength of case study research as it can help to build a methodologically more robust study (Merriam, 1998). According to Decrop (1999:158), one form of triangulation involves looking at the same phenomenon or research question using more than one source of data. A range of types of information was therefore sought in this study in order to see issues from different angles and in order to limit personal and methodological biases. Oppermann (2000) explains that the importance of triangulation is that it assists with the verification of results because it helps with identifying and eliminating methodological shortcomings and also data or investigator bias. He also advocates the use of at least three different types of data. Therefore, this study conducted two stages of face-to-face interviews and integrated these with the use of secondary data and field observation in the case study area.

Decrop (2004) suggests that there are five types of triangulation in qualitative research. The first is "data triangulation" which involves the use of various data sources. In this study, the findings were generated from the use of a variety of secondary data, such as books, reports, official statistics, newspapers, promotional documents, and official ecotourism documents, as well as primary data, such as interviews and observational evidence. This mix of sources allowed for additional cross-checking of the findings in order to evaluate their internal consistency and to increase reliability. Data triangulation also encompassed the field notes written during and immediately after each interview. This study also employed Decrop's second type, "informant

triangulation", which simply involves considering a broad range of informants and comparing what they say. Both typical and atypical informants were investigated in this study. The third type of triangulation employed in this study was "method triangulation". This entails the use of a combination of methods or techniques. In this case, the findings from semi-structured interviews were cross-checked with the results of observations made during the site visits and with documentation analysis. Decrop's fourth type is "theoretical triangulation", which involves the use of multiple theoretical perspectives regarding the phenomenon of interest within the same measurement effort. This is applied in this study through the integration of critical realism and constructivism as the philosophical approaches. Since critical realism helps to evaluate structural change in the world, this research developed the conceptual framework based on an understanding of political ecology and then the conceptual framework was applied to ecotourism in practice. On the other side, the study also allowed the use of constructivism in understanding and interpreting social actors' interactions. The study then integrated a constructivist analysis with a political ecology approach, and established the dialectical interactions between "structure" and "agency". Finally, there is the fifth type, "interdisciplinary triangulation', in which interpretation becomes richer and more comprehensive when investigators draw insights from theories from different disciplines. This type of triangulation is especially relevant in tourism research, since in essence tourism is a multidisciplinary phenomenon. In this study, ideas were drawn from research on public policy and planning, sociology, geography, anthropology, marketing, environment, political ecology and ecotourism studies.

4.9 Methodological limitations of the study

It is acknowledged that there are still threats to the trustworthiness of the data and its interpretation, though the study followed well-establish procedures for research design. Maxwell (1996) states that one important threat for qualitative research based on interviews is that the interviews are influenced by the researcher's own interpretation of meanings, so that the perspectives and meanings of the respondents are lost. To reduce this threat, the researcher always tried to reflect critically on his own role in this research process, which was to understand actors and the ecotourism planning and management in the three case study areas in Chiang Rai, Thailand, without adding

personal feelings and opinions. Secondly, some interviewees may have misunderstood the interview questions, and thus the researcher may have made some judgments that were inappropriate. To reduce this threat, the researcher tried to assess his own approaches and interpretations before conducting the interviews. All interview questions, for example, were translated from English to Thai, and then translated back to English to make sure they would not lose any meaning from the original questions. Furthermore, all questions in Thai were proofread and evaluated by two Thai academic lecturers who specialise in Thai studies and in research methodology as well. Thus, these questions were deemed suitable and not harmful to any interviewees. In actuality, the questions helped to make it easier, in appropriate ways, for interviewees to answer. The third threat concerns the purposive sampling. The selection of suitable actors in the limited time available to the researcher involved listening to interviewees' recommendations. For example, the representatives of local community groups were introduced by other interviewees. This might have been a threat to the validity of the data because such choices could have been influenced by the personal perspectives of the respondents. This threat and the others were considered before the fieldwork, and thus triangulation, care around the ethical issues, and carefully designed criteria were all applied in an attempt to limit the influence of these threats.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the design and implementation of the research. The study is founded on a critical realist stance and an interpretative, social constructivist paradigm. The approach adopted is premised on the idea that social reality exists outside our thoughts, but that it is understood and interpreted through the participants' interactions. This philosophical consideration underpinned the research strategy and selection of research methods. It explains the use of a qualitative methodology, including the use of a case study strategy, in-depth interviews, secondary data, and field observation. The chapter also explained how the specific research methods were applied to the case study. In-depth interviews were the main method used in the case study strategy, and the chapter focused on the interview processes and how the interview data were collected and analysed. This included an account of the purposive sampling. There was also an explanation of the data analysis based on a framework analysis approach

and the construction of a thematic index. The chapter clarified the design of the thematic index and its application. In addition, the chapter also discussed broad considerations used throughout the study, including attention to ethical issues and to data and method triangulation.

Chapter 5 Context to the case studies

5.1 Introduction

This chapter details the research case study areas that are within the same province of Chiang Rai, Thailand. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly explain the case study context in Thailand through an ecotourism management and development perspective.

The chapter considers Thailand's socio-economic development, which focuses on the Thai economy and Thai society. This context links to ecotourism, which influences the country's economy, and also to the relationship between Thai society and local community development in tourism planning and management. The discussion includes the political, governance and public participation contexts in Thailand. It provides a better understanding of governance and of power in relation to local participation in decision-making and also to local people in ecotourism planning and management. The discussion also concentrates on tourism and ecotourism development issues within the country which may affect ecotourism planning and management.

Later the chapter gives an overview of the three case study areas. The discussion relates to resources, social relations, and resource management within the province. Moreover, details of the three case study areas are presented to see how they differ from each other in terms of resources and tourism products. These differences are important background for the assessment of ecotourism management and development.

5.2 Economy, society and tourism in Thailand

An overview of Thailand's development needs to be clarified as it is linked to the country's tourism development. The discussion of Thailand's socio-economic, political and governance contexts focuses on the traditional society and culture in the country's rural areas, and also on Thailand's tourism planning and management.

5.2.1 The context of Thailand's tourism

Thailand is situated to the west of the Indochinese Peninsula of South East Asia (SEA), and it has a population of 63.39 million (http://www.populationworld.com 20/01/2009). The country covers an area of 515,000 square kilometres, which is about the same size as France (http://www.thailand.world-guides.com/ 20/01/2009). Thailand is bordered on the north and the west by Myanmar, on the north and north-east by Laos, on the south-east by Cambodia and the Gulf of Thailand, on the south by Malaysia, and on the south-west by the Andaman Sea. The situation of Thailand and Chiang Rai province is presented in Figure 5.1

The country has 75 provinces, excluding Bangkok (the capital city), each is administered by a governor, and each is sub-divided into districts (Amphur), sub-districts (Tambon), and villages (Moo Ban or Moo). The governors of the 75 provinces are appointed and controlled by the Minister of Interior. In 1995 the Parliament approved the 'Local Administration Organisation and Tambon Council Act' (The Ministry of Interior, 2006), which established the Tambon Administrative Organisations (TAOs), which are important organisations controlling villages within their sub-district in terms of local administration. The TAO is a form of local administration at the sub-district level whose members are elected by local people under the supervision of the Department of Local Administration. The Ministry of Interior grants TAO status to any sub-district which is able to collect local tax totalling at least 150,000 baht (2142.86 Pound, 1 British pound = 70 baht)[1] for three consecutive years. Currently, there are 2,760 TAOs throughout the country. The TAOs have become involved in tourism in the communities they are responsible for, and they often use ecotourism as a tool for local economic development.

[1] 1 British pound =70 baht: the rate of exchange in March 2006

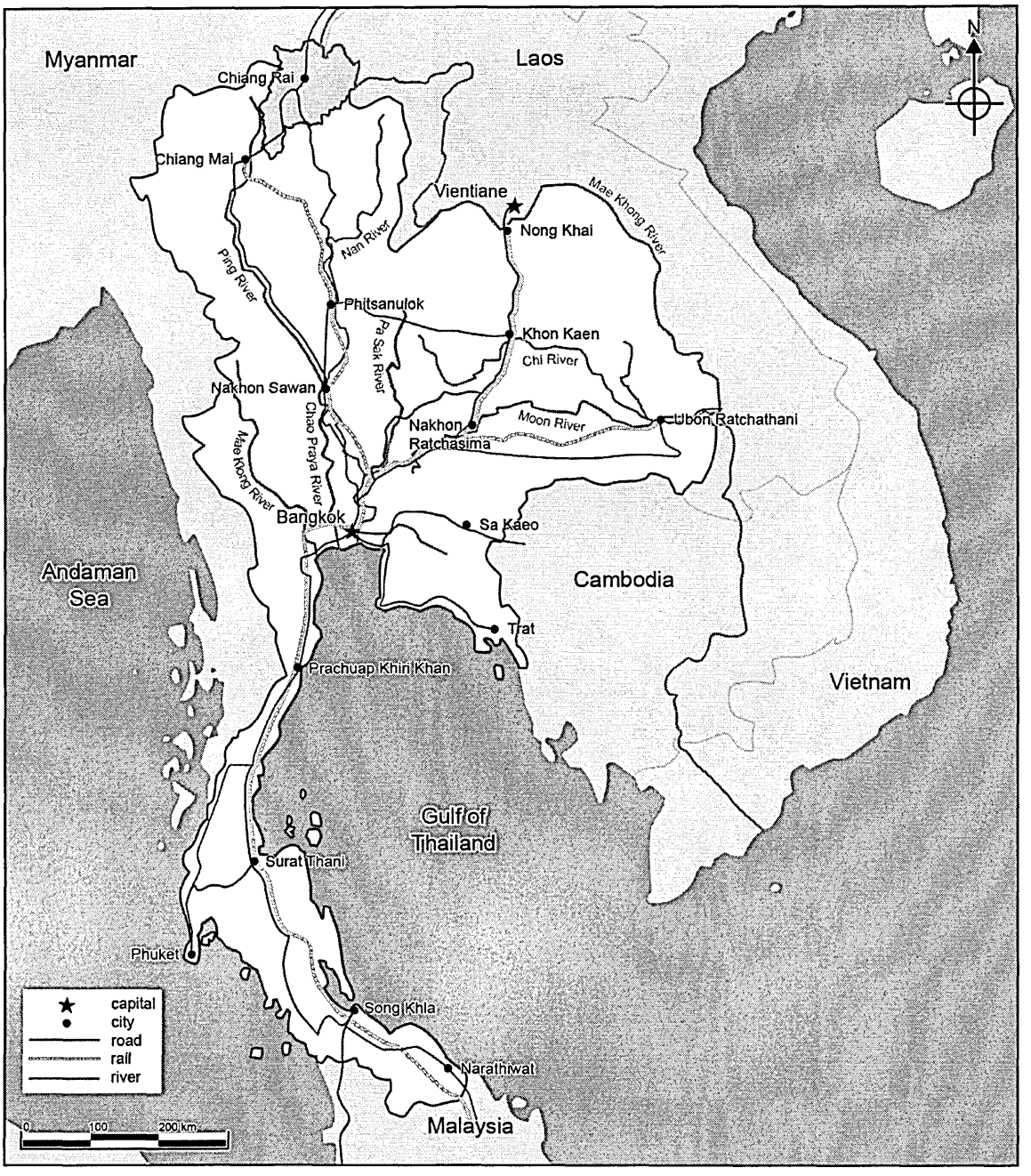

Figure 5.1: Map of Thailand showing the location of Chiang Rai province

5.2.1.1Development of the economy in Thailand

Thailand is a country with an agriculturally-based economy, but it changed quickly as it became a Newly Industrialised Economy (NIE). Change in the economy of the country can be discussed in four stages. Firstly, in the period up until the 1950s the country was known as an agriculturally-based export economy (Somjee and Somjee, 1995). It was even perceived as one of the poorest countries in the world in 1950s, with zero growth of output per head of population (Warr, 1993). Secondly, from the 1970s to the 1990s, the country was transformed by economic growth; expansion of extensive agriculture; a growth in manufacturing; and a low inflation rate and moderate growth of external debt (Warr, 1993). Moreover, in this stage the country launched the first Thai National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP)[2] in 1961. The plan was believed to initiate and guide the country to modern economic investment (Phongpaichit and Chaisakul, 1993; Krongkaew and Kakwani, 2003). Thirdly, in the late 1980s, the country was perceived as one of the world's most rapidly growing economies, since it had achieved its first cash balance surplus after decades of fiscal deficits and vulnerable economic positions (Vajragupta and Vichayanond, 2001). Furthermore, Thailand was promoted as one of the most promising 'New Tigers' in South East Asia (Kamoche, 2000; Karunaratne, 1998). Lastly, after the mid-1990s, many scholars emphasised inappropriate liberalisation policies, inadequate banking supervision, and poor political leadership that failed to save the Thai economy (Kamoche, 2000). The economic crisis after the mid-1990s was affected by the failure of private corporations and businesses due to unnecessary investment, limited expertise and too much borrowing, resulting in a growth 'bubble' and a deterioration of asset quality (Corden, 1999; Dixon, 1999). This failing Thai financial system led to the Thai baht's devaluation (Charoenseang and Manakit, 2002), and this eventually sparked a currency crisis in many parts of Southeast Asia and was called the 'Asian Economic Crisis' (Leiper and Hing, 1998). Under a US$ 17.2 billion aid package from the International Monetary Fund in 1997 (Dixon, 1999), some stringent conditions were applied to rectify Thailand's economic problems, notably various financial reforms and privatisations of some state enterprises

[2] National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) is planned by National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). The plans were for 5 years and at the present time the country is using the plan for the years 2007-2011.

(Vajagupta and Vichayanond, 2001:184). Currently, measures are being employed to strengthen the country's financial system, restore market as well as worldwide confidence, and to return Thailand to it growth path. One of the key things to set the country's economy onto a better track is tourism promotion. It is seen as a key sector for this economic recovery (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1999), especially since 1982 when it became Thailand's top foreign exchange earner (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998). Thus, the country has promoted tourism to both domestic and international visitors.

5.2.1.2 The development of society in Thailand

There are some notable historical influences on Thai society that still apply to the current situation, notably the increasing gaps between two extremes in Thai society. Thus, Thai rural society implies low labour productivity and low income, whereas people in urban areas have higher incomes (Jumbala, 1992; Kulick and Wilson, 1993). Firstly, the Sukhothai to the Rattanakosin Periods (1249-1932), are associated with strong feudalistic practices and even slave service. Its influence on the country has left a legacy of a highly hierarchical society. This means that Thai people are still attached to the importance of power and leadership personalities (Spark, 1998; Krongkaew and Kakwani, 2003). Lastly, there was a significant change in Thai governance from a system of absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy combined with an elected representative government in 1932 (Mc Cargo, 2002). This encouraged the growth of a powerful Thai middle class of businessmen, politicians and nouveau riche.

The structure of Thai society today is moderately heterogeneous, with approximately 90 percent of the population being ethnic Thai together with some Chinese decendants, Malays and Indians (Pornpitakpan, 2000). Society in present day Thailand seems to be divided between the traditional rural society (mostly farmers engaged in agriculture-related activities) (MoFA, 1997), and the more modernised urban society (representing less than 20 percent of the population) (AFIO, 1993). People in these groups differ greatly according to lifestyle, education, political interests and ways of thinking.

The two main traditions of traditional society are the corvee system of forced labour in the agricultural economy (Somjee and Somjee, 1995), and a deeply embedded attachment to the king and supervisors (depite the radical changes in the country's politics and governance) (Suwannathat-pian, 2003). More traditional sectors of society tend to observe their old traditional and customs, rely on kin-based relationships that depend on closeness and trust, hold on to natural superstitions, emphasise status rather than ability (AFIO), 1993; Sparks, 1998), and hold on to Buddhist religious beliefs and teachings (Rigg, 1995). Importantly for this study, these traditional values tend to encourage an institutionalised adherence to patronage and a superiority system that may significantly affect the ecotourism planning and management.

With increasing rural migration for higher income revenue compared to the rural areas, there are problems of urban poverty, low paid and unskilled labour, insufficient investment, and dire infrastructure problems (Ruland & Ladavalya, 1993). Thai society is becoming more divided, urbanised, industrialised, and materialistic, with less regard for traditions and religion (Karunaratne, 1998). But the majority of Thai people retain attachments to the rural-based society, with respect for elderly people, and where there is a different basis for social status (Arghiros, 2001). Likewise, Boyle (1998) explains that there is a tendency for Thai people to strongly desire paternalistic authority and to rely upon, and be loyal to, a particular group. Thai culture tends to emphasise respect for elders, superiors, patrons, economic wealth, and a stable power base. These issues are believed to have an impact on Thai society in terms of social status and power from high social status and leadership, especially in areas of local planning and management.

Another influence on Thai rural society is their religion and their beliefs. About 95% of Thai people are Buddhists, whereas most of the rest of the population are Muslims, Christians or followers of Confucius. Some Thais believe in animism - the belief in angels (Dhevada) and ghosts (Phisarj) (Warr, 1993). This helps to explain why most Thai people do not want confrontation or any conflict with other people. Buddhism teaches people to be on the 'Middle Path'. This helps Buddhists control their minds when they have to make decisions and it encourages members to respect other people's ideas and avoid conflict between members (Jackson, 2003). Another aspect of Buddhism, the Five Basic Precepts in Buddhist teaching (refraining from destroying living beings, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from false speech and from

intoxicants) appear to have become blended within the deep-rooted concept of Karma (the idea that the current life is a consequence of past actions) (Burnard and Naiyapatana, 2004). This has led Thais to believe in merit-accumulation for the next life. This is relevant because it affects several of the prominent Thai characteristics, as they believe they will have a better life in the next life if they behave the right way in this life (Jackson, 2003).

It is not only the following of Buddhism by Thai people that influences Thai culture and lives in communities. There is another thing that seems to control people in groups. It is about the belief in animism, in particular in rural areas. The belief is not bad for the community, as apparently it can make the community stronger. For example, the belief in a tree's spirit (a spirit which was believed to protect trees and forest in rural areas), makes some communities, such as the Karen, turn into forestry conservation groups as they respect the spirit that may cause them to suffer if they do harm to the tree or to the forest (Hirsch, 1998).

To summarize, the development of Thai society and the characteristics of Thais are related to their administration from the past - which was about power and respect for royalty, high social status, and wealthy people - and are also related to religion and their beliefs. Their religion teaches them to follow the 'Middle Path' and believe in Karma. Moreover, animism beliefs seem potentially to have positive results for planning and management, especially for resource management in rural areas.

5.2.2 Governance and participation in Thailand

There were four broad stages of continuity and change in Thailand's governance. The first was the Sukhothai period in the 13th century that was renowned for its paternalistic system, where the king was regarded as the 'nation's father' and administration was highly concentrated at the centre (Jumbala, 1992). Without the intermediary of an administrative hierarchy, the king remained closed to his people, and locals were closely tied to the centre as they were there solely to follow their king (AFIO, 1993). The second stage, from the mid-14th century, had the concept of 'nation's father' replaced by that of Hindu-Khmer divine kingship. It was believed that the king

was a future Buddha and people became servants or slaves and were controlled by bureaucratic and feudalistic pyramids through patron-client links to the state (Somjee and Somjee, 1995). This stage has contributed to the present–day form of ministerial administration in Thailand. This period of centralisation of governance was long-lived and became embedded in the society, with all powers being deliberately amassed for one group in society, especially for royal blood-related groups (Hewison, 1997; Wilson, 1982). The third stage was after the slave class was ended by King Rama V (between 1868-1910). He used a model town to illustrate western democratic principles. These modernisations in governance were considered to be greatly influenced by increased numbers of western-educated people in the country and the growth of technocratic cliques (Hewison, 1997; King, 1999). And the last stage was Thailand's entry into democracy. It became notably more participatory in 1997 under the 16th constitution and also under the current reign of King Rama IX (1946 to the present). Various critics have highlighted the idea that political turbulence, such as has occurred recently in Thailand, might be depicted as part of the attempts to increase the democratisation of Thai society. Nevertheless, centralisation in Thailand remains relatively untouched and political power has often fallen to small groups of the affluent elite, bureaucrats and businessmen-turned-politicians (King, 1999). Thus, the embryonic Thai democracy probably still requires much effort, time and understanding for it to achieve effective public participation and administration.

The 16th constitution of 1997 resulted from Thailand's middle classes and rich businessmen pressing for more individual rights, participatory approaches, and a popular electoral system, in part as a means to secure greater economic prosperity. It also promoted more local involvement in planning and management (MoFA, 1997). As discussed before, the TAOs were promoted at this time as an important organisation to democratise and control villages within their sub-district in terms of local administration. Likewise, the Provincial Administrative Organisations (PAOs) controlled the provincial planning and development as well. However, these organisations do not seem to have shifted power from the central government to the local areas (Nelson, 2001). Therefore, the planning and management and also policy decision-making by local communities have remained very limited, due to the fact that regional, provincial and local institutions are often simply told to follow central government policies (Arghiros, 2001).

5.2.3 Tourism planning and management in Thailand

Since 1960, when the Tourism Organisation of Thailand (TOT) was established, the Thai economy has focused on tourism as one of the main export products of the country. The TOT added the roles of planning and developing tourism for the first time in 1976, when the First National Tourism plan came into existence, and before the name was changed to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in 1979 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1996). The plan aimed to maintain an appropriate growth rate for tourism; to utilise special attractions for development of the industry; to devise marketing projects; to provide means of transportation and promote cultural exchange between visitors and local people; to generate economic development; and to endeavour to achieve the objectives aforementioned while maintaining a socio-cultural and historical identity (Laverack and Thangphet, 2007). While the country has focused on tourism for economic reasons, tourism development has been dominated by bureaucrats and small groups of private sector companies, and the adverse impacts of tourism on the environment and local communities have received insufficient attention. Thus the development of plans and management has tended to benefit the investors that are national and multinational corporations (Santasombat, 2001).

Once the TOT was reorganized as the TAT in 1979, tourism promotion and marketing policy was the priority strategy, especially for overseas visitors. This strategy has enabled the tourism industry to be the main source of foreign currency for Thailand since 1982 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1997). Tourism has also been incorporated into many local development programmes. Later, social pressure from environmentalists and criticism and protests against tourism development impacts, including protests in many development areas both in Thailand and around the world, occurred in 1990s. It pushed the government, particularly TAT, to be more concerned with sustainable tourism development and to focus on quality marketing programmes. This was not only for resolving the negative impacts of tourism, but also in response to changes in the world market, which were influenced by Agenda 21[1]. Sustainable development became a main consideration in the country's development, that was taken into account in all plans and projects by all agencies concerned, although in practice the results have perhaps been modest.

In response to the adverse environmental, social, and cultural impacts of conventional tourism, alternative forms of tourism were adopted and promoted by a small group of Thailand's operators and activists. Ecotourism gained popularity among all stakeholders beginning in the early 1990s (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2001) and TAT began to promote and initiate a national ecotourism policy in the mid-1990s. The policy set forth actions to be undertaken for the different components involved, such as tourism areas, personnel and tourist services. A temporary ecotourism strategy was proclaimed from 1995-1996. The National Ecotourism Policy was prepared from 1995-1998 and was approved and announced by the Cabinet in 1998. However, many high level TAT and government officials continue to pay more attention to conventional forms of tourism, especially in terms of marketing, and the fundamental nature of tourism promotion and development has not changed. This may be due to the fact that ecotourism development requires greater effort and a long-term development process. Another reason is that ecotourism is a largely 'niche' or small market product, while government policies aim to push large-scale economic growth and recovery from the economic crisis that occurred in the late 1990s. Nevertheless, for all policies in the social domain, sustainable development is of concern to almost all sectors.

The current policy for tourism in Thailand is that the government uses tourism to tackle the country's economic problems, creating jobs for people as well as increasing income for the country. Tourism has been strongly emphasized at all levels, particularly after the Asian economic crisis in 1997, because tourism can earn foreign currency more quickly than other sectors. Almost one percent of the fiscal budget of 2003 (8,583.9 million baht or 122.7 million British pounds) was allocated for tourism promotion (Bureau of the Budget 2002: 8). The government also requested the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) to prepare a Tourism Employment Creation Plan for implementation under the Social Investment Project (SIP), particularly in villages in rural areas. This was to highlight public-private sector cooperation.

One significant example of a project used by government policy is 'Nueng Tambon Nueng Phalittaphan' or One Tambon, One Product or 'OTOP'. It was designed to strengthen the local economy by utilizing local wisdom to produce local products and increase the country's income. It includes a proposal for establishing 'Community Based Tourism', opening 500 areas in National Parks for tourism, and the promotion of

agrotourism and nature-cultural based tourism. However, many controversial development projects in terms of development concepts, scale, location and benefits have been pushed by this policy (Krungthep Durakij, 2001).

5.2.3.1 Ecotourism development in Thailand

Ecotourism in Thailand was first introduced into the Third Five-Year National Tourism Development Plan (1987-1991), but it was broadly known as 'Conservation Tourism' (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2001). Thus, it was not surprising that many people, particularly in rural areas, understood 'Conservation tourism' better than 'Ecotourism'. The plan was not much different from plans for other forms of tourism which have the main purpose of economic gain. However, the idea of the plan reflected some activities offered to special interest groups, such as trekking, bird watching, and sea diving. These groups were first considered as concerned with environment conservation and ecotourism programmes (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2001).

The change in ecotourism in Thailand occurred after the Tourism Authority of Thailand produced an ecotourism policy in 1995-1996 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2001). The policy was about the guidelines and details of ecotourism for the country's development. It was considered important that both government and private sectors followed the guidelines. The key concepts of the ecotourism policy emphasized environmental conservation and tourism activities related to resource use that also considered resource conservation. Moreover, the concepts focused on the local community, in terms of their share of benefits and their participation in decision-making in ecotourism planning and management. The defining elements of ecotourism in the policy were discussed in terms of tourism areas, tourism activities, management systems, and participation of local communities (see Figure 5.2). These elements of the TAT's policy are:

1. Tourism areas (Physical component). Ecotourism takes place in natural tourism destinations which have intrinsic characteristics, including cultural and historical resources that are closely connected to the ecosystems of the destinations. This component is known as 'nature-based tourism'.

2. Tourism activities and processes (Activity component). Ecotourism provides an opportunity for learning about the environmental conditions and ecosystem functions of the tourism resource area, which results in increased knowledge, experience, and appreciation, as well as a deeper awareness on the part of visitors and stakeholders of the importance of promoting conservation values. This can be referred as 'environmental education-based tourism'.

3. Management Systems (Management component). Ecotourism involves responsible travel that has no or low impact upon the environment and society. The management systems are comprehensive and address issues of resource conservation, environmental management, pollution control and disposal, and the control of tourism development.

4. Participation of local communities (Organisation component). Ecotourism emphasizes the environment of local communities, including income generation; the enhancement of local residents' quality of life; and economic returns that can be used for maintaining and managing the tourism resources. Moreover, the local communities should participate in appropriate ways in the ecotourism planning and management process.

Though the idea of the TAT's policy promotes working together with groups associated with ecotourism, such as the private sector, the national and local government, the host community, and the visitors, the resulting practical actions seem to have been weak. For example, the local people were not yet ready to be involved in ecotourism management because they had only limited knowledge of ecotourism (Laverack, and Thangphet, 2007). Therefore, the response to the ecotourism policy is likely to be weak and meaningless as outlined. It has become a major element in tourism marketing strategy amongst tourism business entrepreneurs (after it was promoted to them), but there has been little focus in practice on resource and environmental conservation (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1999).

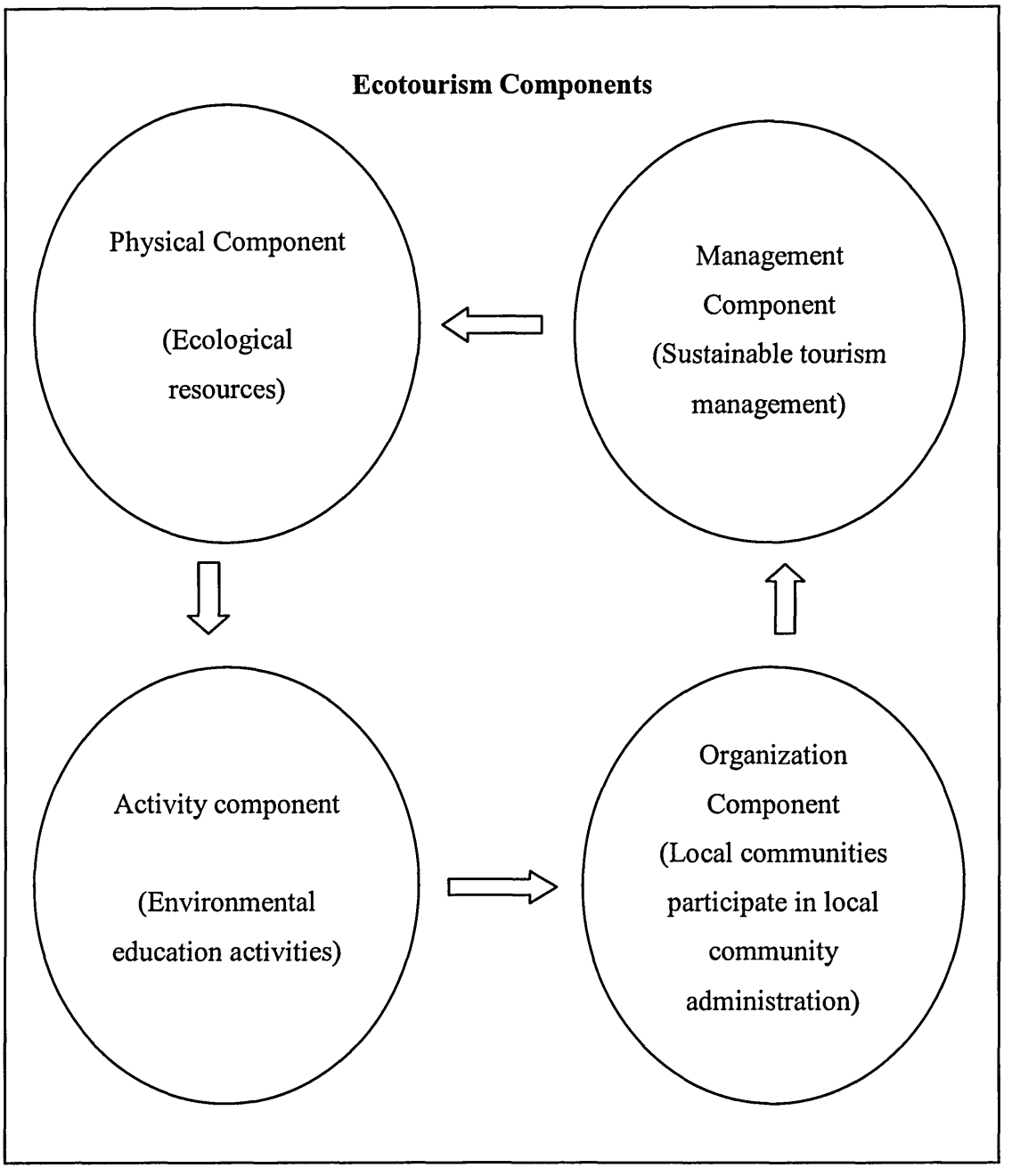

Figure 5.2: The Key Concepts of Ecotourism in Thailand Based on the TAT's Policy

Source: http//: http://conservation.forest.ku.ac.th 25/01/2009

5.3 Chiang Rai Province and tourism planning

Chiang Rai province is located about 785 kilometres north of Bangkok and it is the northernmost part of Thailand. It borders Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PRD). This area is known as *'the Golden Triangle'* because in the past drug trafficking and cannabis production was prevalent here. The Golden Triangle area is currently becoming a major tourist centre of Chiang Rai. The city of Chiang Rai is gradually becoming a gateway to China, Myanmar, Laos PDR, Vietnam, and Cambodia. This wider region is collectively called the Greater Mae Khong Sub-region (GMS). Chiang Rai province is shown in Figure 5.3 in relation to its neighbouring countries and provinces, and it also shows the three case study villages (as discussed subsequently).

The city of Chiang Rai is about 740 years old. If one were to include the ancient city of Chiangsaen, it would have a combined history totalling over 2000 years. At present, the province is divided into 16 districts, 2 sub-districts, 124 sub-districts (Tambons), 1,634 villages, 24 municipalities, 1 provincial administrative affairs office, 120 Tambon administrative affairs offices, 1 Tambon council, 33 provincial Government Administrative Centres, and 47 units of state government and local government (Chiang Rai Province Office, 2006).

Chiang Rai has set up strategies and objectives for development in two ways. The first strategy is to become a Gateway or a center of communication, trading and education amongst China, Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos PDR. For trade and commerce many roads will be built in cooperation with these neighboring countries. The Mae Kong River also offers an easy shipping route for trade between Thailand and China, and the province has an international airport to facilitate traffic from overseas. The province focuses on economic projects in the border regions, such as Mae Sai, and far away places such as Kunming. Sea-going vessels can navigate the waters along the ports that are under construction at Chiang Saen and Chiang Kong districts. A four-lane freeway and expanded main roads from Bangkok to Chiang Rai and to Luangnamtha (Laos PDR) are under development, and a plan for the construction of a railroad from Denchai District to Chiang Rai is underway. The city of Chiang Rai

strongly supports and promotes border commercial trade through Mae Sai, Chiang Saen, and Chiang Kong Customs. A trade promotion and cooperation group, including Chiang Rai, Myanmar, Laos PDR and China, called the "Joint Economic Quadrangle Chambers Committee" (JEQC) has been established(Chiang Rai Province Office, 2006).

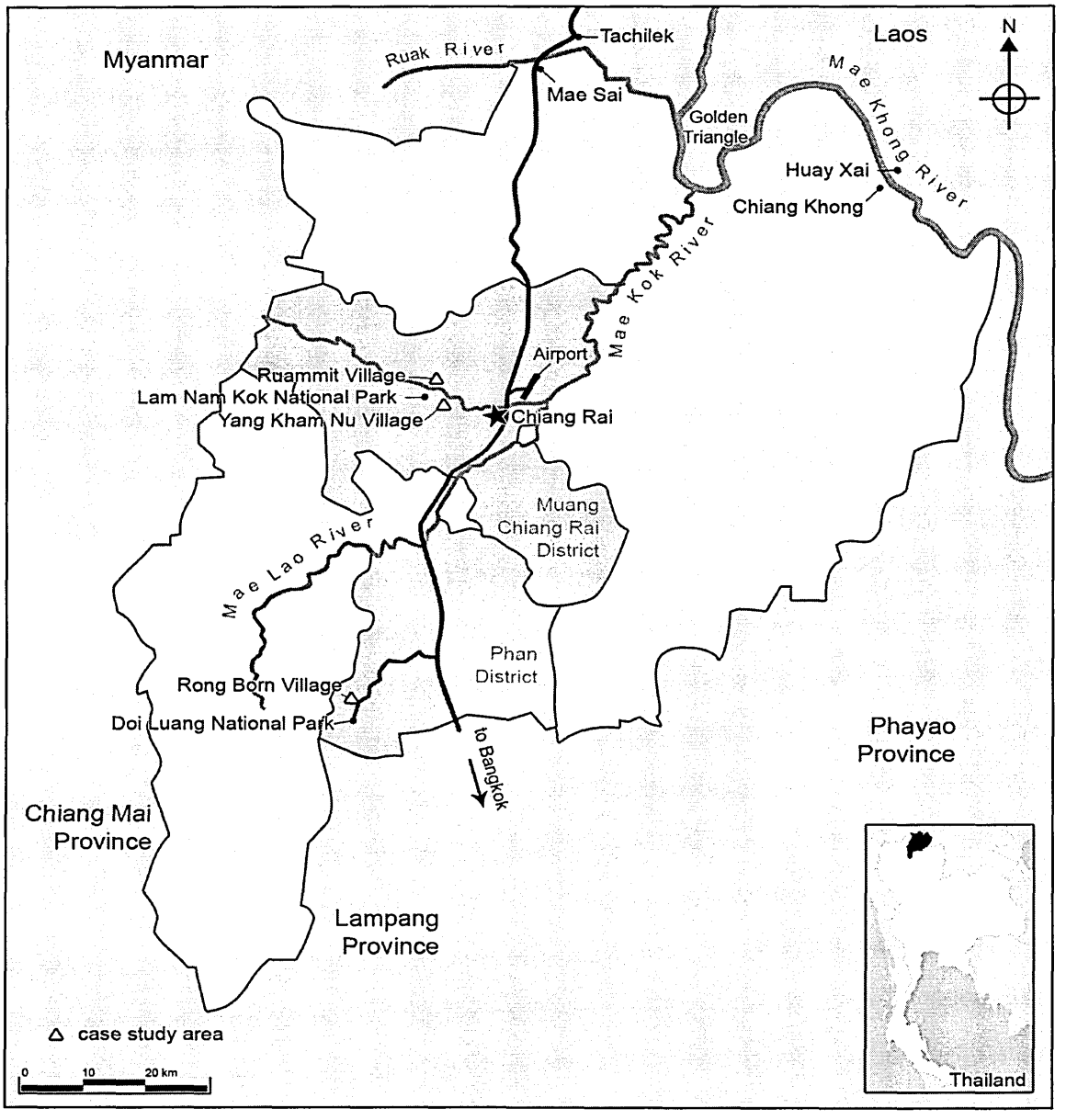

Figure 5.3: Chiang Rai Province, Thailand and the location of the three case study villages

The second strategic objective of Chiang Rai Province is to promote tourism along the northern part of the Mae Khong River Region. This means the province tries

to promote the attractive places within the province and join the promotion for this theme with neighbouring countries, such as Laos, Myanmar and Chiana. Many attractions will be developed to preserve the natural, cultural and historical ways of the indigenous people under this theme between these countries. Other tourist attractions include national parks, forest parks, an arboretum, and Mae Kok River rafting. There are many places to visit for rich cultural experiences, such as Phu Chee Fah, Doi Tung Palace and Doi Tung Temple. Travel between these neighboring countries makes this province an attractive place to rest and relax. A Tourist Guide Center and Souvenir Centers with local products are also available for memento-hunters (Chiang Rai Province Office, 2006).

5.4 Key characteristics of the case study areas

The case studies are located in Chiang Rai Province in northern Thailand, which was chosen because the province combines strong agricultural and ecotourism sectors, with both being important supports for rural socio-economic development. It is a good case study context because of the many local villages involved in ecotourism. The author also lives and works in the province and he has previously undertaken research and project work on ecotourism in the region. He was thus familiar with the issues in the region, the characteristics of the ecotourism industry in the area, and with key officials and experts knowledgeable about ecotourism there.

The three case studies are of rural areas in Chiang Rai: Rong Born village and Doiluang National Park; Yang Kham Nu village and Doihang Sub-District; and Ruammit village (Figure 5.3 shows the location of the three case study areas in the province). The intention was to have three contexts where the patterns and processes of ecotourism development and planning could be evaluated, and this would allow for greater confidence in the wider conclusions that are drawn from the research. If the overall approach, conceptual framework and interpretations appear to have some validity in all three contexts, then the researcher will have greater confidence in the validity of these elements of the study. The selection of the three villages in Chiang Rai was also intended to secure cases that were spread out geographically and that had certain differences in their social mixes, with the latter partly achieved by the clustering

of neighbouring villages in one of the samples. These differences in their cultural make-up or ways of life may well have affected the social relations and values related to ecotourism and sustainable development among local actors. The three case study areas also have notably differing management regimes: the first is indigenous northern Thai people who control their community forest, which is near the Doi Luang National Park; the second is characterized by a group of tribal people, the Karen, that influences and controls their community forest and diversified agriculture; and the third is characterized by both local groups of tribal people and external tourism companies and, in more recent times, by increasing local government involvement (as part of a recent, country-wide attempt to strengthen local Thai government). The different characteristics of the three villages are summerised in Table 5.1:

Chiang Rai Province marks the northernmost borders of Thailand, with natural walls of high mountains surrounding the province and separating it from Myanmar and Laos. The abundant and relatively unchanged mountains and forests are home to several ethnic minorities, such as Thai Yai, Karen, Yao, and others. The province has many ecotourism resources, with three national parks, nine forest parks, one arboretum, and thirty-one designated forest areas (http://www.Chiang Rai.go.th 23/10/2005). Both domestic and international tourists are attracted by the ecotourism resources and activities in the province, such as the many forests, nature trips and trekking trails. Most international tourists come from other Asian countries, notably from Japan and China. In 1999 there were 1,034,597 visitors to the province, and this had risen slightly to 1,052,591 in 2003 (http://www.tat.go.th 23/10/2005), with the growth held back somewhat by the SARS and bird flu cases in Asia. The national and provincial governments recognize the importance of ecotourism for the economy and there are many policies for growth in the sector and also for sustainable development. Each of the case study villages will be discussed next in relation to key characteristics relevant to the development and planning of ecotourism

Key characteristics	Rong Born village	Yang Kham Nu village	Ruammit village
Location	Muang Kham Sub-district, Phan, Chiang Rai	Doi Hang Sub-district, Muang Chiang Rai	Mae Yao Sub-district, Muang, Chiang Rai
National park nearby	Doi Luang National Park	Rim Nam Kok National Park	Rim Nam Kok National Park
Dominant population	Indigenous Northern Thai	Karen tribe	Tribal people (Karen, Akha, Hmong, Lizu, Mien)
Dominant languages	Northern Thai and Thai	Karen, Northern Thai and Thai	Own tribal languages, Dialects and Thai
Dominant religions	Buddhism	Buddhism	Christianity and Buddhism
Major economic activities	Agriculture (rice and fruit cultivation)	Agriculture (rice and diversified farming)	Agriculture (rice and fruit cultivation) and tourism activities
Production of handicrafts	Wickerwork (seldom produced)	Karen textiles (moderate production)	Tribal textiles (high level production; tourist based)
Distance from Chiang Rai city centre	65 km	16 km	19 km

Key characteristics	Rong Born village	Yang Kham Nu village	Ruammit village
Dominant tourism resources	Community forest, temple on top of a hill in the village, Chinese style temple, waterfall at the national park near the village	Community forest, diversified agriculture, Karen ways of life	Trekking trails, elephant riding and trails, tribal cultures and their ways of life, river trips
Dominant tourism activities	Community forest study, nature trail	Community forest study, nature trail, tribal ways of life, diversified agriculture study, homestay	Trekking, elephant riding, boat trips, tribal ways of life, shopping in local shops
Frequency of tourist activity	Visitors in groups; 1-3 times a month	Visitors in groups; once a month	Visitors in groups and individually; daily, year round visits
Tourist group size and numbers	10-40 in a group (Estimated annual total: 400-700 people)	10-30 in a group (Estimated annual total: 300-500 people)	At least 1,822 to 40,120 visitors per month in 2007 (Estimated annual total: (127,636)
Characteristic types of visitors	Thai	Both Thai and Japanese	Foreigners
Importance of tourism as an economic activity	Not very substantial	Not very substantial	Main economic activity
Village leader	Indigenous Northern Thai, female	Karen, male	Karen, male

Key characteristics	Rong Born village	Yang Kham Nu village	Ruammit village
Tenure of village leader	14 years (1994 to present (2008))	3 years (2005 to present (2008))	4 years (2003-2007)
Village meeting frequency	Seldom	Once a month	Once a month
Village meeting place	Temple in the village	Temple in the village	Church in the village

Table 5.1: Key characteristics of the three case study areas

5.4.1 Rong Born Village and Doi Luang National Park

Rong Born village is in Phan District, Chiang Rai province. The village is famous for its local community forest, which is run by members of the village who are all indigenous Northern Thai people. It can be said that it is a homogenous group of local people living together in the same village. Most of them are farmers, with rice as the main crop. In addition to rice, they grow some fruit, such as pineapples, lychees, and longans. Thus, it is not surprising that they stick to their rice farms, where normally they can grow rice twice a year. The normal time is in the rainy season, which runs from June to November and the out-of-rainy season is from January to May yearly.

The village has a local community forest which was destroyed before conservation began in 1992, when the village separated from a big village nearby. The village leader, who has been the elected leader from 1992 until the present, asked the villagers to stop destroying the forest. They were allowed by the sub-district to look after their own community forest under supervision of the Doi Luang National Park in cooperation with some education institutions in the city (i.e. Chiang Rai Rajabhat University). After the forest was restored, it came alive with four different ecological systems, namely swamp, mixed deciduous forest, and dry evergreen forest (Doi Luang

National Park, 2005). The community forest has become a home for biodiversity, including plants, trees, and animals.

Local people derive benefits from the forest for their lives, such as forest products. However, they set their own rules to apply to all members before using the community forest. The rules have been agreed upon by all villagers to protect and to conserve the forest for the village. The forest is not just for the local community; it is also for other people, both from the same province and from all parts of Thailand, who come for a visit. The main purposes of the visits are to learn about resource conservation and to be educated about the environment and ecosystems. Thus, the village provides a nature trail for all visitors which is a half day trail that is 2.7 km long (Chaisook et al., 2004).

5.4.1.1 Doi Luang National Park

Doi Luang National Park is a natural area of major importance in Chiang Rai, which means it attracts many tourists. It is situated only 1 km away from Rong Born village, spans an area of 1170 square kilometres, and it extends through three provinces: Chiang Rai (Mae Saroil, Phan, and Wiang Pa Pao districts); Lampang (Wang Nua district); and Payao (Mae Jai and Muang districts). However, the park area within each of the three provinces is under the control of the same organization, the Royal Forestry Department, and the park headquarters is situated in Phan district in Chiang Rai province. It includes Jam Pa Tong Waterfall Park, Pha Kred Nark Waterfall Park, Pu Kaeng Waterfall Park, and Wang Klang Waterfall Park. These waterfall parks were unified and re-designated as parts of Doi Luang National Park in 1990.

The sources of the two main rivers in the North, the Wang and Mae Lao Rivers, are in the national park. Its natural splendours include beautiful cascades, such as Pu Kaeng Waterfall, which is the largest in Chiang Rai, and caves which are scattered throughout the park, such as Nang Paya Pang Ding Cave. The park contains tropical evergreen and mixed deciduous trees (Doi Luang National Park, 2005). Much of the park is still covered in dense, mixed forests and it is home to over eighty-nine confirmed species of birds as well as twelve different types of mammal, including deer, barking deer, tigers, bears, wild pigs, civet cats, and monkeys. There is a remarkable

biodiversity in the area and the landscape is mountainous; together these features make it attractive for ecotourists. They are drawn, in particular, by the beautiful natural waterfalls, outstanding caves and fascinating nature trails. The national park also has a campground where visitors have to bring their own tents and equipment, a small shop, a visitor centre, and restrooms. Almost all of the visitors are domestic and, in particular, are local people from the province (http://www.thaiparks.com 19/04/2006).

The main organization in the area is the Thai National Park Division of the Thai Royal Forestry Department. The headquarters of the park is in Phan district, Chiang Rai. The Thai National Park Division leads policies for both resource management and tourism in the national park, and it provides for educational services and leisure and tourism activities in the park. In this park, the Pu Kaeng Waterfall is the main ecotourism centre. Most local tourism-related facilities are operated by the national park, such as the tourist accommodation and car parks. But some local people are now involved in the industry and are gaining some benefits from it, such as by providing food and souvenirs for visitors at the waterfall. The local population live in a few villages located around the edge of the national park. Most of these people are an indigenous population from the surrounding Northern Thailand regions.

5.4.1.2 Tourism development in Rong Born and the Doi Luang National Park

After Rong Born's success in their community forest conservation, more tourists visited the project (Chaisook et al., 2004; Doi Luang National Park, 2005). All local people were involved in the forest conservation and they were good hosts when people visited their community forest. At the outset, when tourists visited the village, the local people seemed happy to join all activities provided for visitors, even though they had no payment from either visitors or from their committee leader. However, ill-advised plans for ecotourism and local participation had been made by the committee, such as asking just a few housewives to prepare food and drink for visitors.

An education institution, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, and the Forest Department had set up a nature trail for tourists. The project appears well planned, as the community could manage the times and service providers at the nature trail, such as setting up translators for tourists at the fifteen education points within the trail. The

translators were needed for visitors because some of the local people, elderly people in particular, could not speak the Thai language or the Thai central language which is the official language for Thailand. Thus, the community had planned to bring in local teenagers to be translators. This was a good idea as they could provide education about the environment and conservation to visitors, and they too could learn about these issues.

However, there had been a decrease in the amount of tourism in the village since the economic crisis throughout the country and around the world, as well as the political problems within the country (2003-2006). The number of visitors decreased and the village, in fact, did not charge local visitors a fee after the economic crisis. The kind of visits made were about education, and the village only received donations from visitors. Therefore, it might have been difficult for the committee to give payment to the members who worked at that time. Nevertheless, it was not clear where the money went for the village. Until 2005, the community was divided in terms of sharing benefits, because many of the local people felt unhappy with the financial management of the village by the village leader. However, in terms of administration by the leader, the villagers still accepted that she worked for the village and they believed that she could lead the community towards better tourism planning and development.

Even though the village was situated nearby Doi Luang National Park, the village had not benefited from tourism in the park. It might be that the national park is a government site and it is hard to share benefits amongst all the villages around the park, considering there are at least five villages. Moreover, almost all of the visitors were from local areas in the same province. But, a policy for all national parks is to encourage local communities to participate in forest conservation (http://www.thaiparks.com 19/04/2006). The future vision of the park's leader was to invite Rong Born to be a host for conservation education. Also, in the future, the Park planned to promote the accommodation provided by the village as this was mentioned by the Park's leader in 2006.

5.4.2 Doi Hang Sub-district (Yang Kham Nu Village)

Doi Hang Sub-district is in the west of Chiang Rai province. It covers an area of 91 square kilometres. About 80 percent of the area is mountainous and it is around 500-1,200 meters above sea level. Some of the area comprises valleys and riverbanks along the Mae kok River.

The sub-district has numerous natural and human resources that are of interest to tourists. Among the natural resources, there is the Phaseot Hot Spring in Phaseot Pattana village (Moo Ban or Moo 6). Originally, the hot spring was found near the Maekok River, but it was flooded many times by the river in the rainy season. In 2002, the sub-district re-developed the hot spring infrastructure and re-developed the scenery surrounding it because, in the past, the hot spring was used for boiling the villagers' bamboo shoot products. The hot spring now provides a large open-air spa room and a few indoor rooms, and there is also traditional Thai-style massage in the spa. At the hot spring site, tourists can enjoy campfires, with tents provided for tourists to stay overnight in a campground. Moreover, the sub-district administrative officer runs trips to visit the surrounding area, such as elephant rides to view wild sunflower fields, an Akha village or the Huiykaew Waterfall. Another hot spring at Huiymakliam is located in the Lamnamkok National Park forest, just 1 kilometre from Phaseot village. The hot spring is close to the Maekok River and looks like a natural spa in the countryside, but with tourist accommodation available for both international and domestic tourist groups. There is also Huiykaew Waterfall near Pongnamron village, with a large and beautiful tea farm located nearby and a giant tree (the Sompong or Ngoon tree) in Huiypu Pattana village (Moo 8) (Uonwichit et al., 2003).

Tourists are also attracted here because of the tribal villages, with four villages attracting the most visitors. The first of these is home to the Akha tribe and is called Ar-pae. It is located near the Huiykaew Waterfall and it provides guesthouses and souvenir shops, with most products being handmade by locals. Traditional massage is also offered in the village. The second tribal village of Ja-Eu is home to the Lahu and Muzer groups. They built the village on a hill near Huiytard Waterfall, with the village in a highland setting which offers clear views of Chiang Rai city centre. The tourists can see the tribe's traditional ways of life, and homestays are available. The third

village of Ja-Jor is also home to the Lahu and Muzer tribes. They live on a mountain top near the Huiymakliam Hot Spring and on the way to Huiykaew Waterfall, and thus it is a good place to take a break on the way to the waterfall. Traditional tribal culture and life styles are found in this village, and accommodation is available for visitors. Finally, Phaseot Nai village is home to the Akha tribe. It is located in a valley in the mountains, and it is about 1 kilometre from Phaseot Pattana (Moo 6). This village is famous for its beautiful scenery, and accommodation, notably tents and homestay, is provided for visitors. Moreover, the village sometimes presents a show of traditional Akha dances and songs to entertain tourists (Uonwichit et al., 2003).

The sub-district has well-constructed roads, except for a few that are still rough and dusty leading, in particular, to the tribal villages. The sub-district (TAO) is only about 10 kilometres from Chiang Rai. While some tourists come by road, others visit by boat through attractive scenery from the city centre to a village. This trip takes about 30-45 minutes. Other infrastructure and superstructure are provided throughout the sub-district, such as telephone lines, water supply, and electricity. The tours for tourists to the eight villages in the sub-district are operated by local villagers but, recently, have been under the coordination and leadership of the sub-district administrative authority in cooperation with travel agencies and the Tourism Authority of Thailand in Chiang Rai province. Many of the tourists in the area are from Japan and the United Kingdom (http://www.doihang.com 25/10/2005).

Doi Hang is home to 3,900 people in 989 households, with an average population density of around 44 people per square kilometre (http://www.doihang.com 25/10/2005). The population in the villages in the area is comprised of local indigenous people and some hill-tribe groups, such as Karen, Akha, Leezu, and Lahu, but these vary between the eight villages. Four villages are occupied by hill-tribe people and the others are home to indigenous Northern Thai people. There are indigenous people living in villages that are called Moo 1, 2, 3 and 4, and there are people from the Karen tribe in Moo 5 village. The residents of Moo 6 and 7 villages are a mixture of three different broad groups: indigenous people, people of Chinese descent (a migratory group in the past), and Akha and Lahu hill-tribes. The last village – Moo 8 – comprises two tribes: the Karen and Lahu. The hill-tribes are quite different from the indigenous population and also from each other in terms of culture and ways of life. They live

fairly separately in their own groups in their village. The tourists tend to spend part of their trekking tours taking photos of the tribal people and they often also stay overnight in a house as part of homestay tourism. This is provided by villagers, although one accommodation unit in a resort style is provided by the private sector. Some tourists show notable interest in the ways of life, including the values and beliefs of locals, and how they relate to farming and to nature conservation. These elements make for a trip that is attractive to many tourists.

Most of the population in the sub-district are farmers, although some combine this with other activities. Some work in tourism-related services, make handicrafts or hunt wildlife for a temporary time after the harvest. The average annual income per capita is around 17,880 baht (around 255.40 British pounds) (Uonwichit et al., 2003). In the sub-district there are five restaurants, six garages, seven rice mills and one resort hotel. These small businesses are mainly used by villagers, except for the resort which is for tourist use. The sub-district also provides education for students in both formal and informal educational institutes. (personal survey, 2006)

5.4.2.1 Tourism development in Yang Kham Nu village, Doi Hang sub-district

Yang Kham Nu village was set up informally in 1927 and then established formally by the government in 1985. It was known as Mae Tang Khea village in the past. Later on, the village name was changed to Yang Kham Nu, from the name of the first Karen man who discovered the village. Moreover, he was highly regarded and respected by the Karen people because he worked for the village and did many good things for it. He was 104 years old when he passed away.

The village is 16 kilometres from the city centre, which is around a 30-minute drive. It is situated nearby the Mae Kok River, the main river of the province. The land is mountainous and the total area is around 3,5000 rai[3] which includes 59 rai for housing; 2,239 rai for the community forest; 115 rai for the local community conservation forest; and 1,171 rai for agriculture sites (Ounwichit et al., 2003).

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[3]Rai is a measurement unit system in Thai-land (1 rai = 1,600 square metre)

The population in the village is 238 people as of year 2006 (121 males and 117 females). They live within 62 households and there are two leaders in the village. The first leader is an administrative leader like other village leaders in the country. The other is a religious leader, who is the leader for their events and beliefs, as it is part of their way of life. Within the village, there is one nursery for children, but there is no school. However, there are schools in other villages nearby Yang Kham Nu. Due to the fact that the community is made up of tribal people, a small percentage can read and/or write the Thai language, except for the new generation. Their agricultural society consists of close friends and relatives, as they come from the same ethnic group.

Ecotourism was launched in Yang Kham Nu village in the beginning of the 1990s. The sub-district and the village are on the other side of the Mae Kok River from Ruammit village. There was a trekking trail from Ruammit village up the mountains around Yang Kham Nu as well (Ounwichit et al., 2003). Then, in the late 1990s, the sub-district was known as a place for nature with hot spring treatments. This brought more visitors to the sub-district. After that, increased infrastructure was prepared for tourism, such as accommodation and spa facilities. The Doi Hang TAO planned and developed tourism, focusing a lot on facilities and infrastructure for tourists, for example, developing road access to the sites and providing accommodation for visitors (Doi Hang TAO, 2005; Doi Hang TAO, 2007). The development, in fact, was run by the TAO rather than by the community, such as the hot spring treatment spa. The TAO received income from visitors and paid some local people who became the staff at service places. Another example is that the TAO promoted homestay to a village near the hot spring. However, rather than asking for all villagers to manage the project, the TAO asked only some people who had more money to support their own development with the rest of the funding supported by the government. Therefore, it might be hard for the TAO to work on ecotourism planning for the community development.

In contrast, Yang Kham Nu village shared their ideas on ecotourism planning and management, which were supported by the ideas from an NGO (Mae Kok Farm Foundation). The NGO taught the village to manage their ecotourism on their own. Moreover, the NGO brought visitors, normally Japanese, to visit the village and to stay with the villagers as a homestay project. It appears to have worked in terms of local

people managing their own ecotourism. Unfortunately, they were not supported by the government in ecotourism planning and management for their community, except by the NGO. However, the local people seem to understand that their main living comes from farming and agriculture. Thus, whether tourism was promoted in their community or not, they would work in farming jobs alongside the tourism.

5.4.3 Ruammit Village

Ruammit village, or Karen Ruemmit Village, is well-known in Chiang Rai for its trekking tours and elephant rides. The tours have been operated in the village as far back as 1975. The word Karen actually refers to a group of hill-tribe people in the north of Thailand, and thus the village itself is full of varied hill-tribe people, notably Karen, Akha, and Hmong. The word 'Ruammit' refers to varied people living together within the same geographical area. This means that all the tribes live in the same village and collectively share the area's resources (Noosaeng, 1997; Chamnarnkij, 2006).

Most visitors arrive by long-tail boat along the region's main river, the Mae Kok River, which takes about 45 minutes from the centre of the town of Chiang Rai. There are also two other routes to the village along the river. One is by long-tail boat from Thaton, Chiangmai, a distance of about 4 to 5 hours. The other route is also provided with a bamboo raft, which takes about two days with the tourists having to camp overnight on the way to the village or stay in Chiang Rai city. However, the bamboo trip is now less common because the price is quite expensive and visitors take buses or cars rather than river trips from Chiang Mai to the village as the roads are constructed. Some tourists also arrive by road, which is 19 kilometres from the Chiang Rai city centre (personal survey, 2006).

The village offers tourists boats trips, bamboo rafting, elephant rides, nature trails, hill-tribe trekking trails, souvenir shops and guesthouses. Two common activities in the village are elephant riding along the river, which offers attractive rural views, and staying with local hill-tribe people and learning about their cultures. At the moment, the village has thirty-one elephants, some of which belong to the locals and some to an outside businessman. While elephants are owned by locals, the service trips are

organized by external, private sector tour operators. The elephant riding normally provides both half-day and full-day tours around the village, and also trips to the forest and waterfalls. At present, the trekking activities that include this village extend out to other hill-tribe villages, though these are not included in the survey work. In general, however, the treks all start from Ruammit Karen village near the Mae Kok River, and the type of trip depends on the time available to the tourists and their requirements. Homestays and food and souvenir shops can easily be found in the village. The village has many different hill-tribes, and their different clothing and traditional ways of life attract many tourists to the village. In particular, the Ruammit have many distinct tribes, although they also share certain values together, and many visitors want to learn about the diverse ways of life of the locals. There are many types of souvenirs in the village. Most are handmade, such as Karen textiles and various hill-tribe crafts and decorations, and they reflect the local traditional types of production (Figure 5.4 shows a Karen producing a textile item, and Figure 5.5 shows some souvenir shops within Ruammit village)

Figure 5.4: A Karen producing a textile item

Figure 5.5: Souvenir shops within Ruammit village

Tourism started in the village in 1975, beginning with elephant riding around the village. Subsequently, tourism was developed in the village by both the private sector and the government. Tourism activity in the local economy has been largely controlled by external travel agencies, who bring tourists into the village and, consequently, take a significant portion of the economic returns. However, there is a wide range of tourist services provided by villagers, who often work in cooperation with travel agencies and also the Tourism Authority of Thailand (Chiang Rai office). The ecotourism activities, notably trekking trips, have been organized in the past largely by travel agencies in Chiang Rai, but the government has been attempting to give the lead responsibility for this to the local Tambon Administration Organization (TAO), a fairly new tier of decentralized local government in Thailand. The village is in a mountainous environment, many tourists come to the village on trips provided by the village and travel agencies in the province. Tourism is the main reason the village can develop its infrastructure and superstructure. Most tourists who visit the village are international tourists, especially from European and Asian countries, plus some from America.

Ruammit or Karen Ruammit village is situated at Moo 2, Mae Yao Sub-district, Muang district, Chiang Rai province. The village is surrounded by many villages: in the east by Huaysaikhao village, Moo 3; in the west by Khaewangdam village, Moo 12; in the north by Huaymaesai village, Moo 11; and in the south by the Maekok village or Kok River. Ruammit village was established before the Second World War II by the

Karen, a tribal group, with 6 households that all came from elsewhere in both Chiang Rai and other provinces, such as Chiang Mai province. During World War II, the people were evacuated to another village for their safety. After the war, the population returned to the village again. The name of the village as Karen Ruammit or Ruammit village dates to 1956 because many tribes came to live in the village, which is what the name means.

There are 150 households and 745 people in the village (Chiang Rai Community Development Office, 2000). It is a village where tribes from the northern part of Thailand all live together. The tribes are Karen (Yang), Akha (E-koh), Lahu (Muzer), Mein (Yao), and Hmong (Maew). About 85 percent of the population are Karen, while around 15 percent comprise other tribal groups. In the village, the largest religion is Christianity (Protestant), followed by Buddhism, and Animism. Most of the villagers are farmers growing rice, sugar cane, tobacco, and some kinds of fruit, but some are more largely occupied as entrepreneurs, such as selling souvenirs to tourists in the village. The village has a leader who was elected by the people, voting being done since 1991, and this helps to integrate the different tribes.

The local administration for the area since 1997 has been through the Mae Yao Sub-district or Tambon. This covers 15 villages in the area, with many of these being tribal villages. The main officials in the Mae Yao Sub-district are: Mr Pracharn Sakorn (President of the Sub-district Administration); Mr Pongpan Thata (committee member); and Mr Somsak Khamphaengkham (committee member). The village leader is Mr Patuhae Khatu, and Mr Singhakham Sirilak, from the village, is chairman of the village leaders.

5.4.3.1 Tourism development in Ruammit village

Tourism development in Ruammit village began in 1975, after Mr Pipat Chiasurint (a teacher in the village) offered an elephant service to two tourists who visited the village and uplands. This service gave the idea of tourism to Mr Chiasurint and he invited elephant owners to provide trekking activities for visitors. They began by taking four elephants to provide rides for the tourists, especially trekking trips to other

upland villages. They then invited more elephant owners to be part of elephant riding services between the villages and the trekking trails. Recently, they had thirty-one elephants under the cooperation of the elephant service association that is run by villagers and some people from outside the village (Personal interview, 2006). Tourism development has been encouraged by the village having a riverside view because it is situated nearby Mae Kok River, a main river of Chiang Rai, and travellers can visit the village by boat trip (Noosaeng, 1997; Chamnarnkij, 2006).

As mentioned previously, the village had been well-known to tourists, both domestic and overseas, for quite awhile. The village had commenced modernisation, as they accepted that it could change their local ways of life, such as their accommodation and traditional dress. However, the main purpose of the visitors, trekkers in particular, is to see unique and traditional things used by local people, like the traditional houses, clothing, and the local ways of life within the Ruammit village (Noosaeng, 1997; Chamnarnkij, 2006).

The situation was changed by tourism, but this was inadequately planned by both local people and organisations concerned with tourism within the village (Chamnarnkij, 2006). Furthermore, there are more trekking places around the city which might provide alternative choices for tourists to see and visit. The villagers and local government (Mae Yao TAO) realised the situation and thought about this. They had prepared both a one-year plan and a five-year plan to develop and improve ecotourism management in the village and rural areas around the village. All of the plans were about infrastructure and tourism facility improvement. It is useful to improve the facilities, but they neglected to address sustainability in ecotourism management. In addition, they did not have local participation which is really important in creating an alternative ecotourism plan and management by local people for sustainability. Rather than having discussions with local people, they just discussed between leaders of teams from both the village and the local government. Thus, the outcome of the plan was not really representative of all local people's ideas and it could have weaknesses in terms of ecotourism and sustainable development.

5.5 Conclusion

The chapter presented relevant aspects of the context of Thailand and the case study areas. The first section explained the changes and developments in Thai society and Thailand's economy. It was found that the country had developed from being a poor country to be a top five growth country in terms of economic growth. However, after the Asian economic crisis in the mid-1990s, the country began failing economically again. But the country appears to have sorted out many problems, such as restoring the market and returning the country to growth. Tourism promotion was one of the key things to help the country return on the right track.

It was also shown that Thai society was influenced by the power of highly hierarchical groups, and that people tend to be very respectful of people with high social status (e.g. economic wealth and power and the cult of leadership personality). This was prosibly influenced by the administration of Thailand since the Sukhothai period. Thus, Thai people have found it difficult to reject the idea that there is concentrated power in society, especially in local policy and planning. In the context of political governance and public participation, Thailand remains much influenced by absolute power or by dominance by a few groups, even during its current expanding democratic development. Thai society has adhered to the tradition of hierarchical and bureaucratic administration for centuries. The politeness and kindness of Buddhist teaching has also been an influential factor in people's passiveness and this may also have promoted patron-client relationships. These influences may help to explain why planning and management does not always develop at the same pace as Thailand's growing representative and participatory democracy.

Third part of the chapter examined how tourism in the country has been promoted for economic reasons as it was a main source of income for the country. Though tourism has brought economic benefits to the country, apparently it has also had negative impacts, such as adverse environmental impacts. The country has begun to realise the value of conservation tourism and has set the National Ecotourism Policy as a guideline for ecotourism planning and management. However, in practice, businessmen have used the word 'ecotourism' as a key marketing tool for tourism

businesses rather than focusing on an action plan and providing controls on ecotourism activities.

The last section explained background features of the case study areas and it showed that the case study areas had different forms of communities and resources for ecotourism. One thing that they had in common, however, was the same problem of not having a particular plan on ecotourism. Instead, all of the communities had concentrated on the development of infrastructure for themselves and for the tourists as they thought this was most important for tourism development.

Chapter 6 Social Relations and Sustainability in Ecotourism Management

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the social relations among the various actors in the study area villages, as well as their beliefs about ecotourism planning, management and sustainability. It follows the first theme identified in the study's conceptual framework, as explained in Chapter 3. The discussion concentrates on social interactions and relations and it is divided into three sections. It relates to the left-hand side of the conceptual framework as shown in figure 3.2 in Chapter 3 and to the sub-themes identified in section 3.4.1 in that chapter. The basis of the theme and the sub-themes in the literature on political ecology, ecotourism planning and management, and sustainable development was also explained in Chapter 3.

The first section here concerns resource use, resource management and the deliberations undertaken within communities concerning resources. The resources refer to both resources that support local ways of life and also resources that support ecotourism in the area. The second section here considers power and governance. It examines matters relating to the balance of power for the communities, including issues around power and their leaders, and power in relation to external relations and actors. It also considers issues around control in the villages. The final section here examines the internal and external relations to see the connections between the villages and their relevant activities, incorporating internal and external involvement in ecotourism management and sustainability.

6.2 Resource use and resource management

The section examines the resources in the case study areas, which include both tourism resources and other resources that support local ways of life. It also investigates

resource use and development through tourism management and through the changes in the local communities (Holden, 2006; Bosselman, Peterso, McCarthy, 1999; Dan and Cohen, 1991). These are shown as two boxes in Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3.

Resources found in these three areas are both natural and cultural. For example, the Doi Luang National Park near Rong Born is well-known as a natural area with such features as forest and nature trail education and waterfalls, whereas the Doi Hang (Yang Kham Nu village) and Ruammit villages are well-known as cultural locales with particular hill-tribe groups. However, the tribes in these two areas are different from each other in terms of community living. In Doi Hang, there is only one tribal group which lives in the same village, whereas at Rummit village there are several tribes and they live together in the same location. The resources found in the three villages are listed in Table 6.1.

The first finding regarding the resource uses and development in the case study areas was that after the loss of a tourism resource, or the overuse of other resources that supported local ways of life, people in the area thought about the problem and tried to find ways to preserve those resources. This was the result of the bad experiences the communities had due to the environmental impacts from the loss and the overuse of resources. Villagers at Rong Born (2006) described the overuse and loss of resources and their ideas about the consideration of resource use: *'In the past [12 years ago] we lacked water for farming...because our forest was destroyed...and there were forest fires many times...It was terrible...we think about how we could save and restore our good environment...We consulted with our elders and there were academic people who came to help us.'* This process was evident in Rong Born village where, after the resources had been destroyed, they rethought conservation by starting a community forest conservation project under supervision of their elder people and some academic institutions. Likewise, farmers at Yang Kham Nu (2006) said, *'After the disaster in our forest, and there was some overuse of the forest by people from outside, we thought it was time to think about our good environment being restored...Luckily, there was an NGO to help us to fight for our community forest...we got it now.'* This issue shows that Yang Kham Nu village became forest conservers after there was a disaster in their forest. After that disaster, they started their community forest and followed advice from their elderly people and an NGO in the area. Further, Ruammit villagers, such as the

elephant trainers and farmers (2006), claimed that: *'The village has been well-known for trekking and tribal people visiting...but for the last few years [from 2001-2002] tourism was not good...because the forest was degraded and tribal cultures were changed...We are now thinking about forest conservation and we have our own community forest to be looked after as well.'* So, it can be said that Ruammit reconsidered their tourism resources, such as trekking trails and their ways of life, after the decrease in the numbers of tourists.

The second finding about resource use and resource development and management was that one effective approach to resource management in the villages was through the community forest, with villagers agreeing to set rules for the use of resources from the forest, such as mushrooms, bamboo shoots and herbs. The villages also negotiated with the Forest Department about the boundary between the community forest and the protected forest area. The rules have been set for the community forest by local people to protect their forest from over-use by both people from the village and by outsiders. All three villages have their own community forest areas, but they are different sizes. The villagers in the three villages (2006) confirmed that: *'We set rules for our villagers for using and getting benefits from the forest...the rules were from the members' agreement;'* and *'There will be penalties [such as fines] for those who break the rules for the community forest...The penalties and rules were set by all villagers.'* So, it can be said that these three villages have their own rules to manage the use of resources within their community forests. The rules are established by the village committee, with the agreement of the villagers. Signs about the community forests and their rules have been put up by the roads leading to the villages.

Table 6.1: Tourism-related resources in the three villages

	Rong Born Village	**Yang Kham Nu Village**	**Ruammit Village**
Natural resources	Community forest	- Community forest - Kok River	- Forests in protected areas, which are managed by the Forest Department - Kok River
Cultural resources	Northern Thai people, but not outstanding	Karen tribe and their own traditional culture	Different tribal people living in the same village & their ways of life
Ways of life	Agriculture (wet rice, fruit farming)	-Agriculture (diversified agriculture) -Chemical and pesticide free-agriculture	Agriculture (wet rice and highland rice and corn plantation)
Tourism attractions	- Community forest education - Nature trails in the forest - Nearby Doi Luang National Park	- Karen traditions and their ways of life - Community forest education -Diversified agriculture - Chemical-and pesticide-free agriculture - Trekking tuition - Homestay - Nearby a new National Park, Lam Nam Kok Park	- Diverse tribes -The tribes' traditional cultures and ways of life - Elephant riding - Trekking tuition - Boat trip - Homestay - Local products shopping (souvenirs) - Nearby a new National Park, Lam Nam Kok Park

6.2.1 Time and experience of resource management

This section focuses on the length of time and experiences of communities in their resource management, especially for tourism in the case study areas. It is important to know about the different commencement dates of tourism in the areas because it leads to understanding the development of the communities, in particular tourism development. This study found that all three villages had some time and experience in resource management, but the length of time and experience differed. Table 6.2 shows the time and experience in tourism and resource management involvement in the three villages.

Resource Management	Rong Born	Yang Kham Nu	Ruammit
Dominant time of tourism involvement	Since 2001	Since 1992	Since 1974
Dominant time of conservation involvement (Community forest)	Since 1995	Since 1994	Since 1999
Experience in conservation	Community forest conservation	Community forest conservation	Community forest conservation and fishery conservation

Table 6.2: Time and experience in tourism and resource management

The first village, Rong Born, had been proud of their local community forest and had conserved it for 12 years. It seemed that the village had a long experience in environmental involvement, especially in forest conservation. All villagers knew well that they had been concerned with their community forest for more than 10 years, hence an answer from the Rong Born leader (2006) who stated that: *'...We [villagers] spent about 10 years on forest conservation [grew new plants and recovered old trees and set rules and roles of forest protection for the community to use]... we then can see the change in positive ways... there are more wild products... a much greater source of water for farming and we get food from the forest, such as bamboo shoots and*

mushrooms.' These answers were evidence that the villagers agreed and accepted that they were relevant to the resource conservation experience since they had suffered from a bad environment, in particular forest fires and lack of water for their agriculture from 1995. The lack of water for farming made local people re-consider forest concerns because they were all involved in agriculture and their crops needed water for farming from the forest. The positive results from the conservation also supported and encouraged Rong Born's villagers to become conservers. However, the process needed academic staff and some relevant organisations to supervise the villagers to achieve the goal of protection. Therefore, the leader of Rong Born village had asked the Forest Department and some academic institutes to be consultants. This meant that the locals needed some staff, particularly academic staff, to be leaders and supervisors. The issue, as discussed by the Rong Born leader (2006) is reflected here: *'...the village committee would reach an agreement about forest protection and then inform all villagers...many government departments and many organisations came to the village to visit and they made suggestions...such as the Forest Department, Chiangrai Rajabhat University and Chiangmai University... They have done research and nature trails for us'.*

In the second village, Yang Kham Nu, where almost all members were from the Karen tribe, the villagers were involved in agricultural practices such as rice and fruit farming. They had fought for their local community forest and got the approval on 16 November 2001 (http://www.forest.go.th 09/11/2007). However, it is assumed that they had undertaken the conservation before the approval, perhaps around 4-5 years earlier, due to an answer from a youth in the village (2006), who stated that *'...around 1994 there was a natural disaster. It destroyed the forest there [community forest]. The present forest has been growing since then, after it recovered.'* The answers indicated that the village had started conservation through its own members. Additionally, from that time onward, it had been under the supervision of an NGO and the Hill Tribe Support Centre, which had already moved from the village to somewhere else in 2004. The villagers all looked favourably on the cooperation in the conservation processes. The example from their experiences were about using the locals' ideas to protect their forest, such as separating the forest into different sections for use, and setting rules for the usage of the community forest by the locals. The comments from an elderly person and a farmer at Yang Kham Nu village (2006) supported this: *'...we separate the forest for usage... one zone as a source of water... one zone to use... and one zone for ancestor*

respect. And ...the community forest has its rules set by the villagers...penalties will be utilized if the law has been broken.' Thus, the evidence confirmed that conservation here also needed good cooperation from relevant organisations as supporters of the conservation practices. However, the basis of the local people's ideas was a good example of the process of conservation as well.

The last village in the case study is Ruammit village, which is famous for trekking and elephant riding. It was found that important resources were the forest for trekking and boat trips from the city to the village. The village considered it had had tourism involvement since 1974. Thus, resources had been used for tourism since that time. Unfortunately, the village lost some tourism revenue due to changes in the environment, such as deforestation around the area. Some of these arguments were mentioned by a farmer and a youth at Ruammit village (2006): *'...tourism in the past was good for money...Many foreigners came to the village, but now things are not so good...not good at all...may be more modernity...The forest was destroyed... our traditional culture is going to be left behind...*' So, resources and tourism products can be changed in positive or negative ways, depending on the actors' experience with tourism businesses.

The study also found that long-term experience in tourism concerns does not mean that the local community can create a good environmental conservation process for resource management. In fact, resources were used without good planning. This was because local people were concerned with and spent too much time on the economic aspect of tourism, and they forgot to think about resource conservation and management. Ruammit village was involved with tourism for at least 32 years, but they had not practiced good conservation management of their resources. The local people just focused on their tourism activities and they did not think about how to save the resources. However, when the numbers of tourists decreased, they were forced to think about saving their resources. Considering that tourists had been coming to Ruammit since 1974, it is correct to say that the village had a long-term tourism experience. However, this did not help the village to develop tourism in positive ways for both economic and also environmental concerns. Apparently, the environment and the forest in particular were destroyed by tourism (Arkamanon et al., 1992; Hongsaphan et al., 1994). People in Ruammit regularly said they would save the forest as it was important

to a good environment, but in practice they did not. Instead, there was deforestation and logging in the past. Some experience in conservation could have saved both the environment and tourism, and they can move forward together. But, conservation needs some assistance, suggestions and supervision from experienced academic people. Therefore, time and experience in resource and tourism management needed more support, such as from good cooperation between local members or local villagers. The issues also needed local people's ideas as well as some supporting ideas from organisations outside the village to help locals understand the resource protection process, as happened in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages. They then would be proud to provide their resources as tourism products for visitors and, at the same time, they would also become conservers.

The experience and knowledge of elderly people with regard to resource use and management can also be a good source of information for new generations. This is noted by several commentators on agriculture and development in developing countries (Hirsch, 1998; Juthamanee, 2006; Ganjanapan, 2000). For example, Rong Born had problems with the use of their resources. After they consulted with their elderly people and they followed the elders' suggestions, then they were able to find the keys to the resource use and management. The elder people told the local people to think about 'sufficiency economics'[4]. For example, an idea of growing some eatable vegetables on their fence lines, helped local people to have foods based on their ideas. They called this an "eatable vegetable fence". This idea worked and the villagers could save their money on buying vegetables. Villagers at Rong Born (2006) explained that *'the villagers were encouraged to grow plants on our fence lines. The purpose is for food...yes, it save our money for buying it from the market.'* This appropriate idea was accepted by local people as a helpful alternative resource use, and it also saved some household income for food costs within their community.

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[4] "Sufficiency economies" is a philosophy bestowed by His Majesty the King to his subjects through royal remarks on many occasions over the past three decades. The philosophy provides guidance on appropriate conduct covering numerous aspects of life. After the economic crisis in 1997, His Majesty reiterated and expanded on the "sufficiency economy" in remarks made in December 1997 and 1998. The philosophy points the way for recovery that will lead to a more resilient and sustainable economy, better able to meet the challenges arising from globalization and other changes.

Another issue concerning time and experience in resource management from the indigenous knowledge of elderly people was that their knowledge had been used in local ways of life. Some of the case study villages found the traditional thoughts of local people, especially elderly people in the village, to be very useful for the fulfilment of their forest conservation, such as in the two villages of Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. However, this indigenous knowledge was left behind in several places after high technology had arrived. For example, a local irrigation ditch system was easily made of soil in the area. It helped in collecting water for the local people's farming from the forest. Later concrete irrigation ditches became a convenient thing and made the new style irrigation looked stronger than the soil one. The concrete system became a useful thing for local people, but it cost more money compared to the soil system. In fact the local idea for irrigation appears more efficient for both local people and the environment because it can be made anywhere and at a lower cost than the concrete one. The traditional idea of elderly people had been introduced to the communities and the local people had completely forgotten their elders' ways.

At Rong Born, the villagers thought about their elders' ideas on the conservation process. Before the conservation had been initiated the villagers had troubles and environmental crises, such as lack of water for farming and forest invasion for land selling purposes. After a fight with investors from outside, the villagers got back to their land and they found that they had to work hard in solving the forest's problems. However, one easy thing for them to do was to consult with their elderly people in order to restore the forest. It was confirmed by an elderly person (2006), who talked about the idea for recovering the forest using traditional knowledge: *'...the leader and committee asked me to show what I had seen in the past about the forest... I took them to the forest and pointed out what it looked like [in the past] ...I explained to them what we [elderly people, in his same generation] believe in, such as in spirits, and how that could help to protect our forest from logging...'* The bright idea was to compare the forest's life between the present and the past. It was good that the community compared the change of resources and that they could see how the community in the past lived naturally.

Similarly, in Yang Kham Nu, the villagers respected the elderly and their ancestors. They followed almost all of the suggestions of their elders on forest

conservation, such as using a separate piece of land for each purpose. At Karen tribe elder (2006) said *' We had our forest...it was separated for usage, such as one section for local use, one area for our ancestor spirits, and an area for conservation and the source of the river.'* This means the Karen separated their forest area into sections. The purpose was for both use and conservation. The sections were normally divided in the following way: an area for local people to be used for things such as food and medicine; an area for their ancestors to protect the forest; and an area for conservation, such as providing a source of water for the area. It was an idea of traditional Karen people to save natural resources and use them wisely. This can be supported by an interesting reseponse from some villagers at Yang Kham Nu (2005): *'...We [villagers] believe in and respect our elderly people because they were the first to settle down here [at the village]...They separated the forest for alternative use purposes'* and *'...We believe in the soul and spirit...In the past we each had our own tree for our own soul and we believe that our life will be as long-lived as the tree...It is a good way to protect our forest...good.'* This illustrates the pursuit of indigenous knowledge, especially from their elderly people as a tool of resource conservation. So, indigenous knowledge and the long term experience of elderly people were useful for resource management. The elderly had lived a long time and have more experience living in nature and following their traditional ways of life such as farming. They also have long been concerned with the environment. Thus, they would normally not harm their resources, except for the purpose of increasing their income. Their experience and ideas can be a way for resource conservation. Other good examples of the ideas were found at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages, where local people had consulted the elderly to find ways to conserve their resources.

It was found that resource conservation and management needed time, continuity and assessment by local people in the area. A long time involved in resource conservation, such as community forest conservation, and a continuous process of conservation and assessment of the conservation by local people, helped them to see the results of the process and they could recheck and rethink their conservation planning and management. An illustration of this can be found at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages where they have been concerned with community forest conservation for a relatively long time. In Yang Kham Nu village the local people have maintained the community forest conservation since 1994, as shown in Figure 6.1.

This was at around the same time as the Rong Born villagers (2006) claimed, *'The village started our community forest in 1995, we have succeeded with the conservation project. Our forest has been protected since then.'* Moreover, they continued to follow the conservation projects. At Rong Born, they also did regular conservation project assessments to see how their conservation was going, and they monitored progress by comparing the conditions to the beginning of the conservation project.

Figure 6.1: Yang Kham Nu community forest conservation practices

Resource conservation has not only brought sensible resource values to local communities, it has also led tourism to the village. The study found that tourism was sometimes brought to a community after the conservation process was successful and it becomes well-known and viewed as worth visiting (Holden, 2000; Holden, 2003; Sharpley and Telfer, 2002; Yoo-dee et al., 2004). For example, after the community forests in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu appeared to be successful, many visitors from the outside came to see and learn about the conservation processes in the villages. They became tourists who visited these two villages. Some interviews with local people from the two villages (2006) support this contention. A farmer at Rong Born said, *'Yes, there*

were visitors who came to the villages... They came to see our forests and learn about the nature trail...No... no... before the conservation started there were no visitors at all.' In addition, a farmer at Yang Kham Nu said, *'Yes,...tourists came to see our community forest...'* This means that their forest conservation can be an attraction to pull visitors to the village.

Therefore, this time and experience in tourism can be found in two ways. The first way is when villagers had bad experiences around natural disasters and a lack of a good environment, including forests and water to support their farming. After these bad experiences, they found ways to sort out the problems and successfully conserve the forest. This management has brought tourism into villages, as at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. Another time and experience relationship was after tourism had run for long time. For example, at Ruammit village, the villagers noticed that they had to become conscious of the good environment for their village and the surrounding area, or else there would be no more tourists coming for visits. This consideration of the environment led local people to think about conservation of both natural and cultural resources in the village for tourism.

6.2.2 Attitudes to changes in resource use and resource management

The focus in this context is on what people thought about the changes in their resource use and their resource management. There were some changes in the study areas, and the study examined what people thought about them and how they adapted to the changes in their resource use and management.

The first thing that local people felt about the changes in resource use and resource management is that they were quite surprised that tourists thought that their villages are sufficiently interesting for them to visit, especially as the local people themselves regarded their resources as simply everyday natural resources. However, they were pleased and had a sense of pride that their villages were being visited (Chaikaew, 2005; Chamnankij, 2006; Hongsapan et al., 1994). They felt happy and proud of their villages when visitors came to see them. Local people at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu said that they were surprised that many tourists come to their village to

see their community forest and to look at their agricultural practices and their farming activities. This argument was expressed by some villagers in these two villages (2006): *'I am surprised that visitors come to my village...just for seeing our community forest and chemical and pesticide free agriculture...'* and *'I do not understand why visitors come to visit my village, but I feel happy that they visit.'* This attitude changed the local people's view of their resource use; making them aware that it was not just concerned with daily life, but was of interest to visitors. However, the local people were happy to welcome tourists and proud to see the tourists in their villages.

The second viewpoint is that local people welcomed changes in resource use, such as additional infrastructure in their communities, because they believed the changes improved their quality of life. The changes pleased local people as they provided more convenience for their lives. It was also found that the local people accepted and were pleased that they had good infrastructure in their villages, such as good access roads, good transportation and good electricity. This infrastructure was believed to improve their quality of life. Some views of villagers (2006) in the study areas included: *'...Good road access to the city centre makes me happy...because in the past we had to travel by boat to the city centre and it took a longer time than the road does nowadays... I am happy with the development (road access to the city).'* Moreover, this attitude to change can also be seen in an example at Ruammit. In this village, local people accepted that good roads are useful for them to access the city centre, for example when they wanted to see a doctor in the city centre. They could save time and reduce the cost of transportation to the city, rather than taking more hours in long-tail boats as in the past.

The third perspective is that local people accepted that aspects of modernity could sometimes be a good thing for the local community, such as the changes in their clothing and houses or building styles. This was because the locals could save some money on their clothing cost, and their new style of accommodation would be stronger to protect them from natural disasters. The old version of their accommodation was made of wood and grasses on top of the roof, whereas the new style house was made of brick and cement tile. Whenever there were strong winds in the summer time the new style house looked stronger than the old one (Figures 6.2 and 6.3 show the two versions of the accommodation). Tribal people at Ruammit and Rong Born villages accepted and

wore new style clothes instead of their traditional ones. They said the new style clothes were easy to find and easy to wear. They also accepted that the new style clothes were cheaper than their traditional, hand-made outfits. Housewives at Ruammit (2006) claimed that, *'The Karen traditional clothes take time to make and it is too warm to wear, especially when we work on the farm.'* Consequently, they liked to continue wearing their new style clothes.

The fourth outlook is that local people felt happy with the changes in their villages as it raised their living standards close to those in the city centre. This was because they wanted a good lifestyle, supported with facilities like other people in the city centre. They thought it 1) was modern and 2) more convenient to be living like the city lifestyle. The local people compared their lifestyle to people in the city centre, saying that people in the city centre had good facilities and that it looks modern in the local people's view. The local people at

Figure 6.2: An old style Karen house (2006)

Figure 6.3: A new style Karen house (2006)

Ruammit compared their present life with the past, they acknowledged that they were happy with the new changes, and also wanted to be living like people in city centre. As a food shop owner at Ruammit (2006) said *'After a new road had been reconstructed, I easily ride my motorcycle to the city centre to buy stuff for my shop...It was better than the past when we took a boat to the city on limit time and uncomfortable seats.'* Likewise, a farmer in the same village (2006) said *'This current time is better than the past...I mean lifestyle and we had good facilities, such as good roads to the city...In the past when we were ill it was difficult to get to the city because the road was rough and muddy for a long way to the hospital...It is much better this time compared to the past'.*

Finally, people continued to focus on having a good environment among the changes in resource use and resource management. The communities accepted modernity such as new changes to the villages, however, they still thought about having a good environment for their village. They had implemented environmental conservation, such as community forest conservation, and used chemical and pesticide-free techniques in their farming. This was because they had good environmental conservation consciousness in their communities. Some examples of evidence of this thought is that people in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages said they acknowledged that new changes, such as additional infrastructure, made them happy,

but they did not want to lose their good environment, such as their community forests. Some villagers (2006) in these two villages explained that *'Though, we want new changes in the village...such as good roads, transportation, new style modern houses...but we still want to live in a good environment, with high, dense and green forest, like our community forest at this time...'* (a farmer at Yang Kham Nu (2006), and a religious leader at Rong Born said *'I accepted a new modern style of life in the village...Right, it changes our way of life, teenagers in particular. But I think they love a good environment like us (adult people) because we join together for work on our community forest conservation on all occasions when we planned our activities.'* Thus, this conservation was said to be done not only for themselves, but also for the new generations.

Therefore, there are two important facets to what local people thought about the change in resource use and resource management. The first position was that they accepted and felt happy about the changes to their villages; and the other is that they wanted to see a good environment in their communities to support having this good life.

So, the adjustment or the transformation of resource use and concern by the people can be summarised in two ways. The first way is about local resources, such as the community forests, and how their ways of life and cultures have been changing to be tourism products. This example can be found as explained about Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages. The other way is about local resources, such as the forests and the villagers' ways of life and culture which have become tourism products, where they have been realising the importance of rethinking the conservation process. This last example is found at Ruammit village.

6.3 Social relations, power and governance

The discussion of social relations and power and governance in this context concentrates on the roles and relations between actors concerning ecotourism planning and management in the three case study areas. This relates to three other boxes on the left-hand side of the conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 3.2 in chapter 3. A social relationship represents the existence of a probability of social interaction between

two persons. In social relationships the probability of interaction is increased if the two persons view themselves as members of a common collectivity. Social relations involve complex social roles among social actors (McCall et al., 1970; Bennett, Mercer and Woollacott, 1986; Smith and Duffy, 2003). In this study the social relations that are of interest relate to the planning and management of ecotourism and sustainability and to how people use and relate to their natural and cultural resources that are useful for tourism development.

Generally, power and control is given to leaders who are able to convince others of their authority, such as by successfully staging rituals. This can involve applying pressure and encouraging local people to work with them. This often depends upon their knowing and correctly using powerful knowledge. The pressure in this context may involve the leaders avoiding conversations and also avoiding any particular help for local people who are against their plans, for example. However, power in this context also refers to two types of power. The first type is political power, such as wielded by village leaders. It is regarded as power from the administration system in the community. The other type is sacred power, referring to the local people's belief in their religious leaders or other religious and animistic beliefs (Ganjanapan, 2000; Hirsch, 1998; Holden, 2006).

6.3.1 Wealth, social status and influence on decision-making

It is important to consider wealth, social status and influence on decision-making, because different social status can bring different attitudes and lead the community to having groups of people with high status in the community. The wealth and social status in this context also related to how people in the community accepted some of them as being richer and having the ability to lead or change their community. Especially, in Thai society they accept and respect people with high status in the community (Mulder, 1990; Nartsupha, 2004; Keyes, 1987).

There were social differences within the villages because some villagers have got more land and some have even less, working on other people's farms in the village or elsewhere, and some work in tourism businesses in the village or elsewhere. Landless

people and those with a small amount of land often worked in tourism businesses, such as as tourist guides and in the hotels in Chiang Rai. The people who have no land were more likely to move into tourism because it provided them with a means of livelihood over which they had control. Local people who had their own land commented that they preferred to work on their own farm rather than in tourism. However, some of the landless villagers were happy to work in tourism businesses in the village, such as at Ruammit. Some villagers who were landless and some of those who had a small amount of land in the study areas made the following comments. A tourist guide at Yang Kham Nu (2006) said, *'I have no land for farming. I work as a tourist guide...a trekking tour guide...I think I have enough money for my family...such as I can pay the educational fee at a university in the city for my daughter. I am satisfied with this job.'* A youth at Yang Kham Nu (2006) observed, *'My father has got land for farming...but we are a big family...and I am happy to work in a hotel in the city... Yes, I ride my motorcycle to work and return home because it is not that far from here [his home].'* Finally, a souvenir shop owner at Ruammit (2006) stated that *'We [the interviewee and his sister] had no land for farming at our hometown...My sister moved to work here and opened her small souvenir shop in this village [Ruammit]...We are happy to work here...I can get higher education...I am studying at a university in Chiangrai.'* From some of these views, it can be concluded that the main reason for people to work in tourism business was because they were landless or had a small amount of land to work for farming. However, they were often happy with the tourism jobs as they brought them better income than when they worked in farming jobs.

It was also found that the ethnic tribal people felt it was very difficult to own their own land because they had migrated from place to place in the past, especially the time before they moved and settle down at the village, such as Ruammit and Yang Kham Nu. A few of them had owned land in the villages, but they had sold the land to other people, and they had become landless again. This landless position meant that they felt it was difficult to work in farming. Partly as a consequence, they regarded themselves as poorer than the indigenous people. The groups of tribal people at Ruammit said they did not own land because they were tribal and they lacked some of the rights of people who had Thai national identity. For example, they could only buy land if they could show a Thai national identity card. They felt that they were comparatively poorer than other Thai people, particularly people in the city centre. With

regard to this, the village leader (2006) explained about some of the villagers who sold their land to other people and also explained about people who had no Thai identity card, saying, *'There were some business people from outside who came to the village to buy land from the villagers...For example, my relative, she wanted to sell her land to the business man...I did not agree with her...I told her to compare the good and bad sides after selling the land and that she would become landless...Moreover, some tribal people around the sub-district had no Thai nationality card...so, it is difficult for them to buy land for themselves.'*

Another thing about wealth and social position is the argument about the status of Thai and ethnic people. Indigenous Thai groups seem to be more influential and powerful, having a higher social status than ethnic groups. This is partly because indigenous people think that tribal people are minority groups and that some of them do not have Thai national identity. Moreover, some of the ethnic groups were believed to have destroyed the forest for crops and logging purposes when they first arrived in the area and they lacked farm land. There was a small amount of cutting down of the forest in Ruammit and Rong Born by these ethnic groups before the community forests were set up in the mid and late 1990s. The indigenous people believed that some ethnic tribal groups had destroyed the forest in other areas for both crops and logging, and then these tribal groups had moved on to other lands to settle there for a few years before they came to these villages to settle down (at Ruammit and at a village nearby Rong Born). Some of the indigenous villagers also said that the ethnic groups were poorer than themselves. Some comparisons made by both indigenous people and by a tribal person: *'Tribal people destroyed the forest [pointed to a forest area]...because they were landless and they were poor...Like tribal people nearby our village, they had been moved out from a protected area and they asked to settle down on the side of Doi Luang National Park'* (a farmer at Rong Born, 2006)*;* and *'The indigenous people are richer than us...they have good facilities...perhaps, their ancestors had left them good land and things...or they had higher education compared to us... we are far away from the city'* (a housewife at Yang Kham Nu, 2006).

Landless people, especially some of the tribal groups in Ruammit village, had become very involved in tourism businesses in the village, especially selling souvenirs to tourists. Some indigenous farmers in the village suggested that they would be

ashamed to work in tourism businesses as this would show that they lacked land and that they had to serve tourists because they lacked land. However, the indigenous people in the village knew that tourism businesses brought good benefit to the owners such as the tribal people. However, in recent years before the survey period, the tourism businesses were not good in terms of income benefit to the villagers because of the economic and political problems around the country. From field survey work by the researcher, it was found that the local tourism businesses in Ruammit village were almost all run by tribal people from the village (Table 6.3 lists the small tourism business shops in Ruammit). In the past, these people had come from outside the village and they pay shop rentals to the local people and are probably now permanently established in the village.

6.3.2 The village leaders and the village committee

The communities in the case study areas are considered to be the villages where the people live together in the same community. Two of the villages are made up of two distinct homogeneous groups of people: one village consists of a single indigenous group and the other village is composed of a single tribal group. The third village is different, as it has mixed groups of people from different cultures, such as from different tribal groups. These different characteristics led to different relationships in the communities and also those relations were reflected in how the villages were controlled by their leaders and village committee members. As a result of their influence on the village, the research examines the relations and opinions of these people about their leaders and village committees.

In general, elections in villages gave a lot of power to individual leaders, but elections were not used to elect the whole village administration committees. The elected village leaders had considerable concentrated power, and they made their own decisions to select other people in the village to assist them in managing the village, creating a highly centralised form of paternal control over the village which was a way to keep administrative control over the village (Chandoevwit, 2002; Arhiros, 2001). The survey found that the local communities had village elections, with the village leader came from the election. The leader then selected some people in the village to be on his

or her committee without any agreement from the villagers. The village leader took control of the administration of the village by selecting their own committee. For example, the Rong Born leader selected her committee by choosing them from her close friends rather than asking for votes from the villagers. Villagers at Rong Born (2006) explained about the election in the village and the village committee: *'Our leader had being a leader since 1996 when she won her first election by all villagers. The term time for a leader is only 4 years, then a new leader has to be voted in. However, in our village there was no one qualified like the lady [the village leader]. That is why she has been the leader until now [2007]...After we got a leader... the leader set up their own committee by choosing some people who can work with her...We were just informed about who is involved with the village committee and about what they are going to do for the village...'* Consequently, the leader is agreed on by villagers through an election process, but the committee will be chosen based on the leader's own consideration. It means villagers had less chance to be part of the village committee by volunteering rather than by being chosen by the village leader.

Regarding the position of a leader in the community, the local people respected groups of people with power bases, especially in the pattern of local governance (Hewison, 2000; Hewison, 2002; McCargo, 2002). This was because the local people believed that the governance would help and support them for their village development projects. For example, local people respected their village leader and government officers because they believed that the government controlled the projects for their villages (McCargo, 2002; Chaikaew, 2005). For example, local people at Rong Born respected and talked about their previous district leader (2003-2006) in a positive way, because the leader supported them with a home-grown vegetable project and he sometimes visited the village when he was the governor at the district. Then, he left to go to a new place due to the regulation for government administration rotation. However, this regulation does not apply to the TAO because the TAO is a local administration, while the district and provincial governors are not. The relationships between villagers and the leader were praised by a housewife at Rong Born (2006): *'I like the previous district officer. He visited us regularly and advised us on an home-grown vegetable project... and he looked interested in our community forest...I think most villagers liked him as well.'* Accordingly, this exemplifies how local people

respected the group of people with power bases, in particular when the local people got support for their village development projects, like Rong Born did.

Surprisingly, the survey found that having concentrated power also became a positive tool from the viewpoint of local people. Their experience was that a few people having power could be a good thing because the powerful people could be intermediaries between local people and key people outside the village. They could act as "bridges" to influential outsiders, and they offered the security of patron-client relationships (Ahiros, 2001; Boyle, 1998; Chandoevwit, 2002). For example, when they contacted the government, their leaders would act as intermediaries to help them negotiate with key people (Phongsapich and Khuwinphan, 2002). Likewise, a farmer at Rong Born (2006) said, *'I like having a short cut when contacting key people, especially government officers in the district. They carried a message from their leader and it helped to get faster service from the government officers...And I succeeded in what I intended to do...it is a short cut to be successful more easily.'* Thus, this finding shows that concentrated power held by leaders does not always have a negative outcome and it can be a good thing to deal with or have a connection with people from outside the village as well. Depite this positive response, this could be criticised as representing a patrol-client relationships, and this patronage could encourage corruption (Phongsapich and Khuwinphan, 2002).

6.3.3 Indigenous and ethnic groups and tourism involvement

There were both indigenous and ethnic groups living in the villages. As mentioned before, one village consisted of a group of indigenous Thai people, the other is a single group of tribal people, and one is mixed with different tribes and some indigenous people living together. Members of all of these groups were involved in tourism businesses and tourism activities, however, the roles they played in tourism were quite different.

Homogenous communities were more likely to be strongly involved in tourism organisation to welcome visitors to the villages. For example, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villagers organised a welcome for the tourists to the village and created

tourism activities for them. The two villages are homogeneous communities; that is to say that they are each made up of people from only one group. As previously mentioned, Rong Born consisted of indigenous Thai, and Yang Kham Nu villagers were tribal people, with Karen being the main group. The homogeneity made them strong because they were from the same culture and they could easily communicate with each other. One important thing was that they had had a bad experience in suffering from resource loss and disaster in the past. Thus, they did not want themselves or their new generation to have the same situation again in the future. They knew what happened and they looked for a better way to preserve their resources. As a result, they could encourage their members to join in their forest conservation project. The resources, such as their forest and their ways of life, have become their great tourism products for visitors and local people in the two villages were happy to welcome visitors.

The other group at Ruammit village was made up of ethnic minority groups and these groups were the most likely of all to be involved in tourism businesses in the village. From the survey, it was found that these local people were highly involved in local tourism businesses, such as opening small shops to provide food, drinks and souvenirs for visitors coming to the village. It is interesting to note that some of them, such as Akha, Hmong and Muzer, were from other villages, but they came to settle down in the village because tourism in Ruammit was famous, especially because foreigners were attracted them. A record of the types and amounts of small shops and the owners of these tourism businesses is shown in Table 6.3.

A research study by Chamnankij (2006) found that ethnic groups could get involved in tourism because all village communities gave opportunities to all groups. As the statistics in Table 6.3 show, small local tourism shops were owned by ethnic groups, such as Akha, Karen, Hmong and Muzer. Thus, the ethnic groups in Ruammit were involved in tourism, in particular small tourism businesses, but they had less chance to be involved in tourism planning and in management participation. The survey found that ethnic groups in Ruammit village can work in and run their own small tourism businesses, with small souvenir and food shops in the village being owned by Akha, Hmong, Karen and Mein people.

Kind of Business	Number of Shops	Owners
Souvenir shop	45	Akha = 35
		Karen = 6
		Hmong = 4
Noodle shop	3	Karen = 2
		Muzer = 1
Restaurant	2	Indigenous people &Karen = 1
		Karen =1
Grocery shop	3	All are Karen
Hand-weaving shop	13	All are Karen
Grocery & Souvenir shop	2	All are Karen
Noodle& Souvenir shop	1	Karen

Table 6.3: List of small tourism business shops in Ruammit village (2008)

One important reason that ethnic groups were involved in tourism businesses was because they did not have their own land for farming. This is because they are tribal people, or because they have sold their land to other people, and then moved or found alternative work such as tourism-related jobs. Fortunately, tourism such as at Ruammit was a good business. Thus, they decided to work in the tourism area. The survey found ethnic groups, such as the Akha and Hmong in Ruammit, did not have their own land. A question about if they had any land within the village revealed that almost all of them said they had not, and the reason might be that they came for trading rather than for farming. They mostly rented a small parcel of land (around 2-5 square metres) for running their souvenir shops, having decided to open small souvenir shops in the village when they first came to settle down there. However, the research survey (between March to May 2006, May 2007 and April 2008), also noticed that some of them (approximately 4 households who were from other villages) have been both shop providers and agricultural workers in their previous village. They would go back to

work on their farm in the rainy season (from May to July yearly) and they returned to Ruammit village after harvesting their crop to reopen the shop again.

It was surprising that in the homogenous villages, in terms of their work backgrounds, the villages tended to like working on farms rather than getting involved in tourism, because they were happy with their farming and they had their own farm land. Another reason might be that tourism had only just started in their villages, especially at Yang Kham Nu and Rong Born. Therefore, these villagers had fewer ideas about tourism involvement compared to their agricultural work. For example, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu village are made up of a single group of people that had traditionally worked on their own farms rather than running or working in tourism businesses. Additionally, no small tourism business shops were found in these two villages. The research survey (between March to May 2006, May 2007 and April 2008), also found that the homogenous people in the case study areas liked to work on their farms rather than in tourism jobs. Some of the farmers in the three villages said, *'Yes, I have my own farm... I like to work on farms...I do not think we can do any tourism business in the village because there are only some people who come to the community forest once or twice a month'.* (a farmer in Rong Born, 2006) and *'I like to work on a farm rather than working in a tourism job...I do not think I can do any tourism job...I am too shy to be a seller...It is hard for me to work in tourism'* (a farmer in Ruammit, 2006).

Thus, in this involvement in tourism, two ways of comparing indigenous people and ethnic groups were found. The indigenous people had less involvement in tourism business because they did not like to work in tourism, which contrasted with a large portion of the ethnic groups, except Karen people who were involved in tourism business because they had moved in from outside the village and were therefore landless. However, the indigenous and Karen people seemed to be more involved in tourism decision making because they were leaders and they were the first to settle down in the areas and also they had their own land to let to other ethnic groups to rent for the tourism businesses.

6.3.4 Relationships between villages and external actors through tourism

It is important to know what the relationships were like between the villagers and external actors involved in tourism activities. The external actors in this context refer to tourist organisers or tour operators. These groups have brought visitors to the village, they had certain relationships with these villages, and sometimes the relations between them led tourism in a positive or negative direction. This depends on what occurs between the villages and the external actors through tourism.

Currently, the connection between villagers and external actors through tourism is just about how to get tourists to the village, rather than a broad view of how to develop tourism in an appropriate way. It is very important for the tourism connection to reconsider tourism development in an appropriate way that looks at exploiting tourism to maximise all of its potential benefits. This assertion can be illustrated by tourism that was led to Ruammit village by individual commercial groups based outside the village. These groups led tourists to Ruammit for trekking, on only half-day tours or for a few hours around the village. The connection was only for visiting the village and had only a limited range of benefits. It can also be shown by other examples, when outside organisations brought tourists to Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages to learn about forest conservation and bio-method farming. Local people just welcomed and joined the visitors, but they had not planned the use of tourism resources and village resources together with these outside parties.

After tourists had been led to the village, people knew and accepted that it brought them good economic benefits, for example income for the ethnic groups. However, the communities have recognised the extent to which informal tourism completely alters their traditional way of life. It seems that, despite knowing about certain potentially negative impacts from tourism on their community, they still wanted tourists to visit their villages for economic reasons. A case in point was when Yang Kham Nu provided a welcome event for tourists in the village by tying holy thread around tourists' wrists. In fact, the traditional event is done twice a year for family members only (Ounwichit, et al., 2003). The local people felt unhappy about this, but they still continued this event for tourists because they wanted to make tourists satisfied with their village and they wanted more tourists to come to the village. An example

given by a farmer at Yang Kham Nu (2006) was: *'I feel unhappy with the show of the villagers for tourists, such as the tying of holy thread around the visitors' wrist. It is our way to highly respect our own family. However, we also want to satisfy our tourists and we want more of them to come to the village...We will get more money from them.'* Therefore, the local people welcomed the tourists, and that is why they followed and responded to what the tourism organizers asked for in order to please their customers.

Relationships between external actors and villages are such that the external agencies tend to just offer funding or advice or bring in tourists. What they do not do is tell local people about the broader opportunities that tourism can offer them for community development: local decision making, local control of business, local ownership of tourism, and securing wide economic benefits for all villagers from tourism (Reed, 1997; Laverack and Thangphet, 2007; Suatter and Leisen, 1999). By contrast, the government has provided money and projects to develop tourism facilities for community development, such as support for a homestay project in Phasert village, nearby Yang Kham Nu (Doi Hang TAO, 2005a). However, this project provided enough funding for only six households in the village to build accommodation for tourists whereas there were 20 households in this village. Another example was that an NGO at Ruammit supported local people by providing a local guide training project in cooperation with TAT. However, after the class ended, the trainees waited for jobs, but jobs had not been discussed yet (Mae Yao TAO, 2004; Mae Yao TAO, 2006).

It is a fact that there are good relations between external actors and villages in terms of information and funding support. But there is still a lack of good cooperation in tourism planning and management between them. It seems that the planning and management is controlled by external people (will be discussed more in Chapter 8).

6.4 Internal and external relations for the villages

This section focuses on internal relations within the villages and between the villages and organizations that are external to their communities and that are related to tourism. This is a separate box in the conceptual framework shown in Figure 3.2. The assessment here looks at how these connections from the local communities to the

external organisations can be very important. The discussion also evaluates these relations and the tourism benefits from the interactions between the community and external organisations. The assessment of internal relations specifically examines villagers' relations with their leaders, while the review of external relations concerns how the villagers and their leaders associated with people from outside the villages, such as the TAO, and the district and provincial officers.

6.4.1 External relations in connection with government

External relations in connection with government in this study refer to what connection had been made between government and the villages and what role it played. There is an assessment of what local people felt about relations between the villages and government, with good relations and cooperation between government and communities often depicted as important for effective tourism development (Twyman, 2000; Few, 2001).

There have been major changes in the government of Thailand over many years, and this has led to a questioning of the authority of government officials (Leepreecha, 2005). Despite this, the local villages generally continued to respect people with status, including government officials. People praised the government as admirable and effective because it was the government that had provided them with 'One Million Baht (15,385 Pounds approximately) for One Village' projects (Chandoevwit, 2002). The aim of these projects is to provide villages with a budget to enable local people to improve their work, especially their agriculture. All of the villages joined the project, with the study villages offering their villagers low interest loans, for instance as micro-credit which can be very helpful for small businesses to develop. However, it also caused local people to have more loans and they had to pay more interest yearly. In fact, not all people spent that loan money for their agriculture. But, they received that money for other purposes. Some of the villagers argued that this project could make people poorer because they had more loans and had to pay interest, even though the interest rate was very low.

Currently, the government is encouraging local people to become participants in their own village planning under The 7th National Economic and Social Development Plan and Creative Economy (year 1992-1996). In particular it wants local communities to engage in managing their local resources, community forests most notably (National Economic and Social Development Borad (NESDB), 2008). However, the government has not focused on what participative role local people will play in terms of local empowerment and local resource management for community development. Both the internal village leaders and external government have sought ways to encourage greater local participation in village planning. An administrative member in the National Park Department in Bangkok (2006) said that the *'New role under government policy and under the National Economic and Social Development Plan for a Creative Economy said clearly that local people must be allowed in the local resource participation and management...Yes, we are doing and encouraging them to join in...But, sometimes the local people needed to be explained about the roles of local participation'*. Nevertheless, some local people said they have had no chance to disagree with the planning for their villages regarding the decisions made by their local leaders. For example, at Rong Born village, some villagers (2006) said *'Almost all of the projects within the community were planned by our leader and the leader team...We (as a villager) sometime found it difficult to reject the projects...Because, we did not want to have any conflict with our leaders and the projects were done for us...no point to argue with'*. As discussed before, Thai people respect people with high status and the leaders still think that they can lead the village to do what they have planned. They found that, in practice, the plans were set up by leaders who did not ask for participation from all villagers.

The research investigated the relations between local people and external government and the balance of their relations. It found that there were both good and bad relations between the villages and external government actors. There were two broad types. The first involves the personal relationship formed between government and the local people, and these personal experiences mean that the local people might have some positive or negative views about their government. It often depends on how the government officers interact with the local people. The second type of relation concerns the change of government policy. For example, the National Park's new regulation does not allow local people to go into the forest to collect any wild products

from the protected area. Therefore, the local people construed that they were not allowed to collect the wild products just because the new National Park leader did not want them to go in. The Rong Born villagers mentioned how both their personal relations and the changes of policy affected their relations with the Doi Luang National Park. The previous National Park leader visited and chatted with local people regularly and he allowed them to take some wildlife products for food. There was a positive personal experience there. Conversely, the current leader does not allow local people to access the Park, and he seldom meets the villagers. Thus, local people assumed that the current leader was unhelpful and unfriendly to, the villagers of Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu.

More importantly, local people feel they had good relations with local and national government when they clearly received benefits from the government. The benefits are not just for individuals, but can be for support for village development as a whole. For example, local people in Ruammit respected and considered their TAO (Mae Yao Tambon Administration) to be good because the TAO supported them with a local tourist guide training project. Therefore, there were good relations between the village and the TAO. An example given by a farmer at Ruammit (2006) was: *'I joined the local guide training which was run by the TAO, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, and an NGO (Kra Jok Ngoa)...we were trained thoroughly and we are waiting for the certificate...'* Thus, the external relations in connection with government can be positive or negative. The result depends on what people get and if they think they were supported by the organisation.

6.4.2 Internal relations in connection with villagers and village meetings

In the local areas there were regular village meetings; for instance, they were held monthly, or sometimes when decisions needed to be made by members of the community. The meeting time is for local people, in particular villagers or village members, to join in and share their ideas about what has happen or what plans are being made in their village. It is also a time to introduce any news or any information that would be beneficial to all members in the village (Rajchagool, 2003; Hafner, 1987).

Although the meetings are useful for the villagers, the issues discussed at the meeting were not the main reason for local people to attend the meetings. The local people attended the meetings because they did not want to be penalized if they missed meetings three times in a year. The fieldwork found that local people said they had to attend the meeting because they did not want to be penalized. Also, if they missed the meeting, they would not get any benefits from the village related to the projects or initiatives that were discussed in the meeting. The penalizing issue is explained by village a farmer at Ruammit (2006): *'...Before joining the meeting. It is for all members to know what will be happening in the village and all news and information are useful for them to know...Yes, the penalty has a good result to make members come for the meeting.'* In fact, as explained above, it was not all villagers attending the meeting. However, they had no choice because if they missed the meeting three times within a year, they would lose the benefits they should have had as village members.

After observing participation at meetings in 2006, it was noted that the long duration of the meetings meant that the villagers often felt it was boring to stay to the end of the session. The locals often only wanted the very important issues to be discussed in the meetings, rather than having all issues covered. In fact the process often became one of just informing all the villagers about what was happening, rather than about making decisions. For example, at the observation of the Ruammit village meeting, it was found that there were fewer people still there at the end of the village meeting, because more people had left during the meeting. It was a long meeting that lasted from 1.00 to 4.30 pm (a meeting on May 2006 at Ruammit village).

Importantly, village meetings were a good opportunity for all villagers to come together to share news and see each other. Therefore, it was a good time for local people to develop their social relations in the village. Many villagers added that it was a good chance to see all of the villagers and they could discuss issues with everyone that they did not have a chance to see very often, although they lived in the same village. However, they might have to miss meetings sometimes because they were farmers and they started work early in the morning and returned home in the evening. The survey (2006) also found that a good alternative idea for the village meeting time was used at Ruammit, where they meet on Sundays. This was because the villagers went to church on Sunday. Another village, Yang Kham Nu, asked their villagers to join their meeting

after their Buddhist event had finished every time on their Buddhist holy day. These great ideas can easily be used to arrange village meetings that have less effect on the villagers' work schedule.

6.4.3 External relations in connection with other villages and other external organisations

Local communities have connections not only with the government, as they also have relations with other villages and also with other external organisations, such as NGOs. The villages have connected with people from outside regarding tourism that has been led into the villages, and they welcomed the resulting tourists. Moreover, two of the villages, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, have been successful in community forest conservation, therefore more people have visited the villages for the conservation experience. The relation between villages and external organisations can be positive or negative depending on the extent to which both of them are satisfied with the connection between them.

External connections were considered to be especially positive when villagers received good advice from the external organisations or other villages, or when the network provided support for conservation and tourism management. The first example is at Yang Kham Nu, where the village had good relations with an NGO because the NGO supported them by bringing tourism into the village. All of the villagers know the NGO named Mae Kok Farm Foundation well. The NGO led tourism into the village, especially visitors from Japan. The villagers had also been trained about tourism service and management for tourists by the NGO. So, the relation between the village and the NGO looked positive. The second example is Rong Born village where the respondents felt it was a good example of community forest conservation and that they could be a leader of community forest conservation projects in the area. This was confirmed by the TAO (Muang Kham TAO, 2006). The local people in this village agreed that they were happy to share and be a leader to network community forest conservation with other villages in the area. The last village, Ruammit, accepted that an NGO helped and supported the tourism activities of the Ruammit villagers, such as by training local guides from among local people, and that it helped in improving a tourist centre in the

village. In 2005 the project was run by an NGO called Krajok Ngao in cooperation with the TAO and Tourism Authority Chiang Rai.

Even though there were relations that connected the villages and external tourism organisations, such as the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), they were not as good as they should be. This was because of a lack of communication by both sides. For example, the community did not know about the TAT, so they did not ask for tourism promotion for the village. Also many tourists and tourism organisations had not known that Rong Born had opened its community forest conservation project for tourism, while Rong Born had not known that the TAT could help them to promote their community. Thus, there was a lack of communication and information between them. Another example is that Ruammit argued that the TAT did not help them to promote tourism as an attraction in the province. For example, Ruammit promoted their 'Elephant Day' (giving food to thank elephants after they had worked for a whole year), but the TAT did not know about the event. The researcher even called and asked TAT for details about the event, but they had no information about it (March, 2006).

Crucially, villages' relations with external organisations are based on reliability. This is an important factor for building trust and good relationships between local people and organizations, because local people will accept people who are responsible and willing to work for their village. The example of this reliability is in Yang Kham Nu village where they believed in and relied on an NGO (Mae Kok Farm Foundation) because the NGO had consistently helped with developing tourism in the village. Moreover, a leader of the NGO was a local teacher and he was previously a TAO member in the area. The local people's belief in the reliability of the NGO was confirmed by farmers and elderly people at Yang Kham Nu (2006), who said that: *'Mr Pipat [the leader of Mae Kok Farm Foundation] is really helpful to our village';* and *'Mr Pipat brings Japanese into the village to stay with us for a few days...We enjoy the visitors...Many times, some of us and visitors have cried before the visitors left...They were lovely and they like our village.'* Thus, this relationship between the village and the NGO can be a good example of reliability. It can demonstrate that when the locals get support from an organisation regularly, they trust and rely on that organisation.

6.5 Conclusions

This chapter has traced the relations of the communities to their resources and to other actors around sustainability and ecotourism planning and management. This was the first of the main themes in the study's conceptual framework. In particular, the chapter has examined: resource use and resource management; power and governance; and internal and external relations. The purpose was to investigate the data from the survey in three case study areas, Rong Born, Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit villages, with regard to their social relations and sustainability in ecotourism planning and management.

The first sub-theme of the chapter concerned resource use and resource management. The first finding was that when villages had experienced suffering in the past due to a lack of resources, and this had helped them to realise the importance of resource conservation. This had also led local people to focus on sustainability not only for themselves, but also for the next generation. A second finding was that conservation had itself become an important resource for tourism, as seen in the community forests at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. Further, the adverse impacts of tourism on the environment and local culture had led the villagers to consider the long term conservation of resources in order to secure more sustainable tourism management.

The second sub-theme concentrated on social relations, power and governance. A first finding was that social differences made local people play different roles in ecotourism management. It was found that those with higher social status, such as indigenous Thai people, were more influential in tourism management. In the case of indigenous Thai people, this was because they thought that the ethnic groups were a minority and poorer than themselves. A second finding was that a homogenous community had a stronger involvement in tourism management than a group with varied ethnicity living in the same village. This was probably because within the varied ethnicity group there were different cultures and ways of life, so it was hard to unify them.

The third sub-theme concerned internal and external relations for the villages. It was found that the villagers had positive attitudes to both internal and external relations when they resulted in them gaining advice about conservation or suggestions about tourists visiting their villages.

Chapter 7 Ideologies of Sustainability in Ecotourism Management

7.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the respondents' ideologies, that is their beliefs and values about sustainability in ecotourism management. It investigates the participants' responses and it also draws on evidence from fieldwork observation. The focus here on ideologies of sustainability in ecotourism management, following the second theme identified in the study's conceptual framework, itself based on a political ecology approach and as set out and explained in Chapter 3. The basis of this theme in published literature was also examined in that chapter. The chapter here discusses three main sub-themes in relation to the actors' views about sustainability in ecotourism planning and management in the three case study villages.

The first sub-theme concentrates on the villagers' opinions about "appropriate livelihoods" for local people, which relate to their ideas and beliefs about the management of their resources and their ways of life. "Appropriate livelihoods" refers to ways of making a living that local people feel comfortable with and are suited to their way of life (Tao and Wall, 2009; Dillen, 2000). They may also relate to their feelings that they do not want to leave behind a way of life that they have valued (Bernstein at al., 1992). Overall, it considers what people think is satisfactory as a way of making a living, bringing a stable and reliable income, and having a reasonable standard of living. These are likely to be central ideas behind indigenous definitions of sustainability in tourism-related development.

The second sub-theme focuses on local people's notions of "fairness" in the use of their resources and in the distribution of the benefits from tourism. This links their beliefs about community relations to the benefits obtained from various resources, both natural and tourism resources. Moreover, the focus here includes the views of relevant actors both inside and outside the villages and their views about interactions around ecotourism management.

The third sub-theme examines the actors' views about the appropriate levels and types of participation in local policy decision-making. It seeks to establish whether and how local people want to get involved in ecotourism management in their own area, and it also elucidates how the locals might get better results from their involvement, and especially so in ways that are "fair" to both local people and the environment.

7.2 Notions of sustainable development and "appropriate livelihoods"

Sustainable development in this study relates to the notions outlined by Farrell (1999). He highlights the sustainability trinity which aims at the smooth (but often conflicting) and transparent integration of economy, society and environment. This perspective on sustainability considers how locals have had to change from time to time through particular developments and have adjusted their ways of gaining a living in appropriate ways for both their living and for a good environment. The focus here is on sustainable development for communities that can meet both local people's needs and environmental requirements at the same time. Therefore, the discussion here focuses on those things local people consider they need and also how they conserve resources in the area. Thus the sub-theme here considers the respondents' notions of sustainable development and "appropriate livelihoods", which is one of the four boxes on the right-hand side of the study's conceptual framework (see Figure 3.2).

7.2.1 Villagers' beliefs about "appropriate livelihoods"

"Livelihood" here is defined as locals' way of life (Bernstein at al, 1992; Scoones, 1998), and it often relates to the respondents' livelihoods as farmers. This is because in all the villages almost all local people were farmers. With regard to "appropriate livelihoods" this refers to what local people feel comfortable with in their ways of life. Thus, the focus here is on what local people feel about their living as farmers, but with tourism also as an activity in their areas. The farmers worked in different fields, such as producing different kinds of fruit and vegetables, but most of them grow rice, especially wet rice in the rainy season. Therefore, all the communities

were concerned with their farm products, such as rice, and other factors related to their agricultural activity. In particular, they were concerned about water and the natural environment as they use them for their rice growing.

The first aspect of the "livelihood" issue identified in the study concerned local people's life working in farming. The local people are farmers and they are happy with their farming. This is because they traditionally work on the farm and they feel it is suited to their living because they have rice to consume, and rice is the traditional food for all local people. Rice is also a main economic product in Chiang Rai province (see Table 7.1). Thus, their "livelihood" in this context relates to their farming, especially of rice. They also believed that they cannot live without having rice because they have had it daily as a main food. From the statistics of economic products in Chiang Rai, it was found that rice is on the top of the province's products. So, rice and some other agriculture products are important for the province to be promoted as the province of agricultural production. As the statistics between 1998-2001 show in Table 7.1, Chiang Rai produces a large portion of Thailand's rice, perhaps double that of the other relevant provinces in the north of Thailand, such as Payao, Lampang, Lampun, Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Sorn provinces (http://www.oae.go.th, 11/08/ 2008).

Province	**Planted area (Rais)**			**Production (tons)**		
	1998/1999	**1999/2000**	**2000/2001**	**1998/1999**	**1999/20000**	**2000/2001**
In the whole country	56,240,320	56,852,495	56,922,956	18,662,864	19,015,669	19,552,422
Ching Rai	1,070,980	1,086,300	1,085,185	478,146	498,611	500,509
Payao	555,741	568,759	571,407	243,928	256,011	259,839
Lampang	431,234	428,543	414,872	190,695	192,930	187,955
Lampun	153,597	131,043	131,718	70,635	59,874	61,122
Chiang Mai	476,082	481,160	464,649	224,064	236,077	239,460
Mae Hong Sorn	119,302	101,466	100,468	36,387	33,570	35,878

Table 7.1: Major rice producing provinces in Thailand: production and yield by province (in the north), by crop year 1998/99-2000-01

This helps to explain why almost all indigenous Thai people and many tribal people work on farms, and in rice farming in particular. Farmers in the three case areas (2006) said they loved to work on their farm because they have to eat rice for their main meal, and otherwise it would cost them a lot to buy from other people. Moreover, they felt happy to work at farming with their family or relatives or with their neighbours. The shared experience of rice working creates a better chance for local people to join together in one's farm working. It has become a tradition for Thai people to share time and to work together in farm work. One can say that working in farming is a way for local people to join together and share their ideas and conversation among their group.

The second finding is that the local people, farmers in particular, are strongly tied to the land and they manage to work on their fields all year round. For example, they would plant wet rice in the rainy season, and after the harvesting they would crop other plants such as beans or they might replant their wet rice again. It means that they can grow rice at least twice a year. A representative of the Tourism Authority of Thailand acknowledged that for local people, rice farming is prevalent in Chiang Rai (2006): *'Farmers like to work on their field and some of them can grow rice two times a year. That depends on water resources to support the field or it depends on irrigation systems to provide for their crops. The province is an agriculture area, so some areas can provide agrotourism for visitors along with their farm works, such as at the highland Royal project, which provides agriculture and tourism to visitors all year round'.* Farmers in these three villages often explained about their paddy fields that *'We normally start to plant the paddy field for wet rice from May to November yearly. After that it depends on water or good irrigation, so you can grow another time for the rice between January until April or May...In the last few years we have been able to make a second time for the rice field because we had good irrigation to support our fields... We are happy to work on our farms because we are farmers and we get benefits from the farm (money and meals)'.* Thus, it seems there are two reasons that local people work and are tied to the land. The first is that they are happy to work in their farm jobs, and the second concerns economic reasons that they can gain money from the jobs and the products can provide their meals as well.

The last finding concerns local people's pride in their traditional ways, such as their unique tribal dressing and costumes and their cultural presentations to visitors. As

mentioned, tribal people have their own unique costumes and they are proud of their outstanding cultural tourism. They feel that it is their distinctive way of living and it can attract visitors to come to their villages, as at Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit. The visitors visited the villages because these two villages have tribal people who have their own traditional unique culture and they live near natural areas, forestry and the main river of the city. However, there might be many of these local people who seldom wear their traditional dress because its cost is rising and it takes a longer time to pay for it. But, almost all villagers put on their traditional clothes on the Buddhist day at Yang Kham Nu or every Sunday at the church in Ruammit. The local people feel happy to show their culture to visitors and they feel that it is a way of saving their traditional ways of life for their new generations. Research by Chamnankij (2006) shows that tourism can have a positive impact in saving local culture, such as the tribal dressing, through it being shown to tourists. Moreover, local people in the two villages at Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit (2006) said they felt comfortable with their traditional dress as their dressing is not only for visitors, but it is also their unique way. Some tribal people added that *'We know and understand that our culture, such as dressing, attracts the visitors...We love to show it to tourists...but we like to be comfortable with our normal dress like yours [the interviewer] and the people from the city [Chiang Rai city]. But, it does not mean that we have left our dressing behind...you will see we dress in our traditional clothes on Sunday weekly at the church'* (a Hmong leader, 2006). Thus, this traditional dressing will likely be conserved for the future, but it will be changed from wearing daily to be once a week instead due to the change to modernity.

In this review of the villagers' beliefs about sustainable development and "appropriate livelihoods", two things were discovered. The first thing is about the locals' traditional work or their traditional ways of life. The villages have worked on farms, rice field in particular for many years. It is traditional work that they have carried on for a long time, since when they settled in the villages. The rice is produced for themselves for subsistence and also for economic reasons in the community. Another aspect of "appropriate livelihoods" and sustainability concerns locals' traditional culture that they can adapt from their traditional ways to the current world of tourists in their own communities. This means they can save their culture, such as their traditional dress, for their new generations and also for tourism.

7.2.2 Villagers' beliefs about resource conservation and "appropriate livelihoods"

It is not surprising that villagers were concerned about the kinds of resources that supported their livelihoods and local ways of living, especially whatever could increase their agricultural productivity. These communities regarded their main resources as the forest and water for their farming. They were concerned about all their agriculture, and these resources were relevant to their sense of "appropriate livelihoods" and they were also relevant to the local ways of life as they were agricultural societies.

Local people were very much concerned about conserving their local resources, such as their adjacent forests, because it is an important source of resources for their livelihood. For example, the local people needed sources of water from the forest for their farming and this depended on watershed management. The result of this conservation gives them water for farming. At Rong Born, local people agreed that they got water for farming from their community forest and they also got food from the forest, such as bamboo shoots and mushrooms. Therefore, the villagers of Rong Born encouraged each other to become members of the forest conservation groups set up by the Department of Forestry and Chiang Rai Rajabhat University. Many villagers added that *'After the forest has been conserved since 1995 ...the water has grown much more than the time before the conservation began. We can grow rice twice a year...we get water from the forest and also from the irrigation system as well...We can say the conservation has been done in the right way for us'* (a farmer at Rong Born, 2006). Local people believed that their conservation gave them sources to support their "appropriate livelihoods", such as water for farming and also some wild products for their lives.

A second finding was that the villages widely believed in the need to protect local natural resources. In two villages some locals believe in animism, including a belief in a forest spirit that can help the community to protect its forest from being cut down by people. Although they had never seen the spirits, it was spread by word of mouth. Mulder (1990) notes that in Thai society there is a belief in spirits, such as the God of land. This belief could help the community respect and use the land in appropriate ways. It is a good way to protect resources from being destroyed because it

was believed that cutting down trees would bring bad luck and bad dreams. In Rong Born some villagers believed in a forest spirit and they expected that the spirit would protect their forest from bad things, in particular from being destroyed by people from outside. Villagers said about the spirit with regard to their natural resources: *'It was spread by word of mouth that if we cut down a tree without any permission from the spirit and the village, then we would get bad luck... For example, a man in the village cut down a tree and he was asked to pay a penalty. But he had not enough money to pay, so he arranged to pay in installments. Just a few months later he passed away and we believe that it was the forest spirit who took him because he did the wrong thing in the village'* (a wild hunter at Rong Born, 2006). Thus, the belief in animism was a good way for local people to use as good tool to protect their natural resource, such as the community forest at Rong Born.

Local people also believed that if they protected their community forest, it will provide them with a good environment in order to maintain their livelihoods. This is not only for their own livelihoods, but also for their next generation. Thus, they have encouraged younger people to join in conservation activity, such as in the community forest conservation work. They, for example, train younger people in forest conservation by taking them to the forest to learn about the value of different trees for their ways of life, and they also plant new trees. They considered these activities to be important as a means to promote environmental conservation for sustainability. The people of Rong Born village saw the importance of community forest conservation and they encouraged their younger generations to join in the conservation activity. Both older and younger people at Rong Born (2006) valued this because they liked to live in a good environment and to continue to do so. Representatives of youth at Rong Born explained about their community forest involvement: *'We were invited to join with the community forest activities, such as learning about what kind of trees there are in the forest and learning to know their importance to our living. We were asked many times to be a translator from the northern Thai language to central Thai for visitors... we worked with elder people... Yes, we enjoyed the activity'*. So, this belief was one positive way to let young people or new generations acknowledge their livelihoods and it is an appropriate way to guide the new generation to resource conservation practices in their way of life in the community.

The resource conservation and the local people's sense of "appropriate livelihoods" had two keys features. The first was how local people conserved their resources for themselves. This related to their traditional ways whereby they asked and leaned about resource conservation from the elderly. It was helpful to local people for their conservation to have their traditional beliefs, such their belief in spirits for protecting their resources. And the second thing about "appropriate livelihoods" was the idea of local people to engage young people in the village activities. This practice possibly led the new generation to see the importance of the resources and how they could join in and help with their conservation.

7.2.3 Enhancing the employment opportunities of young people in the community

Employment and opportunity of work in the study areas mainly arose from farming, especially rice farming and some other crops after the rice harvesting. Most older people were farmers and they worked in the fields. Working in the villages took on such forms as preparing the land for cropping, flooding the land for padding, and then harvesting the crops. However, many parents wanted their young people to get a better education in order to get better paid jobs outside of the villages. At the same time, however, they wanted these young people if possible to live in the villages in order to maintain the community with its ways of life. In practice, young people may leave the village to work outside the village during the day and return at night, or they may leave the village during the week to return back at the weekend, or they may leave the village to work for periods of months or several years and then return back to live in the villages, and some people leave the villages in order to find work and then return to live in the village in their retirement. This pattern of mobility allows young people to earn additional money but to maintain their ties with the village.

The research found that farming jobs are available for young people within the villages, but these young people have often been convinced by their parents that farm work is a difficult way of making their living. Consequently, many young people prefer to work in a nearby town or city rather than work on their farm land within the village. This is because a life in the town or city looks more modern than living in their village in terms of facilities. So, villagers said they wanted their young people to get jobs

outside as they could earn more money in that way rather than working in the village. It is widely believed within these communities that the best jobs are to be had working in a nearby town and city rather than working in agriculture. A comparison between farm work and work in the city, such as hotel jobs, was explained by a youth at Ruammit (2006): *' I work in a hotel near the city. I am paid monthly plus a good service charge, but if I work on the farm I might earn less than I get at this moment...I respect farm work, but my personal idea is that I like to work at the hotel'.* And another example was stated by a souvenir shop worker at Ruammit (2006): *'I think working on a farm in a hard job compared to my job...My brother is studying Law at a university in Chiang Rai...I do not want him to work on a farm...I hope he will get a good job in the city or other big city...It provides more money than farming.*' From these two examples it seems that, even if there were jobs available in the community, the new generation would avoid farm work due to them having higher education and also being convinced by their parents.

As shown here, youths who had higher education did not like to work on a farm. Apparently at present, all young people have to stay at school until the age of 15 (http://www.obec.go.th/ 03/05/2009). However, many parents of young people want their children to get higher education, including university education. They want this because they believe it is important in order to get better paid jobs, and because they believe farming work is hard work. Therefore they often try to get jobs in industries or businesses in the town centre or city. Once they left the village and work outside they often don't want to return to working on farm. The local people said that if their young people got a high level of education, they would get a better job which is better paid and it would be easier work than working on the farm. Many farmers (2006) in the three villages discussed their youths and working on the farm: *' A farm job is a hard job...We [farmers] have to work in strong sunlight...very hot and humid...and the earnings after the harvest are less than people who work in the city centre, such as officers...I would prefer my children to get higher education in order to get a well-paid job in the city centre or some other big cities'* (a farmer at Rong Born). If so, more of the new generation will leave farms and take work in the city instead. However, they also assumed that the future of farm jobs would be better because there would be more tools and high technology to make the job easier than at the present. One more thing the farmers added was that farm jobs in the future must be paid quite highly for the farm

processing as the job would be related to high technology production. This could cost more budget on farm processing which reflects the higher cost of farm products. If so, it would still be good for the new generation to get involved in farm jobs.

One surprising finding of the research was that if young people or other people go to work outside the villages for some time, many of them usually return to the village to settle down once they had enough money to be able to do so. This was often because they loved the social and familial networks and socializing often found in village life, including the tie of staying with a large family (Mulder, 1990; Nartsupa, 2004). They also come back because they still have land of their own, which can be worked on by farming. Once they earn enough money they will come back to run their farms. Local people in Rong Born and Ruammit said that many of their members worked outside the village, but that they would return when they got some money to do jobs in the village. A food shop owner at Ruammit (2006) claimed that *'I had once worked in industry in another province...After years [7 years] I returned home here [at Ruammit] to settle down here...I opened a small food shop for both locals and visitors... It is not bad...and I can stay with my family...My parents are getting old and they need me to look after them'*, and a farmer at Rong Born said *'Look at that house...their daughter works in Bangkok, but she sends money back to her parents...She returns home yearly...she said she would come back to settle when she earns enough money'*. It seems to be important for local people that they can live with the family when they can settle down in the village.

Thus, enhancing the employment opportunities of young people in the community could include ensuring farm jobs were available for local people, but sometimes they just left because they had higher education which they believed enabled them to earn more money than farm jobs. Moreover, the young people prefer to live with good facilities such as those in the city centre. So, the farm jobs in the future possibly will have more high technology to make the work more convenient. This might encourage the new generation or the young people to cooperate in farm jobs since it uses high and convenient technology in farm processing, and this might allow future farmers to receive more income from their farm jobs.

7.2.4 Adapting to changes in resource use in order to maintain "appropriate livelihoods"

The Thai people have a close relationship with nature, in particular with the community forest. Being tied to the land and nature strongly influences their lives and beliefs (Forsyth, and Walker, 2008; Ganjanapan, 2000). Natural resources, for example, are important in order to support their agricultural practices. It is not a surprise that many local people want their community to take care of their community forest resources. The people are concerned about their natural resources because they support their local ways of life, such as forest and water sources. However, modernisation and changing expectations of the villagers meant that inevitably they have to adapt to changes both from both outside and from within the villages. Many of these adaptations were reflected in the way in which they used their natural resources.

It was found that in fact most of the changes brought about by modernity were not resulting in harm to the way natural resources were being used in the area. This was because local people generally understand and are seeking to conserve their resources, such as their community forest areas. The villagers accepted that they like modernity brought into the villages, such as good roads, good electricity and good facilities in the village, but they felt that these did no harm to their natural resources. Apparently, most of them realized about the importance of nature conservation for sustainability. They also encouraged each other to learn more about conservation within their community forests. They have also been encouraged by outside agencies, such as universities, NGOs, and the forest department. Most of the respondents agreed that the resources, such as their community forest, are much better than they were before conservation activities began. This is similar to the finding of Arkamanon et al. (1992) and Hongsaphan et al. (1994). They also found that tourism and modernity have led to change in the local communities in Thailand and it was harmful to nature in the past, for example local people have changed their dress to be like tourists and to be like people living in the city centre instead of using their more unique clothing. Similar to Chamnarnkij (2006), she agrees that tourists, such as trekkers have required more convenient things while they were visiting and staying with local people. Their requirement had destroyed what local people provided for tourism, for example, their traditional accommodation. However, these authors also found that it was better after

the communities had acknowledged the need for resource conservation. Apparently, local people in Thai villages often understand this and often they have begun their own resource conservation projects. They are considering their traditional ways as a means of ensuring protection of the natural world. For example, at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villagers enjoy protecting their complex forest ecosystem.

However, the cost of living in these rural areas in Thailand is rising, and therefore local people are trying to find ways in which to economise and save money. For example, some villages are reducing the use of chemical fertilizer because they are very costly. This has led to an increased use of excrement from their animals and also bio-composting, and clearly this is better for environmental conservation. This also leads the local villagers to think about effective ways of using non-chemical products. It is clearly a positive and unexpected result of outside changes in which prices rise. Local people at Yang Kham Nu often indicated that the cost of chemical fertilizer was increasing and becoming difficult to afford and because of that many of they were using animal excrement more and they were adding diversified agriculture activities to include tours for visitors of their agricultural activities and land. Among the case study villages, Yang Kham Nu is the only one that provides farm tours. An important consequence of the rising of cost of living for villagers in Yang Kham Nu was that some of them had introduced diversified activities in order to gain extra income by introducing farm tours for tourists. This course is good for the villagers because it also teaches them about sustainability.

Even though modernity had been brought into the villages, the local villages very much valued their ties to the land through traditional farming. For example, the local people still work and love to work on their own farms because they think their traditional job is farming, as discussed before. However, the agricultural process might be changed in appropriate ways, such as by using non-chemical substances in farm processing and by leading farm tours. People in Yang Kham Nu and the Karen people at Ruammit said that although tourism comes to their village, they still love to be farmers because it is their traditional job. Also at Yang Kham Nu village, they have extended farming to tourism such as by providing farm tours of their diversified agriculture and their bio-method of pig feeding. The diversified agriculture in this village was confirmed by an NGO who ran tourism into the village: *'Yang Kham Nu village has a*

particular farm. It is diversified agriculture and all plants are their local vegetables and fruits...such as banana, longan, lychee, lemongrass, basil, gingers...They do not need to buy these vegetables from outside and it saves them money...This agriculture is outstanding, and that is why I choose it for my tourists to visit' (Mae Kok Farm foundation, 2006).

So, adapting to change in resource use in order to maintain "appropriate livelihoods", is shown often to be positive. As explained above, people wanted to change their life to modern ways, but they also loved to work on their farm land rather than in other jobs, such as tourism, especially in the two villages of Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. There, the local people preferred to work in their fields and they serviced tourism for only some of their time. Moreover, the natural resources became an important thing for the local people because they realised what they have from these resources, such as their local community forest. And they tried to find ways to reduce the cost of their farm work to save their money by thinking about natural methods, with non-chemical methods being used in particular.

7.3 Notions of "fairness" around tourism and sustainable development

The discussion now focuses on people's concepts of "fairness" around the local community and their tourism concerns. This relates to the separate box on the right-hand side of the conceptual framework as shown in Figure 3.2. This is about a fair distribution in relations within the village and also between the villages and outside actors. It examines the views of the villagers about what is an appropriately fair way of distributing the economic returns and other intangible benefits that tourism can bring between the villages and the outside actors and also within the villages themselves. This related to their views about what is equitable and what represents a just way of distributing wealth from their economic activity. It is about the notions of justice and equity, and quality and "fairness" (Hyman and Brough, 1975).

7.3.1 Cooperation and the "fair" distribution of tourism benefits

Sharing benefits on a community basis should come quite naturally in the villages because there is a strong sense of community there and because the villagers have very strong personal ties in the villages based on their relatives and also based on long term social interaction and friendships. In Thai there is a phase "Khwam Sam Pan Cheong Krau Yart" which indicates the strength of ties between relatives, and this applies both within these rural villages and also within all parts of Thai society generally (Mulder, 1990). Possibly, people could work cooperatively in terms of looking at tourism as the benefits from tourism could be spread around the villages. In fact, the benefits are not spread equally. Yet, people in these three areas are likely to have close relations to both their family members and others from the same village. These relations mean it is easy for the community to set up a shared sense of community in the village

There might be strong cooperation in these villages because they have strong family ties and they know each other well. In fact, the farming regimes there tend to promote independence and competition rather than cooperation. There is limit of time in which to crop their plants. For example, in the rainy season all of farmers will start the paddy field at the same time (from May). If everyone wants to finish their field in time, they have to pay for some labourers from both within the village and outside. This plan would raise wages for labourers a little higher than normal. Many farmers said the pay for working in the field normally is around 120 Baht per day, but if too many farmers want to finish their field at the same time, the cost for the labours could rise up to 150 Baht (2.14 British Pounds) a day (a farmer at Rong Born, 2006), whereas the national standard labour cost for Chiang Rai province for any general labour is 151.00 Baht (2.16 British Pounds) per day (http://www.mol.go.th, 06/08/2008). Within the community, the local people said they know each other in the village well because they live in the village. However, they have to work on their own farm and they need to finish in time during the rainy season. This independent working often became a competition rather than cooperation among the villagers. So, it is hard to say that the local people have a "fair" concept of sharing their work in farming.

Occasionally, when the communities have worked cooperatively they have also not received the benefits that they ought to have done. An example would be the housewife and youth clubs, which have been involved in, for example, preparing food for tourists and guiding tourists on nature trails. But, sometimes despite people helping these groups they have not received financial payment for it. For example, at Rong Born the housewife club members said they had not received any payment from their leaders when they joined in the tourism activity in the village. This process would not encourage local people to cooperate by working together, due to there being no payment for the work. In the second survey at Rong Born (a year later, in 2007) it was found that no housewives wanted to work for free in providing a cooking service for the visitors visiting the village. A housewife villager at Rong Born (2007) argued that *'I and many of housewives love to provide services for visitors, but we cannot work for free...We have jobs to do to gain income for my family...This time if the village leader wants a cook for visitors, she has to pay for housewives ...she has now paid round 100 Baht a day...It is a good deal'* So, from this community study, it was found that cooperative working would be more efficient when people have something returned back to them.

However, one valuable approach used by local people was an informal shared community. It can help local people to join the group and become a unified group, such as when a farmer asks for the help of friends and neighbours to work on his farm. Actually, this idea has been used for a long time in two of the villages, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. An elder from Rong Born (2006) said *'Oh...the idea of gathering members of the same village to help a neighbour join their cropping process...It is called "Long Khaek". This method can save a lot of money from the labour cost of the farming...But the situation has changed. Money became a very valuable commodity to villagers, so whoever has more money and wanted to finish their farm earlier, they could do and paid more for the labour both from the same and from the different villages'.* Mulder (1990) argues that the reintroduction of "Long Khaek" would significantly reduce the financial burden of farming for cash-strapped households in Thailand. However, this idea is shown already to be used in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. The local farmers at Yang Kham Nu and Rong Born join a group informally to help together to finish their farming. They looked happy with the work and the way they could save their cost and time to work in the fields. Therefore, the "Long Khaek" is really helpful to enable the community to be stronger in terms of community-building.

In the context of this cooperation and the "fair" distribution of tourism benefits, it can be concluded that the communities in these three villages had good cooperative work within their communities. It was not just about their general work, but also it was about tourism services, such as the way local people at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu served their tourists. One significant finding of the research was their cooperative way to work together within their communities called "Long Khaek", as it is a way for local people to agree to share their labour and time to assist all members, starting with one of them finishing their farm work before moving to others in the group. However, the cooperation sometimes needs to bring back benefits to the members as well, otherwise it would break off the cooperation, as at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages having to pay for members when they were asked to share time for tourism in the village.

7.3.2 Retaining and distributing tourism benefits within the village

It is important next to evaluate the extent to which different actors received benefits from the tourism development activity in the villages. The benefits relate to the value of things arising from tourism and also to by the use of resources at the local sites. The distribution of benefit between different actors relates not only to financial returns, but also to the extent to which the different actors feel tourism is promoting "appropriate livelihoods" for their groups and also leading to fair incomes for their groups.

At the time of the study, tourists were brought to Ruammit village by tourism organisers, but in the past (1974) local people had had more control because they actually looked after the tourism themselves. The consequence of this is that now the villagers get less benefits as more of the income is retained by the outsiders who bring them. In the past, tourists would come and have a meal in the village, and shop in the village but now that no longer happens. Because tourists had been brought in by outsiders there has been a tendency for the length of stay in the village by tourists be reduced, so they just stayed only a few hours rather than staying overnight. This means there is less of opportunity to make money from overnight stays and from providing meals and from souvenirs in the village. The change of this distribution in tourism

benefits was indicated by local shop owners at Ruammit (2006): *'Tourists often came to the village via tour operators and they had just looked around the village without doing any shopping... They [tourists] just looked around the village for elephant riding, watching hand made products and seeing our [villagers] local ways... In the past, they [visitors] came for days, spent time with local people, stayed overnight with us...Yes, we got more money than now'*. Thus, this change provided fewer benefits for local people when tourism was brought to the village by tourism organisers.

Regarding the retention of benefits from tourism, what happened over time was that increasingly tour operators brought in the tourists and they added the places to the arranged itineraries, and these often included several villages. In the past (before 1998) when tourists were brought in to villages, they would tend to stay just in one village. This had important impacts on the retained income benefits for local people in the village. When tourists spend a longer time in one place then local people will tend to get more benefits from tourism, for example for accommodation and food. This situation was evidenced by farmers and souvenir shop owners (2006): *'The presence of almost all tourists coming to the village with organisers, and the programme was managed by the tour operators to include many other tourism attractions. That is why they [tourists] spent just a few hours at the village for their visiting'*. The altered tour programmes organised by the tour operators affected the length of tourist stay in the village, and it also changed the distribution of tourism benefits in the village.

When the small local traders and small local business people in the village got benefits from tourism, then the farmers tend to have less involvement in the tourism benefits. Because the farmers were primarily involved in farming issues, they were not especially concerned about how tourism operated and how they could benefit and distribute those benefits to the village. Therefore, they felt that the return from tourism should go to the people who were involved in tourism activities. They are less concerned about how the benefit had been distributed among the villagers. Farmers see they are individuals on their farms and they work on the own farm, and therefore it seemed logical for them to conclude that the people who work in tourism should be the people who get the benefit from tourist activities. Some farmers at Ruammit (2006) said *'People who are involved in the tourism business should retain the benefits of their works... Like small local shops in the village, they have sold souvenirs or meals to*

tourists, then they should get the benefits [money] from the visitors.' This of course had implications for any expectations that tourism should be a community-based activity.

As tourism has been brought by outsiders to the villages, it is not that the farmers are indifferent to the importance of tourism in the villages, because they recognized that tourism is important to the villages. Tourism brought communities good economic returns (Archer and Cooper, 1994), so some of villagers could gain their family income through tourism activities and service provision. Likewise, the Ruammit villagers provided souvenirs, food and accommodation and some of them worked in tourism businesses, such as through employment as elephant trainers (mahout). But, others who worked as farmers knew that tourism was not their primary activity, and therefore they did not want a return from it, although at the time they were happy to join in tourism activities when relevant. They were also proud that tourists were attracted by their village environments and culture. In fact, the villagers were generally quite proud that tourists came in to their villages. This was demonstrated at Rong Born, where several people commented that in fact they felt happy that outsiders were interested in their community forest in the village and in the village ways of life (interviewees at Rong Born, 2005).

One barrier to tourism concerned the distribution of benefits to local people when they joined in with tourism activities in their village. Local people, and farmers in particular, often had not received money from the tourism activities. When they get involved in tourism activities, they did expect to get a return because they had spent time helping with the tourism activities. The people at Rong Born argued they joined with tourism activities in the village and they expected to get a return from it. In fact, they got nothing and some of them complained that it was a waste of time because they lost their benefits from farming or labouring at that time. A farmer at Rong Born (2006) complained about the lack of return: *'Think about yourself [the interviewer]. When you work almost a day in welcoming visitors activities...Take them to the trail [community forest]...But I got nothing...I have two children to get to school ...I have to pay for them for transportation, lunch and for a snack...If I work for the village...what about my family? They have to eat and want money to support their life'*. From this argument, it does not mean the local people do not want to work for the village, apparently they

loved to share and join in with tourism activities for visitors as they were proud of their community forest. However, they needed some money in turn to support their living.

In conclusion, about the retention and distribution of tourism benefits within the village, it was found that the benefits needed to be distributed directly to local people when tourists spent a long time in the community, like at Ruammit in the past (before year 1998). But after tourists were brought in by tourism organisers, this was hard to control because all the tourism programmes were arranged by the organisers. The benefits were returned to the organisers rather than to local people. However, as mentioned before, almost all local people were farmers and they focused on their farm work rather than tourism. This was one reason why tourism would bring back hardly any or few benefits for many local people.

7.3.3 Distribution of tourism benefits between the villagers and outside actors

Sometimes the outsiders received more advantage from tourism than did the villagers. Some questions were asked about who received the benefits from tourism in the area. Of course, many people replied that much went to the tourism operators and businesses both in the village and also outside. It was also recognised that they did not need to reward external business people who brought tourists in the villages to such a large degree. Yet there was not total hostility to the external interests and the internal business interests being rewarded.

Actors outside the village sometimes could get more benefits than did those who lived in the village because they were directly involved in tourism trading, such as by being tourism business traders. However, some were from outside the village had become members of the village after they established their small businesses in the village. For example, at Ruammit there were many people, from different tribal backgrounds in particular, who had moved from outside to the village to run small souvenir shops there. After some years they became members of the village because the tourism business returned them good benefits. Some of these small business traders said they moved from other villages to Ruammit in order to sell souvenirs to tourists. They found there was a good business in tourism at that time when they first came. They then

encouraged some of their relatives to also open tourism businesses at Ruammit (Small tourism business traders, 2006). This is no doubt why there were many different tribal groups living in Ruammit. Moreover, the local people at Ruammit argued that the tribal people who moved into the village years ago or more recently were more likely to get most of the benefits from tourism.

However, there was no conflict between local people and the people from outside the village in tourism relation to benefits. Apparently, local people (farmers in particular) did not compete with the people from outside to open tourism businesses in the area because they thought they could get other benefits from the outsiders, such as by providing rental land to the outsiders in order to open small shops. However, the cost of land rental was not much money for the outsiders. It cost only 800 Baht per month (£11.50) approximately. This seemed quite inexpensive for the outsiders, but more recently after the city had economic and political problems (year 2005), the outsiders, as shop owners said they did not have good trading in tourism in the village. But, they did not want to do other jobs, except tourism. Perhaps, they had moved from another place and had no farming land to work, like the original people at the village. So, it appears to be a fair balance to both local people and the outsiders who came to the village to settle down for tourism businesses. The local people in Raummit said they felt happy and did not mind outsiders opening small shops in the village because some of them could get return by providing rental land to the outsiders (an elderly person in Ruammit, 2006).

One reason why the outsiders came to settle down in Ruammit was because the village was not far out from the city centre. So, businesses people could operate in different markets, in the day at Ruammit village, while at night they could trade in the city. During the day time tourists come to the village for visits, so local traders could run their tourism businesses in the village. After dark, both local people and visitors would spend their time for entertainment and relaxing at the night market in the city centre. Therefore, the traders could provide their businesses at the night market again, because from the Ruammit village to the city centre is only 19 kilometres (http://www.chiangmai-chiangrai.com 12/11/2008). Traders in the village said they decided to undertake tourism businesses in Ruammit because the village was not far from Chiang Rai city and they did trading in the city centre at night time while they provided trading in the day at Raummit.

In the context of the distribution of tourism benefits between the villagers and outside actors, it can be concluded that the outside actors first came into the village, at Ruammit for small tourism businesses, souvenir shops etc. After they had been running their small businesses for some time, they became members of the village. They settled down in the village as a villager like the others. It also found that the original local people did not feel unhappy with the newcomers who had settled in their village. They also welcomed the outsider into their village because they liked tourism to come to their village, even though they are farmers and did not want to run any tourism business in the village. They just feel happy at seeing tourists visit their village.

7.4 Notions of "appropriate participation" in ecotourism management

The notion of "appropriate participation" in policy decision-making was examined next in order to establish if ecotourism was fairly managed for the community as well as for the resources. In terms of sustainable management it is often considered important to share benefits and to encourage local participation in decision-making (Carter, 1993; Tosun, 1999; Reed, 1997). Local people have roles to play in their own tourism activities and in environmental use and conservation management. It is widely seen as their right to get involved in policy decision-making in tourism and environmental management. Therefore, the study concentrates here on the roles that local people played in policy decision-making for ecotourism management in their community. This sub-theme forms another separate box in the conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 3.2.

7.4.1 Community participation in aspects of local development

This section looks at participation by local people in community development, especially ecotourism. It should be noted that "participation" often means the involvement of people (as individuals) or community (as a collective group of people either in the same physical setting or with the same interests) with government or the state (Pretty, 1995). The the terms public participation, local people's participation, and

community participation may be used interchangeably. However, this study examins the actors' attitudes about aspects of their community participation in ecotourism planning and also in their local development.

It was said by local leaders and governmental officials that local people were taking part in local community development projects, such as joining in and voting for specific projects in their community. It was added that the community had also made their own decisions about the projects within their village. In fact, there were hardly any locals that been involved in the local development projects. They just had been informed about what projects were going to be undertaken. Or it can be said that locals merely played a passive role by just listening or they had only had information what would be done in their villages. This argument is evidenced by comments made by several leaders and governors, who said that they allowed local people to engage in local participation (National governor, 2006). In addition, some local people argued that they did not know about all of the processes involved in the projects. What they had known was only basic information about the project, rather than being invited to share ideas and make decisions about the projects (villagers in the three villages, 2006).

When local people were asked about their participatory involvement, they said they wanted to take part but they did not understand what participation role they should have taken. A key reason why they did not know and understand their role in participation was that they were controlled by their leaders and governors. Surachai and Nongpha-nga (1998: 74) affirm that the scope of people's participation in the development planning process in Thailand relied on the decision making of government and on the government's aims for obtaining benefits for the community. The problem is that the participation process has not been promoted to local people. For example, the local people said they wanted to participate but they did not understand about the role of local participation. So, they did not argue about whether or not they were happy with their leader's plans and with their projects to be set up in their village.

However, one community participation process that the local people believed they were involved in was joining the village meeting, which they did understand as a way to become involved. In fact, local people often just joined the meetings because they were forced to do so, with the meetings being compulsory for all villagers.

Otherwise, they would be penalised by the village committee. All of the villagers in the three study areas said that they had to join village meetings every time, otherwise they would lose some of the benefits from the meeting at that time (villagers in the three villages, 2006). From the survey, however, it was found that local people just listened to what their leaders presented to them without any or much argument or discussion between them (Participant observation at Ruammit village meeting, May 2006).

So, community participation in local development mainly involved local people joining their village meetings regularly, monthly for example. This belief was that it was a way for them to be participants within the village development projects. Yet in practice the local people were hardly involved in their development as full participants. The local people had been involved largly just as listeners about what is going on in the village. This cannot be depicted as highly successful local participation in local development, since the locals had not been involved in all the participation processes.

7.4.2 Community participation in tourism activities and tourism management

Community participation is part of sustainable development, as it creates a sense of belonging and ownership among community members (Mitchell, 2001; Tosun, 1999; Horochowski and Moisey, 2001). It empowers the community to solve their own problem and stimulates self-reliance among the community. There are a number of advantages of community participation in any development programme. First, community participation provides an opportunity for people to influence and shape the development programme. Second, people can understand the goals and objectives of the programme and develop a sense of commitment to them, and they can take responsibility for successes and failures of the programme. Third, participation strengthens community togetherness and cohesiveness. And fourth, participation facilitates the use of available community resources in the programme, and the community also discovers its own potential (JOICFP, 2000:14-15; Fannell, 1999).This study explores here how community participation worked in relation to tourism activity and tourism management in the communities.

It was found that only those people who got benefits from tourism in the village wanted to be more fully involved in tourism participation. The word involvement here often related to wanting to be involved in getting more benefits from the tourism promotion of the village. Specifically, they often wanted to know how they can get more benefits from tourism for their families. An example of this involvement can be found at Ruammit village where the local business traders, such as souvenir shop owners (2006) said *'Of course, we want to be part of tourism involvement here [at the Ruammit]...We have attended all the village meetings...I have never missed the meetings...I want to know about how tourism is going to be managed in a good way...If there are more tourists, I could get more income from these tourists'*. However, the survey also found that there was no cooperation between the small local traders in the villages, and especially in Ruammit village. Apparently, they do their own business individually. As some souvenir and food shop owners at Ruammit (2006) said: *'We had no cooperation between us (shops). We work individually...But we respect not over selling things to visitors...Yes, and we had been asked by the village committee not to oversell and not to compete too much between us (Small shop owners).*

Nonetheless, the village committees said that they welcome all villagers to join in the tourism activities in the villages. But, it was difficult to invite all people to participate in tourism decisions because people who had never been concerned with tourism, such as farmers, did not want to be involved in the tourism activities. The reason is that they did not get any benefit from tourism and they preferred to work on their farmland. The villagers, especially farmers, who have not received money from tourism in the villages said to local people who got involved in tourism that they should get the benefits and participate in tourism decision making, and not them. Thus, farmers in the villages (2006) said that *'I work as a farmer because I eat rice...If there is no rice we have to buy some from others, but I do not want to do that...And I cannot work in tourism because I am too shy to participate with tourists', 'I prefer to work on my farm than in a tourist job...and it is not busy enough to do tourism in this village [Yang Kham Nu], and 'There is no tourism in the village [Rong Born]...and when people from outside come to visit the village we get nothing...either from visitors or from the village leader'.*

An important thing for community participation in tourism management in the villages concerned good relations between the leaders and villagers. It was found that a good personal relationship in connection with leaders tended to encourage local people to become involved in tourism management. The relation might be through relatives and personal interactions between leaders and villagers, which is called *"Khwam sam phan cheong krau yart"* (Mulder, 1990). This relation makes Thai society operate in a family-like way. This relation helps the community by encouraging cooperative in working for the community. This relation can be found in tourism management in only two of the villages, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, where good relations of a family type existed between many villagers and their leader. This helps to explain why villagers joined with tourism activities in their village, sometimes working without wage payment particularly in Rong Born, where the leaders called their close committee or friends or relatives to join with tourism activity in the village. Thus, participation in tourism in the village depends on the relationships between the leader and villagers in the village.

Only in the village of Yang Kham Nu did the villagers become more involved in tourism activities and tourism management. Here the villagers joined the meeting to welcome the visitors and they could join in with the planning and management of the welcome and tourism activities, or they could withdraw when it was inconvenient to be involved.

7.4.3 Constraints on community participation in ecotourism

Community participation is just one component of sustainable tourism development (Juthathemee, 2006). However, community participation often faces constraints in ecotourism development particularly at the operational level. Structural constraints and cultural constraints are common too (Tosun, 2000; Mitchell, 2001; Horochowski and Moisey, 2001). In theory, ecotourism can create good opportunities for achieving development and community participation, but the constraints on community participation were clear barriers to the effectiveness of ecotourism planning and management.

An example of cultural constraints on local participation (Tosun, 2000; Mitchell, 2001; Horochowski and Moisey, 2001) was how respect towards their leaders and elders made them reluctant to say exactly what they wanted in the meetings. But they normally discussed these issues between their close friends and relatives, without presenting or forwarding their views to their leaders. This issue related to local people in the three villages discussing issues in their small groups, sometimes only in conversation with their relatives. As Mulder (1990) has explained about Thai society and their respect for elders and headman, this relates to the role expectations for the father, the good headman, the good elder, the reliable patron, and ultimately the King. They will avoid direct conflict and they will avoid arguments face-to-face with their leaders. But they will discuss or argue within their own relatives or their close friends. From the survey it was found at village meeting, local people had no doubts as to what their leaders said, but in the interviews they would argue about what they disliked in the leaders' planning. For example, a local shop owner at Rong Born (2006) argued that *'I did not agree with a project for street re-construction within the village...I wanted water supply rather than a modern, concrete-style road...But, I could not say anything. I accepted it and did not want to get into any conflict with the leaders'.*

While some villagers did not agree with certain projects or some agreements made in the village, they would not say what they thought directly. This was because they disliked conflict with their leaders. It is because they believe two things: the first is that they should respect their leaders or elder people, and the second is that they worried that they would lose some benefit from the village if they were in conflict with their leaders. A food shop owner and an owner of a souvenir shop at Ruammit (2006) argued that *'The leader is lazy. He just does and runs projects for the village for himself...He has a restaurant there [in the village] and his sister is the elephant camp manager...I have not seen him do a good thing to bring tourism to the village...No, no I have never heard about tourism plans or there has not been a meeting about tourism plans or any project about tourism...I cannot argue like this to him directly...I do not want to get into conflict with them, and I am happy with this [situation]'.* So, whatever happened the local people would tend to accept projects put forward by their leaders.

Lack of community participation could also cause local people to be unclear about the ideas and concepts behind important developments for the villages. At Rong Born village, for example, the villagers had a conflict with their leaders because they were unclear about the local benefits, such as the likely income from tourism for the village. Almost all the interviewees within the village said that they had never known about any income from tourism for the village. But they thought the leader had received some money from visitors to the village. According to some villagers at Rong Born (2006): *'We (villagers) had seen visitors give her an envelope of money for tourism service after touring around the village and community forest...But we did not know how much had she got...We try to trust her that she has saved the money for our village development'.* However, many villagers argued that even though they had received no income from tourism, they believed that their leader worked for their community development because they had seen various positive changes within the village. Their leader had helped to bring tourism to the village and had encouraged their successful community forest conservation. One solution that some of them agreed to was that they would like to see all people join the village meeting and to discuss about these unclear issues in order to make them clear for the villagers.

In conclusion, there were two main constraints on community participation in ecotourism. The first concerned the lack of knowledge of local people about their role and participation. This barrier could block people from presenting their ideas about developments in their community because they did not know about their roles and their rights in community participation. Another barrier blocking the participation arose from the power of the leaders. Local people gave much respect to their leaders as this is a feature of Thai culture. And without complaints or arguments form the villages, the leaders thought that the villagers accepted all they have done for the community though sometimes the management by the leader might not match the requirement of the villagers.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the views of respondents regarding their ideologies of sustainability in ecotourism management, one of three main themes in the study's

conceptual framework. It drawn on several sub-themes: notions of "appropriate livelihoods" and sustainable development; notions of "fairness" among the local people and for their resources; and "appropriate participation" in decision-making for ecotourism management and sustainability (as shown in the conceptual framework in Figure 3.2).

The first sub-theme concerned notions of sustainable development and appropriate livelihoods. Here it was found that local people could adapt their livelihoods to where they were. They felt happy to work on their own farm because farming was their traditional job, but after tourism had arrived in their villages, many of them, farmers in particular, had not changed their jobs from farming to tourism. They still keep their farming as their main job, although some of them joined in tourism activities after harvesting or after they were free from farm work. Some of the villagers integrated agriculture into tourism through farm tours, as at Yang Kham Nu. Here the farm tour was focused on diversified agriculture tourism. A second key finding here was that even though local people loved to work on their own farm, they did not feel confident to encourage younger people to work in farming. Instead, they accepted jobs in the city centre which paid more money, and they believed that these jobs and the higher earnings would provide them with a better quality of life.

The second sub-theme concerned notions of "fairness" around tourism and sustainable development. Here "fairness" often related to relatives in their own family and sometimes to groups of people living in the same village tending to work together though good cooperation. This kind of cooperation has been used over a century and is called *"Long Khaek"*. This is an idea to organise work as a group within their community, in particular in their farming. This idea can be found in two villages, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, but not in Ruammit, perhaps because they are from different groups, and some of the villagers worked in tourism, such as in souvenir shops and food sellers which might have encouraged intense competition. It was hard to ask these business people to join in cooperation, especially in farming jobs. A second key finding concerns the distribution of tourism benefits. This distribution can spread to outsiders, which could possibly have good or bad impacts depending on how local people share the benefits.

The last sub-theme of this chapter concerned notions of "appropriate participation" in ecotourism management. A key finding here was that the community needs to understand their role in participation in decision making so that local people do not simply follow what the leaders want. A second key finding was that tourism business people were more likely to get involved in tourism decision making than farmers. Another finding was that local people were reticent to present or to argue against the ideas put forward by their leaders or their governors. This was because they avoided conflict with those leaders.

Chapter 8 Ecotourism Planning and Management and Sustainability

8.1 Introduction

This chapter evaluates respondents' views about ecotourism planning, management and sustainability in the three case study rural areas. These views related to their relationships and ideologies with regard to tourism planning and management, which were explored in Chapters 6 and 7. The analysis in the chapter discusses how ecotourism planning and management operated in the three villages, and it also focuses on the roles of the various actors involved in this planning and management. The actors in this chapter refer to both local people and also relevant people from outside the village. The analysis considers, for example, the plans and policies made by local communities and also those promoted by administrators and officers within the local, regional and national government.

The chapter relates to the third theme identified in the study's conceptual framework, as explained in Chapter 3 and shown as the central block in Figure 3.2. It is influenced by the sub-themes identified in Figure 3.2. Thus, in relation to the top box in the central block in Figure 3.2, section 8.2 examines the organizational structures for ecotourism planning and management, and section 8.3 considers ecotourism planning and plans at different spatial scales. In relation to the next box down in the central block in Figure 3.2, section 8.4 looks at the management of ecotourism products. In relation to the third box down in the central block in Figure 3.2, section 8.5 explores the implementation of ecotourism planning and management for sustainability; and, finally, in relation to the bottom box in the central block in Figure 3.2, section 8.6 considers the resource outcomes, and who wins and who loses from this.

8.2. Organisational structures for ecotourism planning and management in the three case study areas

The view of organisational structures for ecotourism planning and management in this context focuses on local community forms. It also focuses, however, on some planning and management support organizations, because this support becomes part of ecotourism planning and management in the communities. In addition, the issue of the relations between local people and organizations, and the ecotourism planning process in the case study areas, is also discussed.

In terms of organisational structures, it was found that local people in the study areas were able to organise themselves quite effectively in the administration of ecotourism activities and management. For example, the two villages of Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu designed and organised tourism management systems whereby all members were part of the tourism programme in their respective villages. In particular, Yang Kham Nu villagers were successful because they would have meetings and asked all members to share their ideas and to decide whether to participate in tourism management. There was no conflict between members about the management because they were all asked in advance and they welcomed the arrangement of tourism in the village. Moreover, they were consulted by an NGO, Mae Kok Farm Foundation, that brought tourism into their village. Therefore, the local people basically had a well-organised arrangement for tourism in their community and good cooperation with consultants that had ecotourism experience, like the example of Yang Kham Nu and the Mae Kok Farm Foundation.

Relations within the villages' organisational structures were distinctive for the Yang Kham Nu case. The village was characterised by its good organisation for managing ecotourism. This is because they had a good consultant, the Mae Kok Farm Foundation, as mentioned earlier, that runs inbound tourism and also runs their tribal assistant in cooperation with a Japanese company. The consulting was for tourism services and ecotourism arrangements by the local community for visitors. However, within the three case study areas there were different organisations supporting ecotourism planning and management. Relations between these organisations and the villages depended on how ecotourism was brought to the communities and how they

work together. This section examines the structures and linkages between communities and organisations.

The three diagrams (Figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3) show the structures for organisational management and also the details of the organisations' connections to each village in the three case study areas: Rong Born, Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit villages. In general, the connections for the three villages can be divided into four levels by administrative authority. The highest authority of the administration is the national level, which is the national government concerned with ecotourism planning and management in villages. This national level relates some organisations' concerns with ecotourism planning and management, such as those of the National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP); the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) (the head office in Bangkok); the Ministry of Sport and Tourism; and the National Parks Department (the head office in Bangkok). These national level plans are for the national policy for tourism and environmental planning and management. It was found from interviews with representatives of these organisations that the national policy and planning focus was on tourism promotion in general, environmental conservation, community participation in both tourism and environmental conservation and also, more specifically, the promotion of ecotourism and community-based tourism. However, as they are at the national level, the plans and policies were generally set out for all areas of the country. Alternatively, these plans were guidelines for the lower levels to follow up in practical ways.

The second level is at the provincial and district level and it refers to two main sectors of relevant organisations: the government and the private sector. On the government side, there were the Chiang Rai provincial and district offices; TAT (Chiang Rai office); two national parks (Doi Luang and Lam Nam Kok National Parks); and two academic institutions (Chiang Rai Rajabhat University and Chiang Mai University). These organisations worked with the government, so their planning related to the higher national level, as explained above. However, the two universities worked as researchers for resource conservation use and management. The other sector was the private sector, where the Chiang Rai Chamber of Commerce and the Chiang Rai Tourism Association focused on tourism business for economic reasons. These two groups narrowed down planning and policy arrangements for the provinces and the

districts. Plans by the provincial office, the Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Association concentrated on tourism development for economic reasons. These three organisations' plans focused on tourism and gateways to neighbouring countries, such as Myanmar, Laos and China (Chiang Rai Chamber of Commerce, 2006; Chiang Rai provincial office, 2006). These plans were made because the province has an international airport and a port to ship goods to and from China via the Mae Kong River. Although the plans and policies paid more attention to the province's economic development and encouraged business people to join in and focus on tourism business in the province, some parts of the plans and policies also focused on conservation of local cultures, local resources and the environment. However, the plans and policies were again focused on general areas, or on tourism. Sometimes they seemed to be for sightseeing, rather than for the local community. Therefore, this level of planning and development is focused on tourism for economic reasons. This second level is again applied to all of the three cases because they are in the same province.

The third level is local organisational administration, such as the Tambon Administration Organisation (TAO), which approves, plans and manages projects to develop the villages under their control. This local level relates directly to the communities under their control in administration, planning and community development. Normally one Tambon, which refers to a sub-district, has 5-20 villages under its control, depending on the geography in that area. There are three TAOs administering the case study areas: Muang Kham TAO (where Rong Born is) with 12 villages; Doi Hang TAO (where Yang Kham Nu is) with 11 villages and Mae Yao TAO (where Ruammit is) with 19 villages. The plans of the TAOs include tourism planning and management in the villages.

At this level of local administration, the TAOs link between higher levels (provincial and district offices) and the villages under their control for planning and policy-making. In theory, all plans are made and prepared by villagers and then the plans are passed to their TAO to be considered. If the plans match with provincial and national policies and planning, they are then approved. However, from the survey it was found that some plans prepared by villages in the case study areas were lost or left behind after they were presented by the villages to the TAOs. For example, all interviewees at Ruammit argued that they had planned to move the elephant camp

service from the current location to a new one, but after they passed the plan to the TAO and the TAT office in Chiang Rai, nothing was returned and no progress was made on the plan. Two years passed (from 2006-2008 at the time the research survey was made), and there still was no progress on the plan. This made some of the Ruammit villagers disappointed with their TAO. Another example was at Yang Kham Nu village, where there was a plan for homestay and they provided accommodation for visitors for years (at least 5 years – until 2008). Unfortunately, their plan had not been set nor approved by Doi Hang TAO. The TAO was apparently more interested in a village other than Yang Kham Nu, as that other village was situated near to a hot spring which was an attraction for tourism within the Doi Hang sub-district. Thus, this administration level appears to have not supported plans submitted from villages to TAOs. At the time of the research, the only thing that the TAOs had agreed to approve was an infrastructure development project for their villages. This infrastructure development project was believed to be their first priority project.

The last level is about the villages themselves and it is explained next village by village. This section looks at the villages and their relations with organisations that are in the villages and others outside the villages, like the villagers' clubs and traders in the village, and the business people, traders and tour operators outside the villages that worked with them for ecotourism and resource conservation activities. Ecotourism planning and management within these villages focused on infrastructure improvement, both for tourism and also for the villagers. Some examples are plans concerning road reconstruction and the improvement of trekking and nature trails and plans focusing on environmental conservation, such as community forest conservation projects. From the survey and document analysis it was found that the villages prepared the plans after they had been informed from a higher level, such as the TAO or district and provincial offices, and subsequently before they passed on their plans for annual funding by the government.

At Rong Born village (Figure 8.1), it was found that the community forest was the main tourism resource. The village had a villagers' club and all villager members participated in the conservation of the community forest and nature trail frequented by visitors. Thus, almost all the plans were about community forest conservation projects. They also planned for improving their infrastructure for tourism, such as road access to

the top of a mountain in the village and homestay projects for visitors. Moreover, they had planned to ask other villages to join a forest conservation network with Rong Born. It is important to note that the leadership team was essential to the village for village planning and management because they were powerful and respected by all villagers.

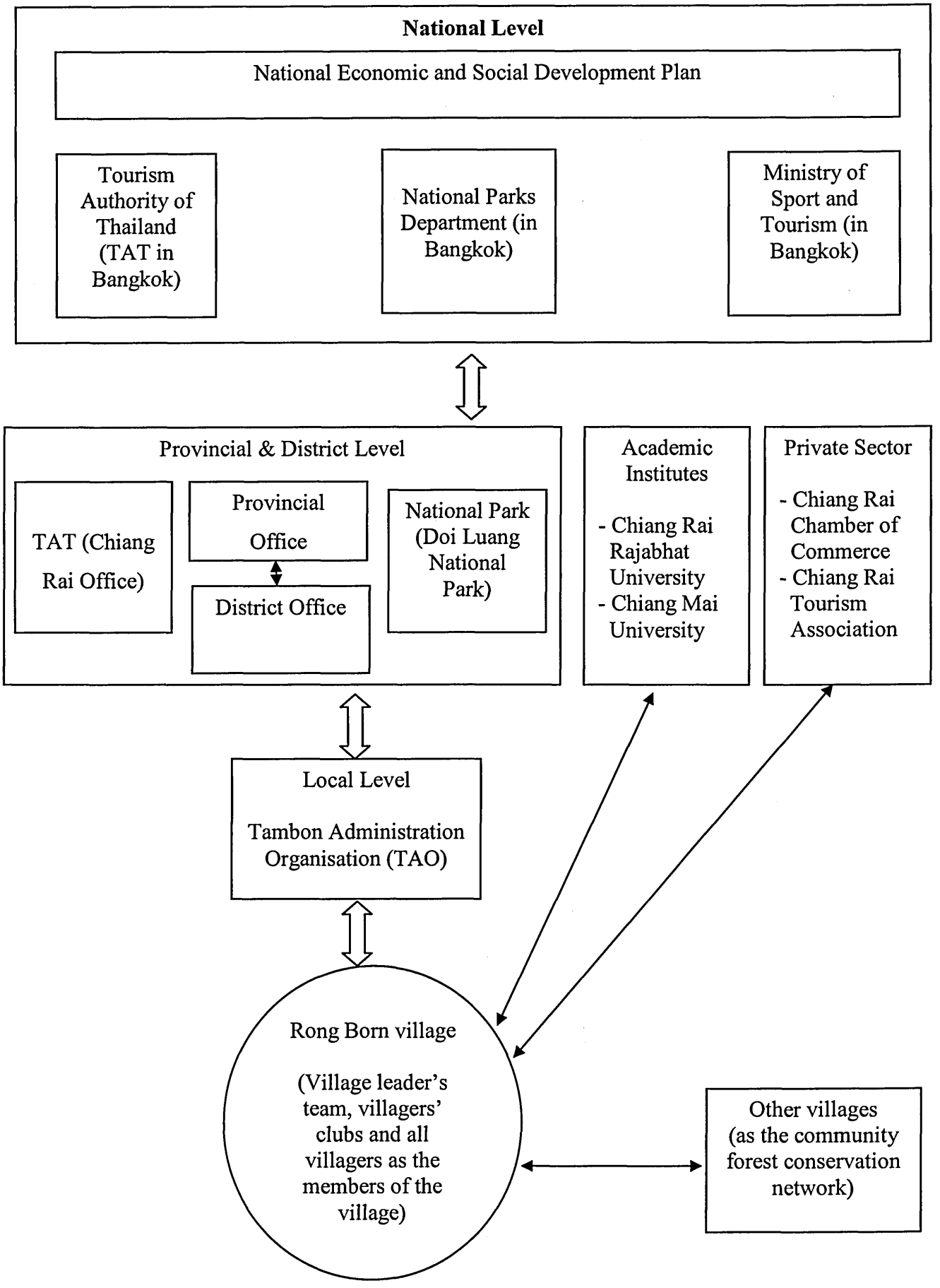
The Yang Kham Nu village (Figure 8.2) had relations with an NGO, Lam Nam Kok National Park, the TAO, the village leader's team and the villagers' clubs. The NGO led Japanese tourists into the village and the NGO trained the villagers regarding tourism service and management. The villagers seemed to have had good relations with the NGO. However, connections with the new national park, Lam Nam Kok National Park, were not positive. It might have been that the park was newly established and had not yet informed the local people about their plans. However, in the interview with the park leader, he sounded like he had a good vision and useful plans for the local people around the park. The relations between the leader team and villagers' club looked smooth because they were from the same Karen tribe. In terms of the relations between villagers and the leader team in this location, it seemed to go well, as they lived together in the same village and were close relatives.

The final diagram (Figure 8.3) concerns organisational arrangements for ecotourism planning and management in the last village, Ruammit. The organisational structure for ecotourism in the village is very different from Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, though the national level (the Ministry of Tourism, TAT and National Park Department) is similar. The last section of the diagram refers to the village and some directly related organisations: Lam Nam Kok National Park, TAT Chiang Rai, Kra Jok Ngao (NGO), tour operators, local shops, the village leader team and villager clubs. These organisations supported the village with information, and with arrangements and management of ecotourism in the village. For example, Lam Nam Kok National Park was concerned with nature conservation, especially the forest, while TAT Chiang Rai promoted the village as an interesting place to visit (Chiang Rai Provincial Office, 2006). The NGO supported the village by providing knowledge and training for local guides to give better service for tourists. The other organisations, which worked similarly to the first two villages, were the village leader team and village clubs. However, there were two organisations which were hardly found in the other two villages: tour operators and local shops. These two organisations helped to encourage

more visitors to come to the village. The organisational diagrams for the three case study areas show the above mentioned information.

Regarding organisational management in the three case study areas, it was found that planning and management were more clearly utilised for managing ecotourism when there were some organisations which had more experience in tourism management and which helped the villagers create good plans for managing ecotourism. An example of this good relationship that helped a local community in planning and managing ecotourism for their village is at Yang Kham Nu village. During the research period, it was apparent that the villagers regarded the Mae Kok Farm Foundation as a good organisation for tourism in the village. The foundation planned tourism for the village and brought tourists there. This was because the leader of the foundation was a TAO member and he was a teacher in the area. A representative of Doi Hang TAO (2006) regarded the relationship between the Mae Kok Farm Foundation and the villagers thus: *'Mae Kok Farm brings tourism into the village [Yang Kham Nu]...of course, they have good relations. The foundation helps the village by leading Japanese tourists into the village and guiding them [the villagers] for tourism planning. The villagers respect Mr Pipat, the leader of the foundation'.*

To make progress in planning and management between organisations and local people it was important that the objectives and duties for organizations were clear to the local people. This is a significant factor for creating and maintaining good relations. What the organisation is going to do for the community needs to be discussed and explained. Otherwise, local people will have conflicts with the organisation and the balance in the planning and management will be affected. An example found from the survey is that representatives from a new national park (Lam Nam Kok National Park) in Doi Hang and Mae Yao sub-district said that they were planning to have local people involved in tourism at the park. The plan explained that local people would receive benefits from tourism. The leader of the national park (2006) explained the plan as follows: *'I am planning for the park management. The plan is inviting local people to get benefits from tourism. For example, I will not build any accommodation in the park, but visitors can stay at homestay in the villages around the park. I am trying to invite*



igure 8.1: Organizational arrangements in Rong Born village

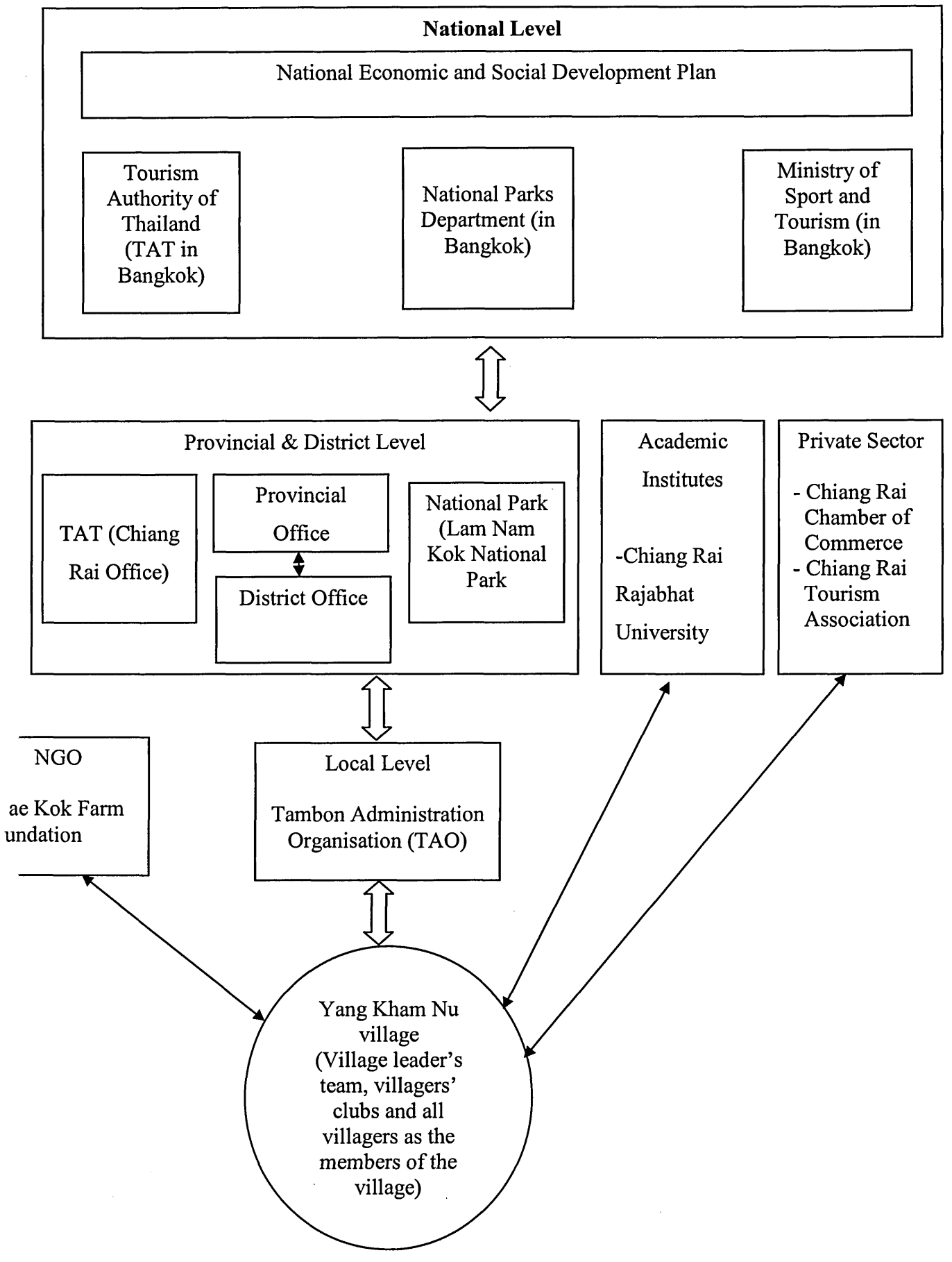


Figure 8.2: Organizational arrangements in Yang Kham Nu village

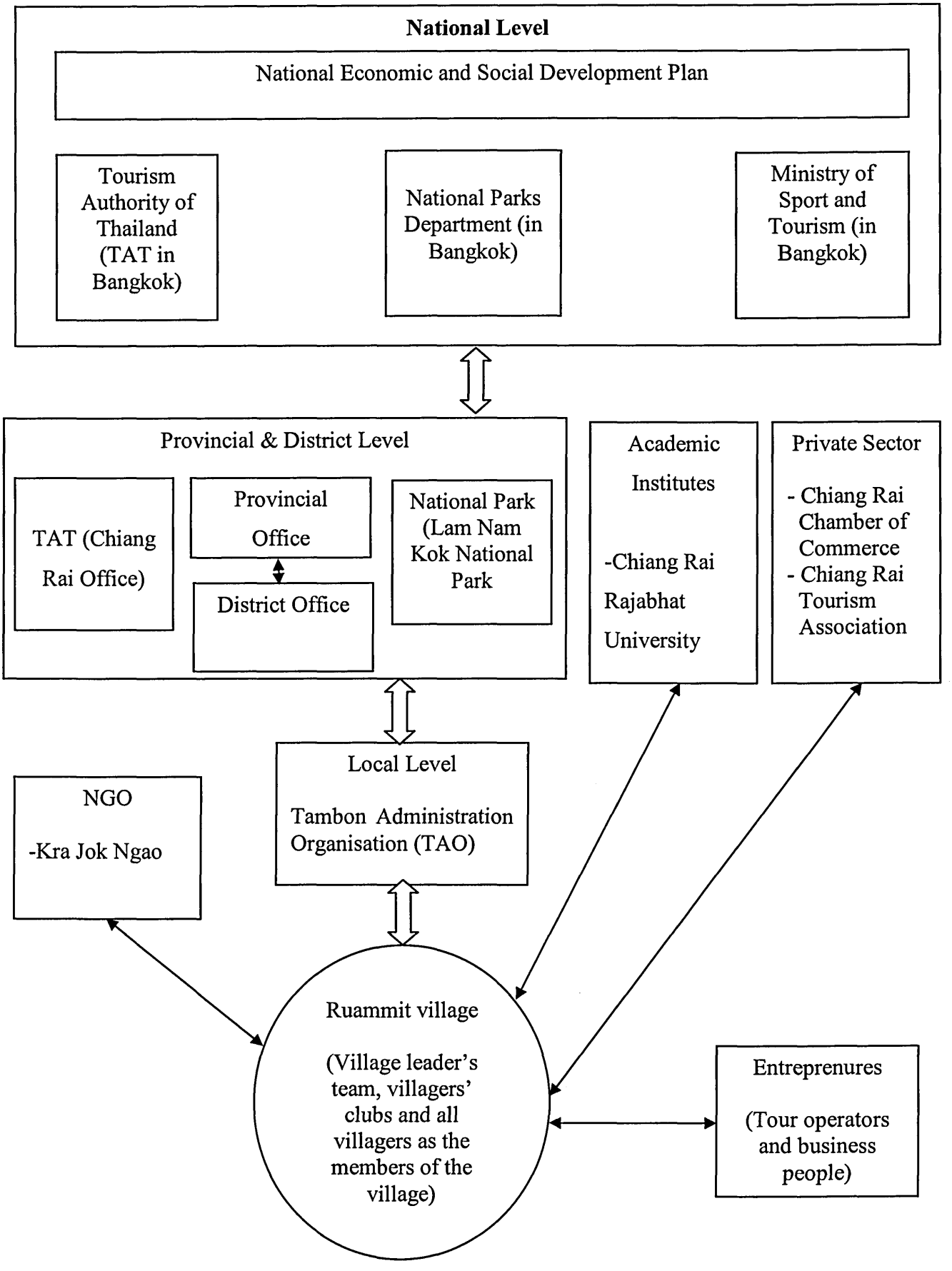


Figure 8.3: Organizational arrangements in Ruammit village

local people to share their ideas and participate in forest conservation for sustainability. I have done a project like this before and it works at another forest park, Phu Chee Fah Forest Park (in Chiang Rai province)'. At the same time, some local people did not understand what the plans were going to be. Therefore, they felt unhappywith the new national park set up. For example, two farmers, one from Ruammit and the other one from Yang Kham Nu, (2006) argued that *'I am afraid that the new national park will block our ways of living, such as we might not be able to gather bamboo shoots or mushrooms for meals'* and *'We worry about our land being in part of the park. Many of us are fighting [Ruammit villagers] ...We need our land for farming...The forest park have not done good things for conservation...I do not believe them'.* As can be seen, some local people were in conflict with the national park, in part as a result of the park management not explaining its plans to them.

At a provincial and district level of tourism planning and management, (focusing on both government officials and private sector participants), it was found that although the number of tourists had decreased due to economic and political problems in the country, tourism was still considered to be a good tool that could improve the economy in the city but not in the rural areas (Chiang Rai News, 2006). The Chiang Rai province tourism policy focused on improving the economy in the city and did not provide much support for tourism in the rural communities. The tourism policy written by a Chiang Rai province official did not give much support to community tourism. The provincial tourism policy focused on tourism links to neighbouring countries (Chiang Rai Chamber of Commerce, 2006), while local people still needed to develop the basic or fundamental aspects of tourism in their area before they could consider more wide-ranging opportunities. Also, the provincial plans and strategies focused on bringing tourists and developing infrastructure for tourism between the city and neighbouring countries (Chiang Rai Provincial Office, 2006), while local villages' plans concentrated on practical aspects such as natural resources and the villagers' ways of life.

Thus, the organisational arrangements in ecotourism planning and management can be clarified in two different ways. The first aspect is within the community itself as they have their own way of organising and arranging ecotourism planning and management. However, this planning and management needs some advice from advisors about management to carry out the plan. The second aspect is relevant to

organisations which are concerned with and related to ecotourism planning and management. The organisations may have different levels of concern that are basically based on three tiers (national, regional and local) that interact with each other.

8.3 Ecotourism planning

This section focuses on an assessment of plans, projects or policies made relating to ecotourism planning and management in the three case study areas. The plans, projects and policies include some that mainly focused on other issues but may support ecotourism planning and management, especially in the three case study areas. Ecotourism planning in this discussion concentrates on three different aspects related to ecotourism in the case study areas. The first part takes a broad view with a focus on national plans. These plans cover not only the three case study areas, but also apply to other areas of Thailand. The plans at the national level provide guidelines for other levels of planning below the national level (i.e. regional and local levels). The second section has a regional focus, looking at plans, projects or policies made by provincial and district departments, which have a direct application to tourism planning and management within the province. These provincial level plans, projects or policies could affect the ecotourism planning and management in the case study areas. The last section looks at ecotourism planning at a local level, i.e. by local government or the local communities, such as TAOs, village leaders and villagers in the case study areas.

8.3.1 Ecotourism and national plans and policies concerning ecotourism planning and management

Effective ecotourism management requires an appropriate and realistic policy and planning framework. This study analysed ecotourism planning ranging from top-down to bottom-up as the levels were linked together in ecotourism planning and management (as explained in Figure 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3). As mentioned earlier, some of the plans, projects and policies did not apply directly to ecotourism management, but they supported activities concerned with ecotourism management. This section discusses

national-level plans, projects and policies in relation to ecotourism planning and management concerned with the three case study areas.

8.3.1.1 National Constitution of Thailand

The National Constitution of Thailand from 1997, which was in effect at the time of the data collection, was applicable to this study, especially in relation to environmental issues. Code of Law number 79, Section 5 explains the country's guidelines for principles of environmental and natural resource management. It establishes that the government has to both promote and support local people in conservation, protection and the use of natural resources and biodiversity in appropriate ways, including promoting, conserving and protecting the environment in accordance with sustainable development. This is a guideline for the government in managing the relationship between human and natural resources and opening up local opportunities in natural resource and environmental management participation with the co-operation of local government, local administration, the private sector and NGOs.

In regard to Code of Law number 46 on promoting local participation, it was found that indigenous local people have a right to conservation and resuscitation of their culture and their local knowledge. They can participate in managing, conserving and using their natural resources and environment in appropriate and sustainable ways. Moreover, Codes of Conduct number 289 and 290 indicate that local administration can manage the environment and natural resources in their area in appropriate ways.

8.3.1.2 National Economic and Social Development Plan

In Thailand, the overall policy for the development strategy is based on the National Economic and Social Development Plans (NESDPs). Since the inception of the first NESDP in 1961, the sole emphasis has been placed on economic development. Natural resources and human capital have been utilised to expand the production base, occupational opportunities and national income of the country. These guidelines were appropriate for and consistent with the country's situation in the early period of national

development because of its abundant natural resources and excess labour supply, especially in the agricultural sectors.

The eighth NESDP (for year 1997-2001) showed the first change in the design of the country's planning and development. It had more focus on social participation and its strategy was to place 'humans at the centre of development'. Its aims were to use the economy as a tool to make the population happier and provide a better quality of life. However, from the first year of the plan, 1997, it was difficult for it to be successful as the country had significant economic problems which caused Thailand to become poorer and increased the country's unemployment levels.

The later plan, the ninth NESDP (for year 2002-2006) used the 'philosophy of sufficient economy' as a guideline for the country's development and administration, together with the concept of 'humans at the centre of development' following the eighth plan. Moreover, this plan aimed to balance individual, social, economic and environmental concerns for sustainable development in Thailand. This plan was considered successful, especially as the country's economic growth increased at 5.7% per year. The quality of life was deemed better because there were more promotions for Thai public health plans, such as the policy of lower medical payments for all Thai people - 30 baht (0.43 British pounds) per year per person for treatment in government hospitals.

Though the ninth plan was judged successful, the latest plan - the tenth NESDP (for year 2007-2011) had to take into consideration many issues, especially the country's political problems and the national and global economic problems. However, concepts of 'sufficient economy', 'human-centred development' and social participation were still used as guidelines for the country's sustainable development (http://www.nesdb.go.th 24/10/08).

8.3.1.3 National ecotourism policy

At the national level, the role of policy and government efforts related to ecotourism development is important, because the government has the political power,

financial resources and responsibility to control resources and services and it can steer the development in the right direction. The success of the development depends on the perceptions and actions of the government, which must co-operate with other stakeholders. To achieve sustainability any national government will have to adhere to key principles of sustainability regardless of state or national policy priority and it must consider the key principles of sustainable development that require public-private co-operation and people's participation regardless of national-level economic and social policy priorities.

The national Thai ecotourism policy provides a main operating framework and guidelines as follows:

1) Ecotourism development must control and manage resources in order to retain their original condition as much as possible and to avoid or stop travel in sensitive areas which are easily adversely affected and are difficult to rehabilitate.

2) Ecotourism management must take the character and potential of existing resources into consideration in order to arrange appropriate activities and to ensure compatibility between ecotourism and the original activities carried out in the area. This should include the avoidance of being in serious conflict with other forms of tourism and the benefits of ecotourism flowing to the wider tourism system.

3) Ecotourism development must promote educational development and the creation of awareness to jointly maintain the ecosystem of the area, rather than focus on economic growth and income generation only.

4) Ecotourism management must facilitate the involvement of local people and local organizations in the tourism development process, particularly in the management of resources, services and programmes designed to transfer knowledge and community culture. This should include local participation in formulating development plans. Additionally, opportunities should be created for their representatives to become members of joint-committees at every level.

5) In developing sustainable tourism, it is essential to give priority to ecotourism management and to give various related organizations clear roles in promoting ecotourism. This can be done through appropriate budget allocation, personnel provision, and management system design.

6) An ecotourism development plan should be incorporated into development plans at various levels, namely district development plans, provincial development

plans and regional development plans, along with sufficient budget allocation and distribution to facilitate implementation.

7) The development objectives should be supported by research which analyses and assesses all aspects of tourism so as to determine or adjust the management guidelines, to solve problems which arise, and to improve the plans step by step.

8) The law should be used strictly to control, supervise and maintain the environmental condition of tourism resources by focusing on cautioning, providing advice and cultivating discipline among tourists.

9) Operating guidelines or codes of conduct should be provided for related persons in order to facilitate proper involvement in ecotourism development.

10) An ecotourism network should be established both vertically and horizontally, through the co-ordination of information and joint-management at all levels.

(TISTR, 1997:27-29; TAT, 2001: 7-8)

This main policy acted as a framework for setting more specific ecotourism management policies which consisted of policies on (a) tourism resources and environmental management; (b) educational provision and creating environmental awareness; (c) local community involvement; (d) marketing promotion and tour-guiding; (e) development of infrastructure and tourism services; and (f) investment promotion. Management strategies have been formulated according to each management policy.

Although ecotourism plays a big role in terms of the overall Thai national development policy, and there exists a specific Thai ecotourism policy, ecotourism is 'a niche within a niche market' and it plays a small role in the whole tourism industry of the country, both in terms of income and practice. The income from ecologically wise activities (including ecotourism) was estimated to be about 22% of total income from international tourists and 25% of total expenses of domestic travelers (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2001; TISTR 1997). Although the government recognized and supported ecotourism as the 'heart of long term tourism development' or as the major form of sustainable tourism development, other forms of tourism receive more support in practice. Moreover, the direct budget for ecotourism development is low when

compared to other budgets. The campaign of 'Amazing Thailand Year 1998-2000', for example, promoted nine products including Shopping Paradise, Taste of Thailand, Cultural Heritage, Arts and Life Style, Sports/Events and Entertainment, World Heritage, Natural Heritage, Gateway and Agricultural Heritage. This was no doubt because of the government's concern about earning income from tourism, mostly from mass-market tourism.

8.3.1.4. National projects related to ecotourism activity

This section focuses on national plans and policies in the country's development, which related to ecotourism activities and ecotourism development. The plans might not apply directly to ecotourism, but they might affect ecotourism activities in indirect ways. Some of the plans and policies will be discussed as follows:

1) National Village and Urban Development Fund (One Million Baht for One Village)

The National Village and Urban Development Fund has played a greater role in communities, as the Government set a new direction to promote this revolving fund as a powerful community financial organization (Chandoevwit, 2002). This program provided one million Baht (14,285.72 British Pounds) as start-up capital for each village to develop occupations and create economic activities to generate income to ease poverty and improve local people's living conditions (Leepreecha, 2005).

In its policy statement presented in Parliament in February 2008 (Boonperm et al., 2007), the Government stressed that it would increase the potential of village and urban community funds, so that they become a source of revolving funds for investment, employment, income generation and expenditure reduction. It would also consider upgrading village and urban community funds that have good management to village and community banks. Community banks aim to help members within the village by providing low interest loans rather than the higher interest loans provided by commercial banks that are profit- oriented. All the case study villages were supported by their local community banks through this fund. This was a special situation because

rather than having many commercial banks to choose from, the community banks were the only source of local funding. It is just that this funding would be preferable and more attractive to the villagers in terms of local people to loan with low rate interest and the process was run by a village committee. This project was opened to all village members to apply for funding or loans, and at the end of the year they could repay the loan including very low interest (6 bath [0.06 British Pound] per 100 bath [1.43 British Pound] per year). Alternatively, villagers were able to pay only the loan interest yearly without a limit date on repaying the loan balance. As of the date of the study fieldwork (25th July 2001), the number of village and urban funds had so far increased to 78,013 since this loan facility became available. Out of this number, 73,821 were village funds, 3,454 were urban funds and 738 were military community funds. The number of village and urban fund members, including committee members (loans could be granted to committees as well as to individuals), came to 12.8 million. Eighty-seven percent of the members (village members) have secured loans from the funds. The revolving funds across the country amounted to 131.5 million baht (1.88 million British pounds, approximately).

Eighty-four percent of the loans were extended for agricultural production, followed by 9.6 percent for trade, 3.6 percent for community industries and 2.8 percent for the service sector. A number of people used the loans to ease their immediate financial difficulties and support their group activities, agricultural improvement and development for instance. Surveys conducted by the National Statistical Office and other agencies show that around 94 to 96 percent of the people benefiting from the program repaid their loans on the due date (Chandoevwit, 2002).

Actually, this project was originally formulated for political promotion. It aimed to promote the government's Thai Rak Thai political party. Thai Rak Thai was the main party at that time and was led by Taksin Chinnawattra. The hidden aim of this project was to promote the party to the local communities, especially in rural areas (where there was a large proportion of the national electorate). It worked for the grass-root populace as most of them accepted the policies of the Thai Rak Thai party. Some comments by local people from the three case study villages demonstrating this were: *'...This project is good for villagers... we received low interest loan...We had more money to do some things, such as more funds for producing our farm products and some of villagers could*

use this loan to improve their quality of life (refurbished their houses and bought goods for their living)'. Interestingly, from the study fieldwork it was found that most of the villagers took out loans from this fund to improve their quality of life, as they thought it was their first priority, even though some of them had applied for the loans to support their agricultural endeavours. This means that the use of the funds did not always match the aim of the project. With respect to the strategy of political promotion, most of the local people agreed with the government, especially the Thai Rak Thai Party, which supplied some funding to local people, such as the 'One Million Baht for One Village' project. This project influenced the opinions of the local people so they viewed the party as being good in terms of supporting local people in rural areas with funding. The outcomes of the project could also be seen as confirming that Thai society, especially in remote areas, respects people with high social status, politicians and wealthy people in particular (Arghiros, 2001).

In fact, in rural areas the project aimed to provide local people with a fund to support their agriculture production. However, there were no rules to limit the use of the funding. In the three case study areas, it was found that funds were used for loans to support tourism only at Ruammit village. Many of the villagers in the three case study areas said they used loans from the fund for their agricultural work. But, some local villagers said they had used the loans for improving their quality of life, for example, some of them had used the money for reconstructing their houses. At Ruammit some of the village traders said they had used their loans to set up and provide better quality of service for their food and souvenir shops for tourism business in the village.

2) The project of One District, One Product or One Tambon, One Product (OTOP)

Producers and operators of the One Tambon, One Product, or OTOP, project have been urged to set strategies for their production, which must be in response to the demand of consumers. This call was made in 2004 by the Thai Prime Minister at that time, Thaksin Shinawatra, who presided over the launch of the Smart OTOP program at the Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Center (BITEC) in Bangkok. The objective of the program was to provide knowledge and advice for OTOP producers and operators, who had registered to join the OTOP Product Champion project, so that they

would be able to develop and upgrade the quality of their products. The program was also intended to enhance the potential of OTOP producers and to help develop community enterprises into small and medium-sized enterprises at a later stage (http://thailand.prd.go.th /14/10/2008). It was believed that there were political motivations behind the development, in particular in rural areas, as the local people believed that it was a way to gain some additional income for their households (). However, the March-June 2006 survey and May-June 2007 survey for this study found that the OTOP projects in the case study areas, Muang Kham (where Rong Born is), Doi Hang and Mae Yao (where Ruammit is), were not successful. The OTOP shops in both locations were closed throughout the period of the survey. The problems of the project, as reported by local people in these three villages, were related to marketing promotion and the absence of a market for their OTOP products.

The target groups for the Smart OTOP programme included producers and operators of six types of products: food; beverages; textiles and garments; decorative items; artistic creations and souvenirs; and non-food herbs and medicines. More than 26,500 people were expected to take part in the program, which had continued until November 2006 in seven locations in all regions of the country (Leepreecha, 2005). This programme is related to tourism in that, as reported by villagers from Ruammit village, for example, their OTOP products (tribal textiles) became their tourism products, such as souvenirs for visitors.

The program has been organized jointly by the Regional OTOP Subcommittee and the Department of Industrial Promotion, Ministry of Industry. Former Prime Minister Thaksin told OTOP producers and operators that new knowledge and trends come up all the time, so it is necessary for them to seek new knowledge to improve their operations. This would enable them to securely stand on their own feet and gain the maximum benefit from their work. This could be related to Thaksin's politics as it could be considered a tool to promote his political party when he was the leader and also to help his party's performance in the elections by showing that he had done a good job for Thai people, rural people in particular (Pongpaichit, et al., 1996; Leepreecha, 2005).

The former Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin, urged OTOP producers and operators to be aware of the importance of how products were viewed. These views would

become factors to set strategies for product development. For example, if Mo Hom cloth (Northern Thai traditional cloth), an OTOP product of Phrae province, was viewed as the denim of the East, then strategies for this product would be changed in terms of designing, weaving, and dyeing. As the world population was seen as consumers, the production of Mo Hom must attach greater importance to quality and standards.

OTOP was one of the main grassroots projects (projects for people in rural areas) initiated by the Thai Rak Thai party administration. The objective was to encourage rural people in every tambon, or sub-district, to unite and create a product that represented the wisdom and culture of the community in order to generate extra income for local people during their free time. Since there are about 58,000 tambons all over the country, the government formed a national committee to select only the products that had export-ready and outstanding quality to promote at the national and international levels. This could be viewed as one of ways in which it supported the policy of self-sufficiency in the NESDP (http://www.nesdb.go.th/ 24/10/08).

The OTOP policy was introduced in 2000. This project was able to earn about one billion baht in the first year. The earnings rose to more than 30 billion baht (4.30 billion British pounds) in 2001. Thailand continues to strive to heighten the standard and excellence of OTOP products to provide the greatest satisfaction to both local and international consumers.

This study survey (2006) found that, within the three case study villages, residents had generally not participated in the project. In reality villagers within two of the case study areas built two OTOP shops (One was at Ruammit village, another one was at Muang Kham TAO where Rong Born was) and opened them for tourism, but the shops were not successful so they closed them. Many local people said they had not produced any unique product for ecotourism or tourism in general. However, the two places were found where they had shown their OTOP products in the community and nearby. At Ruammit there was an OTOP shop, but it was never open on the three occasions when the research was conducted (in February 2006, May 2007 and April 2008). Villagers said that it was under construction. At Yang Kham Nu village, the OTOP shop was empty and it was closed, but they had their own handmade products, such as their Karen cloth to sell in their village to visitors. Even though the OTOP

projects were accepted by local people and they accepted that it was a tool to gain income within their communities, many of them at Ruammit village argued about the marketing. One example comment was: *'...I do agree with the OTOP...It helps my family to gain some more income...I produce our tribal textiles and sell them to the village...,but there is a lack of market for the products...We have only waited for visitors come to buy the products...They should have been sold somewhere else...'.*

8.3.1.5 Provincial projects related to ecotourism activity

Chiang Rai province has a massive plan to be the future 'Gateway to Indochinese Countries', as the province has become the second most popular destination for tourism in the North after Chiang Mai province (Chiang Rai Provincial Office, 2006) and it borders Chiang Mai, Myanmar, Laos PDR, and inner China through Yunnan and Sichuan. This situation prompted Chiang Rai to look for some business within these geographical areas, tourism in particular. The Chamber of Commerce of Chiang Rai and the provincial plan for tourism intends to ship local products between countries to inner China from the river port at the Mae Khong River, Chiang Rai province. Additionally, Chiang Rai International Airport is preparing for flights to these neighbouring countries. The gateway also incorporates travelling by road from the south of Thailand to the North and it is planned for this to be extended in order to be able to travel to China by road in the future. In fact, in Thailand and Yunnan, the roads were already prepared for tourism, but there was some problem with construction in Myanmar (Chamber of Commerce of Chiang Rai, 2006)

Although, the province officially reported optimistic plans for the future of tourism between the neighbouring countries, in the study fieldwork there were some negative comments about ecotourism planning and management in the city. It was said that the city did not yet have a clear plan for tourism resource conservation and management and it had not clarified which outstanding products were for tourism, which would be useful if they were to plan properly for tourism and its management. It was true that the city had rich tourism resources, but it needed to focus on how tourism organizations clarify their particular resources to be managed and planned for sustainability. A representative from TAT mentioned that the city was rich in cultural

resources, so it needed to have a plan for them. Likewise, travel companies said the city was famous for cultural tourism as well as nature tourism. However, the promotion of culture seemed to be more outstanding compared to the promotion of nature tourism in Chiang Mai province. The TAT representative mentioned that this was because the city had many different minority groups to promote to visitors. Moreover, the city was not as modern as Chiang Mai (a representative from TAT Chiang Rai, 2006). So, the plan does not seem to fully support ecotourism in the city.

8.3.1.6 Local projects within the case study areas related to ecotourism activity

As explained previously, the national and provincial policies tried to encourage local communities to focus on and put forward their community plans and projects to the local administration before the local administration (village leader teams) submitted plans to local government and the provincial office. Overall, it was found that the plans of the local communities in the three case study areas predominantly focused on infrastructure and improvement of their quality of life, rather than tourism activities. Thus, the case study villages had mainly planned for general living requirements, such as road access to their communities or some other infrastructure improvement. An exception to this was Ruammit village where tourism had been offered from 1974, providing tourism activities for visitors. This tourism made Ruammit different from the other two villages.

1) Homestay project at Rong Born

At Rong Born village, there was a plan for a homestay project in their village. The project aimed to support accommodation for visitors by using and developing the villagers' rooms for visitors. Some of the villagers had observed homestay projects in other provinces, such as in Chiang Mai province. The project was planned by the village leader and village committee in 2006. The idea was to invite villagers to provide an accommodation service (rooms in their houses) to tourists coming to the village and to Doi Luang National Park, situated near the village. Many of the local villagers did not understand the homestay service processes, but they hoped it would bring some benefits to them. For example, a representative of the housewives who visited a homestay

project in another village in Chiang Mai said, *'I do not understand the homestay project for tourists well, but from what I see...They provide rooms for visitors and they must get money from visitors. We hope to get income like that. But, our village has nothing to see, except the community forest'*. This suggests concerns that tourists would not be interested in or attracted to their village, but it was perceived that the community forest and the national park near the village might be of interest to the visiting tourists. Moreover, at the time of the study fieldwork the project was still being investigated. The village leader mentioned that there would be some experiments in homestay planning and some of the houses would join the project initially before it expanded and applied to more households to share in the homestay service for ecotourism in the village.

2) Ecotourism planning at Ruammit village

At Ruammit village, there were some projects about ecotourism planning and management for their village, such as local guide training and bio-gas products from elephant excrement. These projects are discussed in turn.

The first plan was about local guide and ecotourism training for local people. This training was provided by an NGO (Kra Jok Ngao), Mae Yao TAO and the Tourism Authority Thailand (Chiang Rai office). In fact, the project had been running from 2006 and some of the local people had joined the project. The idea was to prepare and train local people to be tourist guides, especially trekking guides to the village and around the area. It also aimed to provide knowledge of ecotourism and conservation processes to local people to protect their ecotourism resources and the environment in the village. Even though the local guide training project had been carried out, there was a problem. The problem was that they could not get visitors for the local guides because most of the visitors came to the village with their own tourist guide from a travel company. The TAO was in the process of sorting out this problem by setting up a tourist information centre and with local tourist guides available there. The TAO was trying to set up a tourism centre in its office for tourism arrangements to be made in the sub-district. However, this tourist information centre was just an idea of the TAO. It was only an idea that might or might not be carried out at the time of the study fieldwork.

Furthermore, this was only the idea of the TAO and it did not come from the local community.

Bio-gas production was the second plan and it aimed to deal with the excrement of elephants in the village. This plan was needed because the village had thirty-one elephants to service tourism. Thus, the elephant excrement created a problem around the village. The idea was to use the bio-gas as an alternative energy source to decrease electricity usage and thus reduce the cost of living. At the time of the study fieldwork the plan appeared to be working in that it reduced excrement along the roads and around the village, therefore creating a better community environment and it appeared to save people money as well. An example comment from interviewees was that *'...Before the bio-gas project began in the village...It was so dirty on the road and everywhere that the elephants left their excrement...But after we had the bio-gas project, it was much cleaner...We can also reduce electricity costs by using this bio-gas...Our primary school has used the gas for cooking and for electricity as well...There were some people from outside who came to learn about our production of this gas'.*

3) Cultural and local ways of life exhibition at Yang Kham Nu

The village had planned a cultural and local ways of life exhibition in their village, but there was no progress yet because it was just being discussed by the village committee (in May, 2006). They planned to arrange the exhibition to show visitors their ways of life, such as highlighting the large mortars around the village that use water power for pounding rice to separate the grains from the chaff. Moreover, their culture, including hand weaving, their cloth and their traditional clothes would be shown at an indoor exhibition venue. This was, however, just a plan to promote ecotourism in the village which had not been carried out yet. In addition, a leader of the village (May 2007) said it might be difficult to set up this plan because it needed a larger budget and it was perceived that the village did not have interesting things to see compared to some other villages, such as Phasert village which is famous for hot spring spa tourism. In fact, Yang Kham Nu village did have its own unique culture because the villagers are Karen, and the village has community forest conservation and support from an NGO

(Mae Kok Farm Foundation) who led Japanese visitors into the village regularly. Thus, there were attractions that were proven to be of interest to visitors.

8.3.2 Power and authority in ecotourism planning and management

Regarding the power balance between the communities and actors related to the communities, the surveys found that there were some different responsibilities and duties between local people and other actor groups, over governance in particular. The differences concerned the power structure of management - as the people at the national level believed that they were the controllers (Pongpaichit et al., 1996). In the past, the management system was very focused on the national government and their power. This affected local people, local government and their administration system. The local people and local government had little or no chance to present their ideas on planning because most of the plans were ordered by top leaders. In other words, most of the local plans and management did not come from local people, nor did they necessarily reflect what local people really wanted. After the eighth NESDP (for 1997-2001) showed the first change in the design of the country's planning and development, the participation of local people was suggested to be used for community development (Samart, 2000). This idea became a new form of local management that focused on local people and specified that all orders should come from local ideas (Samart, 2000). However, the effects from previous management and administration made it difficult to change the system. Perhaps, the power of the leaders influenced the new form of local participation. As was mentioned in the previous chapter (Chapter 7), Thai people respect people with high social status, such as their leaders. Even though the government has tried to encourage local people to participate and share their ideas on management issues, it has hardly seemed to work for local people to be an integral part of the planning process. This is because the local people still picture the previous administration and management by the national government. It is not surprising that local people have never implemented their own ideas for local planning and management for sustainability - that would require a radical culture shift. Consequently, almost all of the local communities' wishes and ideas for ecotourism plans were not reflected in or supported by provincial or national plans. For example, Chiang Rai province focused its plan, which was for economic reasons, on preparing the province to be a gateway to

neighbouring countries, but villages in the case study wanted a good plan for their resource conservation and the promotion of ecotourism. The local people had no power to negotiate with the higher leaders, unless their local community leader had strong institutional back-up, like at Rong Born village where the resource conservation plan was supported by academic institutes.

The first thing about the use of power and authority found in the case study areas was that leaders (at all levels - from village leader to governor), used their power to control local communities in planning and management, such as by setting up their own committees and pushing projects into the community, based on their own decisions rather than asking for brainstorming or participation. Even though the plans and management were designed for the community, they might not meet the requirements of the villagers. Answers from interviews showed that local people sometimes did not know about the details of the projects. They had not been asked to share their ideas about the projects or they had rarely been asked to join the village planning before being asked to vote on them. A housewife at Rong Born (2006) said that *'Actually, I want a water supply for general use...this project should have been done first, but last time the committee pushed a project for road reconstruction within the village...I know they had already decided before they asked us [villagers]...so there was no point in arguing'.* and a local shop owner at Ruammit (2006) added that *'The leader and committee use their own power to set up things, such as projects for the village...no they did not ask us before making decisions for planning... only occasionally'.*

The second thing about power and authority use in the community was about the knowledge and experience gap between leaders and villagers which created an imbalance in planning and management in the community. The leaders took control and compelled villagers to agree with their ideas on any planning or management issue. The villagers did not argue if they disagreed with the plans because they respected their leaders and they thought they had neither knowledge nor experience in planning to the same extent as their leader. Therefore, the leaders had minimal accountability. People accepted long term leaders, such as a leader at Rong Born village who had been leader of the village since 1996. The local people believed that she had good vision for planning for the community. Moreover, her husband was an academic so local people were confident that she had some consultation and some good ideas from her family.

Therefore, the local people's positive opinions of their leaders could block their ideas for making decisions for their community. Thai people and Thai culture have been tied to accepting authority or a hierarchy to control all their local planning and management, including ecotourism planning and management (Boyle, 1998). Alternatively, they respected and did not want to complain or argue with any project or plan for the village designed by their leaders. Interviewees at Rong Born village (2006) said that *'Our village leader had more knowledge and more experience in project planning compared to other people in the village...because her husband was a master at a school and she had higher education than many women in the village...So, we accepted and followed the leader's ideas on her village planning and management...and we could not argue with her ideas as she was our leader'.*

The third thing about power is that some power that affects ecotourism planning and management is held by businesspeople because of the monetary benefits they produce. The business people in this discussion concern those both inside and outside the area. The business people from inside the village refer to villagers with local businesses such as the small local shop owners in Ruammit, whereas the business people from outside refer to tour operators from other provinces, such as from Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

This power generates an imbalance in tourism planning and development in the community. This is because these businesspeople can help or push the community's planning and management towards success or failure, depending on their own financial goals and their responsibility to the community and to environment considerations. An example that demonstrates these issues, is from local people at Ruammit. They said they had a plan to move the elephant camp from the current location, which they thought was too small for their elephants serving visitors at the camp, to one with a better environment for elephants. The new camp was situated a short distance from the village centre. Local people accepted the move, but businesspeople in the present camp area did not agree with it. The project had been delayed for consideration as some of the traders whose shops were near to the current elephant camp disagreed with the move and the village had no budget and no sponsor for this plan. Some local people at Ruammit village (2006) argued that there was economic or financial power affecting the ecotourism within the village. Some of them added that '*Yes, there is power in*

ecotourism planning and management...I know that some of the business people whose shops are situated nearby the present elephant camp do not want to move the camp to the new place...I guess they are afraid to lose their income from tourism'.

The fourth thing about power is that power sometimes can be a good thing to promote tourism in the area. For example, Rong Born had a strong leader who controlled the village planning and management. As mentioned before, the leader led the village to practice conservation, in particular conservation of the community forest. So, the village became a good example of a community forest conservation area in Thailand. This is because the leader used her power to encourage members to join the process. The villagers accepted her vision and her ideas; therefore, almost all the villagers followed her plans and management. The village also had good co-operation with outsiders, such as educational institutes and some other villages within the area. Answers from local people and some government officials in the area agreed that the leader was strong and used her power in a positive way for village planning and management. For example, she formed a cooperative shop for the villagers. Although some of the villagers did not understand and did not know the project well, almost all of them felt happy to shop at the cooperative after it had been running for a while. This is shown by some statements from villagers at Rong Born (2006) who said that '*Before it [the cooperative] was set up, I did not understand it and was confused about how it worked. Now I can see...for example, we can buy some cheaper stuff from the cooperative...I can say I am happy with her idea';* and *'Oh, it is a good vision of hers [the leader] to bring good things into the village...Yes, she has power, but she has been fighting for the village for a long time...that is why she is the leader of our village'.*

The last thing about power is in regard to local government, which is through the TAOs and which empowers the local community. Formally, a TAO controls plans, which have been made by villages under the TAO's control, and passes the plans from villages to the province for approval based on provincial officials' consideration and the district and province's strategies (Doi Hang TAO, 2005a). This means that not all plans from the villages will be approved, and the plans must be related to the district and the province's strategies. Two of the TAOs' plans, Mae Yao and Doi Hang, focus on tourism as it is economically one of the main products in the areas. They have planned and supported some projects for tourism in the area. For example, Mae Yao TAO had a

plan for tourism for all villages in their control because the area is mountainous and almost all local people are tribal. They promote and provide tourism activities in the area to visitors. One of the planning programmes was a competition to create a good and beautiful environment for the villages. The aim was to encourage local people to maintain the quality of their environment for both themselves and for tourism purposes (Mae Yao TAO, 2004; Mae Yao TAO, 2006). Villagers at Ruammit thought that their village was the most popular tourism village within the TAO and perhaps within the city. Therefore, they expected to be the winner. Unfortunately, they were not. As a result, they were disappointed with the competition, and some of the villagers at Ruammit (2007) said, *'We are disappointed with the competition...Our village has been known as a famous place for tourism for long time...People who come to Chiang Rai have to come to see our village, as the village is a symbol of Chiang Rai like the golden triangle...But, why did we not win this competition...I will not believe the TAO anymore...We will do what we want for the village'.*

8.3.3 Negotiation and conflict between villagers and their leaders

The local areas in Thailand, the three case studies in particular, have some power derived from both local and national governance. Local people cannot claim that there is no conflict and no negotiation within communities. Conflict and negotiation within the communities were related to the ways in which local people dealt with fellow villagers and their leaders. In general, the issues concerned their quality of life and the benefits from society and environment in their living areas, with the communities trying to sort out better ways to live in the areas and this became the subject of their negotiation and conflict.

One significant finding of this negotiation and conflict was that local people often had no means to negotiate even if they had some conflict with their leaders in connection with ecotourism planning and management. This is because they respected their village leaders and they did not want to have any argument with them. Alternatively, it is related to their general respect for people with power and possibly their awareness of their benefits from the leader, potentially through patrol-client relationships, such as having personal help and support for any advice (Phongsapich and

Khuwinpan, 2002). Thus, this reduced opportunity for negotiation and conflict makes an imbalance in the planning and management process in the community. Also it restricts the emergence of any alternative vision of planning and management for tourism by local people. The local people said that they hardly ever negotiated with, or they never had a conflict with their leaders, because they did not want to have any problem with their leaders. Otherwise, they might be socially distanced and treated as strangers in the village and they might not receive any support from the leader and other villagers. However, village leaders denied that they had ever refused any assistance to their villagers when negotiation or conflict had arisen. A question about negotiation and conflict between local people and their leaders found, for example, an answer by a homestay owner at Ruammit (2006) who said, *'Yes, I want to express my ideas...For example, I want to preserve my traditional Karen house there [pointing to his traditional house] for tourism...I asked for some money to refurbish it, but nobody cared...I want to preserve it, but I do not have enough money to pay for it... I might destroy it soon...Yes, there are only a few traditional houses which are still available for visitors to stay in...I do not want to talk or ask for any comment from the leaders... I think I did enough, but they didn't carry out any action in regard to this...In the meeting, we [villagers] have less opportunity to show our ideas because they are cleverer than us'*. However, the leader of Ruammit (2006) rejected this and explained the complaint saying, *'We [the leader's team] allow all people to present their ideas on any good development of tourism in the village...Yes, anyone can speak and anyone can argue with our [leader team] ideas. But, we had never taken any action about the plan or any issue in the meeting'*. One thing that supports the leader's explanation with regard to the local people not taking part in the discussion in a meeting in May, 2006, was that the villagers at Ruammit had joined in the discussion and listened to the leaders and they had few questions about issues in the meeting, although the leaders had asked for comment. The assumption made by the leaders was that the villagers had no ideas about planning and they had just accepted what their leaders presented without conflict or any negotiation (personal survey, 2006).

The result of less negotiation and conflict between leaders and villagers can have an impact on tourism in their community. Ecotourism planning and management in the community will be unbalanced if the leaders' power dominates community planning and management and causes an absence of negotiation and conflict from villagers. This

is because effective planning and management needs the ideas of all villagers rather than only the input from a small group. At Ruammit village, local people were confused about the planning and management of tourism, especially the elephant camp project. Some villagers had not been informed about the new elephant camp plan. The plan involved moving the elephant camp out from the current locations where there were no trees and it was spatially restricted to a better environment for the elephants. There were some differences of opinion regarding the project, as there were some villagers who agreed and some villagers who disagreed with the project. This could be, in part, because their leaders did not ask all the villagers to share their ideas on the project at the development stage. An elderly man in Ruammit (2006) said, *'I had heard about the project [moving the elephant camp to a new, better one]. I heard that from my daughter, but she did not know much about the project...No, I did not hear about this project at any village meeting...But, I do not want to know about it...It is not my business...because I work on my farm, not with elephant service'.* and a food shop owner at Ruammit (2006) discussed the project saying, *'I know about the project, that it [the elephant camp] is going to be moved, but I do not know when and where it is going to be moved...Yes, they [the leaders] told us [the villagers] about the move...no there are no details about it...The idea is from them [the leaders]...No, I did not join the project and they did not ask for any comment...I do not want to argue with them. Whenever and whatever tourism they bring into the village I am happy with'.* Therefore, the villagers were aware of the project and had the opportunity to negotiate or argue with the leader and the committee, but there was an absence of negotiation and conflict because the villagers perceived the project to be the leaders' idea and trusted their decisions.

Sometimes, personal conflicts from the past between organisations and local people will make the locals feel dissatisfied and confused. This can cause the locals to automatically reject plans or policies made by the organisation. This is because the local people have lost faith in the organisations due to past negative experiences.

Local people at Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit believe that their forests were destroyed by the forest department. In 2005, when a new national park was set up in the area by the forest department, the local people disagreed with the project and they tried to reject it. There are two other reasons that local people disagreed with the new

national park and the forest department. The first thing is the local people believe that they can preserve the forest and look after it better than the forest department. This belief stems from their comparison of forest resources and products between their community forests and the reserve forest which was managed by the forest department. Another reason concerns their land and farmland area being a part of the new national park. So, these particular two reasons have created conflict between the local people and organisations.

However, organisations such as Doi Luang National Park have tried to reduce the conflict with local people. They have allowed local people in the area to have free entrance into the park and have clarified their duties and response to the environment to local people. Some conflicts have been reduced, for example, about the rules for using resources in the park. A farmer at Rong Born village explained his understanding of the park management saying, *'The first time I had a conflict with the park management...after they came to visit us and we joined together in our community forest conservation...I understood that they had to maintain the rules about using resources from the park... for wildlife and forest conservation and for a better environment'.*

Significantly, tourism resources can be something that local people use to negotiate with the government for community planning and development. For example, Rong Born and Ruammit villages have become tourist attractions because the villages negotiated with their local government, through the TAOs, to focus on tourism planning and management. So, these villages had some better facilities for their visitors. They also had plans to develop their tourism projects. Rong Born village is planning to open homestays for their visitors in the village. The project is in cooperation with Doi Luang National Park and Muang Kham TAO. The leader of Doi Luang National Park (2006) made this comment: *'I am thinking about homestay projects and I am just talking with the leader of Rong Born. It is because this village is a strong community and they are famous for community forest management. Yes, when visitors come to the Park I will recommend staying at the new homestay to them'.* However, this project was still being evaluated in April 2008. Likewise, Ruammit village is proud of their tourism resources, such as nature trails for elephant riding and trekking and also their unique tribal cultures, so they had negotiated with both their local government and the TAT in

Chiang Rai. Their new plan is for tourism facility improvement. In April of 2008, the village opened a new tourism information office, which was supported by an NGO, Kra Jok Ngao. Thus, local tourism resources can be significant in helping local people to negotiate with some organizations to develop tourism in their community.

8.4 Managing ecotourism products

It is very important for local people to join in discussions and share their ideas on ecotourism planning and management for sustainability. This is because the local people know what they need for their plans. Plans are usually more successful when they come from the local people's ideas and planning (Reid, Mair and George, 2004; Few, 2001). This ecotourism planning and management section focuses on the local level with their shared community planning around particular ecotourism products and businesses. It is also important for the local level in the shared plans to have a good vision of their ecotourism products at the local level. Thus, this section will explain how ecotourism strategies for particular ecotourism products and businesses worked at the local level in the communities. It relates to the second broad sub-theme in the central box in the conceptual framework (see Figure 3.2).

8.4.1 Ecotourism business development

This discussion on ecotourism business development in communities focuses on how local people adapt to the change in their traditional ways due to ecotourism business.

Traditionally, local people in the case study areas were farmers and almost all of them worked in agriculture. After tourism had been brought into the village, many of them joined tourism businesses, such as becoming mahouts (elephant trainers), making and selling their traditional handicrafts to tourists, providing accommodation to tourists or providing land rental to other people to open small shops in the village. These new careers brought some profits to local people, such as those in Ruammit village. However, tourism was still not the main occupation for all local people. As mentioned

before, the indigenous and the newly-arrived people preferred to work in their traditional jobs. However, they accepted tourism businesses as additional work when they were free from their farming. Some tribal people who moved into the village after tourism had been brought into the village certainly worked in tourism businesses such as souvenir shops. For example, Ruammit village had pushed their village into having tourism business. However, this change had not been applied to all villagers because tourism in the village was changing from trekking and cultural visits to sight-seeing. Some of villagers made the following comments about the change in the tourism in Ruammit (2006): *'This village was famous for trekking and visitors came to stay and spent at least 2-3 nights with local people...We received money from them...But now (2006), they [visitors] come for a few hours and visit in big groups...business is not good at this time...the past was better';* and *'I have not see any change to my life...I have worked on a farm since I came here in around 1980...tourism came after I arrived...All of us [Karen people] still work as farmers...except newcomers from outside that came here for their tourism business'.*

The development of ecotourism businesses in the case study areas has been different in the three case study areas. The first case study area, Rong Born village, had just started ecotourism in the village as it had become famous for community forest conservation. The business was not for only one person, it was for all people in the village. The income from tourism was just a small amount because visitors were not yet being charged for their visits. The income depended on what visitors donated to the village. Therefore, the money was not being split amongst all villagers. The leader's team was saving the money for general management and development projects in the village. Moreover, the village was planning to set up a village homestay project for visitors that might bring benefits to the villagers.

The second case study area is Yang Kham Nu village, which is famous for its community forest like Rong Born. It is also famous for having diversified agriculture and a traditional tribal culture. Ecotourism business in the village has been related to community forest conservation, diversified agriculture tourism, as well as cultural education with the tribal people in the village, such as staying in the village in a homestay. The village has arranged the trips themselves under supervision of an NGO (Mae Kok Farm Foundation). It can be said that this arrangement has brought benefits

to villagers as almost all the villagers were happy with the arrangement. Villagers could cancel any participation with the trips if they were not available.

The third village is Ruammit, which is known as a mixed-tribal village. The ecotourism businesses have been connected to their nature trails for trekking and elephant riding trips as well as their tribal culture and present ways of life. There were also some small local shops serving visitors, such as the local souvenir shops. The businesses in the village were managed individually by local people. The elephant camp was the only business in which they joined together in a cooperative. This business was not limited only to owners of the elephants, but the cooperative also welcomed anyone who wanted to be in partnership with the elephant camp and tours. The cooperative aimed to share benefits between members from tourism activities. It seemed that Ruammit had more ecotourism activities for visitors compared to the other two villages. But, in terms of unity and shared benefits, Ruammit seemed to be different from those two villages because Ruammit had many groups of tribal people and this might have made it more difficult for everyone to cooperate.

Due to economic and political problems in the country from 2006 to 2007 (the time of the survey), tourism was not a good business for local people, and the numbers of tourists had decreased in the area. The problem was that the cost of petrol was rising and in the country there were protests from people against the government (the Thai Rak Thai party was the leading party at that time). Local people did not feel that tourism provided good opportunities for them (Chiang Rai News, 04/04/06). The local people compared the tourism business and the numbers of tourists before and at the time of the survey and they felt that tourism had been negatively impacted by economic and political problems. Some of the villagers decided to return to work on farms and quit their tourism jobs. For example, one mahout (elephant trainer) at Ruammit (2006) decided to quit his elephant training job to be a farmer. He explained that *'I decided to quit my previous job, as a mahout, because it did not pay well compared to the past...Yes, we received pay from the elephant camp, but in the past we got more tips from visitors. For the last 3-4 years there have been fewer tourists using the elephant riding service, so we have not had so many tips as in the past...I think at this time, my job as a farmer is better than as a mahout [elephant trainer]'.*

Although ecotourism businesses were open to all villagers, and local people in the area could share benefits from the businesses, it did not mean that all villagers wanted to join the businesses. There were some negative factors associated with tourism businesses, even though or perhaps because there was only a small amount of tourism in the area. The factors were about budget and some competition between traders, though the local people said there was no direct competition amongst themselves. One owner of a grocery shop and one owner of a noodle shop in Ruammit (2006) talked about the competition between traders: *'I sell things to both local people and visitors...compare the selling price...such as I sell a can of Coke for 16 baht (0.23 British pounds), but some shops nearby the elephant camp sell it for 20 baht (0.29 British pounds)...My shop is quite far from the elephant camp...however, sometimes some visitors walk from the camp to my shop to buy drinks';* and *'I sell noodles...I have a snake to show to tourists and they can be photographed with it...But there is another shop that has the same kind of snake show...there are more tourists there because they offer photo printing for the tourists...I cannot do the same as them...because I do not have a big enough budget'.* Local people were still happy to work on their own farms rather than work in tourism businesses because their traditional jobs were agricultural and tourism was not currently profitable due to the country's economic and political problems. The local people at Ruammit (2006) said there were no restrictions on local people having their own tourism businesses in the area. However, many of them said they preferred to work on their farm rather than work in tourism jobs because they had no experience in tourism business. The villagers said they did not have enough resources to conduct a tourism business compared to the lower cost of farming processes. When working on a farm, they could share their time to help their neighbours get the farm work completed. However, they could not do this with a tourism business. In addition, some tourism businesses had to try to sell things to visitors. Sometimes, tourism businesses had to pay in advance for the products and would only get their money back when the products were sold. (Farmers from all three case study villages, 2006). Overall, factors like these deterred many local people from having tourism businesses.

8.4.2 Managing resources for ecotourism products

Tourism resources in the three case study areas were different, so the resource management for ecotourism seemed to be different for each area. For example, the ecotourism resources in Rong Born were associated with community forest conservation, whereas at Yang Kham Nu village ecotourism resources included community forest conservation, diversified agriculture and Karen tribal culture. However, at Ruammit village there were trekking trails and elephant riding trips and they had a variety of tribal people living in the same village. Therefore, ecotourism management in these cases was carried out in different ways.

Ecotourism resource management in Rong Born village has been carried out by villagers under the supervision of educational institutions, such as Chiang Rai Rajabhat and Chiang Mai Universities. After Rong Born village had success with their community forest conservation (starting from 1995), the village opened itself to the public to visit and learn about their conservation management. They have provided nature trails around their community forest, with details and nature information from signage as well as local people. It normally takes half a day to visit the nature trail. In terms of nature conservation, they have done well. This was evident from the prizes that the village had received from many organisations for their successful community forest conservation. However, they lacked villagers to share in the management. As mentioned before, the leader of the village appeared to have strong control over the village. As a result, this ecotourism management seemed to be performed according to the leader's decisions rather than with any ideas from villagers. A farmer in the village (2006) said this about the ecotourism management: *'We [villagers] would know about the visitors coming to the village after the leader told us. She asked for hands from the villagers to join the trip...such as being nature guides or cooks for the visitors...It is voluntary...anyone can join...I think she should do something for good management..., I do not know how to do that [the better tourism management]'*. So, it is perceived to be well managed and successful now, despite a lack of villager participation.

Yang Kham Nu village seemed to be more focused on local participation in the management of ecotourism resources. All villagers were allowed to be involved in the management. This might have been because they had consulted an NGO (Mae Kok

Farm Foundation) regarding ecotourism management. The villagers managed ecotourism products for visitors by introducing their community forest conservation ways and presenting their diversified agriculture and their traditional tribal ways of life to visitors. They agreed to separate jobs for everyone in the village, such as housewives being cooks and men being security guards at night. The others, teenagers and elders, would work together to present their traditional and cultural shows to visitors. Moreover, all households could share the homestay project and all houses were checked by the village committee for cleanliness for visitors before they were allowed to share in the project. All people in the village seemed happy to manage the resources by themselves.

Ruammit village had a variety of groups of tribal people living together in the village. This variety made it difficult to be inclusive in management, because each group had their own language. However, most of them could communicate with other groups by using central or northern Thai languages. In addition, the village had more choices for ecotourism products and activities, such as trekking trails, elephant riding trips, village sightseeing and visiting and boat trips along the nearby Mae Kok River. The management of ecotourism activities such as trekking trips and sightseeing around the village was run by travel agencies from outside the village. They just used the village for accommodation or stopped for meals or for elephant trips to other places. The villagers could just provide these services for visitors and they had to follow the requirements of travel agencies. However, the local people had formed an elephant camp cooperative for all villagers who wanted to join and receive benefits from the business. Alternatively, anyone in the village who would like to produce and receive more income from ecotourism could open a small local shop under an agreement by the village committee, as local people knew that their important products are forest and cultural resources. The village committee asked the villagers and shop owners or sellers to use their cultural products to promote tourism, for example when they were asked to wear their own unique tribal clothes for tourism. They agreed to wear the clothes weekly at weekends, especially on Sundays when they prayed at a church in the village (almost all of them are Christian). All the shop owners agreed to wear the clothes to show their traditional clothes to tourists as well. However, it did not seem clear as to how the natural products would be managed yet because the trekking trails were not in

their control. The trekking trails were under the control of the forestry department and a new national park (Lam Nam Kok).

Almost all ecotourism resources in the three case study areas are natural resources. The local people have used their resources (both natural and cultural resources) to develop significant ecotourism activities. Rong Born was famous for having community forest conservation before it became an ecotourism resource in the village. Likewise, Yang Kham Nu village used their conservation process for their local community forest. The forest then became an important attraction for pulling visitors in to learn about conservation from the local people in the village. Both of these two villages have done a good job developing their natural resources to be ecotourism products. From the interviews, it was found that all of the interviewees in the two villages felt happy about, and were proud of, their ecotourism resource management for visitors and the conservation process as well. However, Ruammit was different from the two other villages because their natural resource, the forest, was looked after by the government. Therefore, they did not feel proud to be part of the forest conservation. In fact, they used the forest for trekking trails and for elephant trips, but they had no chance to be involved in the resource conservation and management. However, a new national park (Lam Nam Kok National Park) was thinking about local participation in forest conservation, including the local people at Ruammit village. The idea was confirmed by the Lam Nam Kok National Park's leader (2006) who said, *'...Sure, I am thinking about local people's participation in forest conservation and management...Yes, including Ruammit and Yang Kham Nu villages where parts of them will be connected to the park...I want them to feel proud of their national park environment when they join in the conservation and protection of the park'.*

Both tourism and agriculture are important for ecotourism development and could be linked together within an educational project. This idea was explained by both a farmer and a committee member at Yang Kham Nu village (2006). They said that tourists could see and learn what local people do on their farms. Then both visitors and local people could exchange their knowledge related to tourism and agriculture. Yang Kham Nu village was providing agricultural trips for tourists to see their local ways and farming, especially their bio-gas production method and diversified agriculture. The local people said during their interviews that they sometimes exchanged ideas with

visitors about agricultural experiences. This means that the local people can discuss and share ideas with their visitors and this interaction can guide the local people to position and adapt their ecotourism management for sustainability.

In conclusion, the local communities demonstrated that they are able to manage ecotourism products, in particular in the villages of Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, since they started developing ecotourism after they had been involved in community forest conservation. They have been able to manage ecotourism products for visitors and they have also had success in being leaders of community forest conservation for ecotourism as more people came to learn about their conservation processes. At Ruammit village, which began having tourism in 1974, villagers started managing ecotourism products after they had been exploiting the products, both natural and cultural resources, for a long time. Therefore, Ruammit village looks to be making slow progress in conservation management, in particular in natural resources like forestry, compared to the other two case study villages. The main reason is that the forests around the trails at Ruammit have not been under the village's control, but have been looked after by the forest department. The situation has been further complicated because there has not been a good connection between the village and the forest department.

8.4.3 Managing land resources for tourism

All of the three case study villages are in Chiang Rai province which has a higher proportion of people working on farms than other Thai provinces. This is because, traditionally, these local people have been farmers, growing rice in particular. Nowadays, most of the local people (80%) in Chiang Rai are still farmers (http://www.Chiangrai today.com/ 22/12/2007). Moreover, the traditions and culture of Thai people are related to rice farming, as rice is the main meal of Thai people. This is why most of the local people in Chiang Rai province work as farmers and therefore, most of the land is used for farming.

Most of the local people in the three areas are farmers and they work on their own land or might rent land from other people in the village. As a result, they are

concerned with the use of the land for agriculture, rice fields in particular. Normally, these lands have been used for agricultural practices all year round, as many farmers grow rice twice a year or prepare the land for other plants, soya beans, for example, after growing rice. However, some of the areas are changing to be used for tourism facilities such as accommodation provision. In addition, some local people are trying to sell their land to business people from outside the village who will come to do some tourism business in the area. From the survey at Ruammit village, land near the village which had been a rice field, was developed in 2007 to be a small resort hotel for visitors. The leader of the village (2006) added that some of the villagers were trying to sell their land to people from outside. However, the leader convinced those local people to think about their own future as well as the future of new generations who might be left with no land to live of. Some of the villagers said they had to think about finding a new place to live before selling their land. If they could find a better place to live in a good environment that included farming or had tourism business, then they might be inclined to sell the land. If not, they would not sell any land. One significant reason why the villagers had thought about, and were still thinking about, selling the land was that the tourism business in the village did not provide good returns like in the past, because, as mentioned earlier, at the time of the fieldwork the country had political and economic problems.

One interesting thing about land use in the villages is that farmers preferred to work on the farms and they were able to work on the farms because they had enough water to support their agricultural products. For example, at the villages of Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, local people said that they could grow rice twice a year. The two villages had good irrigation systems and they had gained some water from their community forests. Many farmers in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu (2006) talked about land use and their farmland saying, *'We can now grow rice twice a year...wet rice grows from June to November or December, then we grow another dry rice crop from January to May or June...Yes, we can have some more benefits from the land use...We can grow rice twice a year because we have a good irrigation system and our community forest gives us some more water for farming as well'.*

It can be concluded in connection with managing land resources for tourism that in tourism sites, such as Ruammit village, it might be of interest to business people to

search for land to establish some businesses, both for tourism or other uses. This is a sensitive issue for local people - selling their land to businesspeople, especially outsiders. However, one thing that could help local people to stick with their farmland is having a good irrigation system provided. Examples of places with good irrigation systems are Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages, where villagers can work on their farms all year round. These villagers would prefer to stay with the land rather than sell it to other people.

8.4.4 Managing homestay for ecotourism

All the case study areas talked about homestay projects in their village. However, most of them did not have a good understanding of what homestay accommodation looks like. They thought it was about some kind of accommodation, similar to a small resort. In fact, homestay is a kind of accommodation run by household owners in the village and it does not need much resource investment (Garrod, 2003; Chiakaew, 2005; Ounwichit, 2003). It is a way for local people and tourists to share ideas and cultures. So, the benefit opportunities will not be just about income but will be about visitors and local people exchanging points of view, about culture in particular. Table 8.4 shows the different homestay situations in the three case study areas.

One significant obstacle to homestay planning and development occurred when local people did not understand the homestay concept. It is important to make the concept clear to local people before asking them to plan or manage it. Clarity of concept would put the local people on the right track for good planning. Without this, any plan from the local people about how to manage a homestay might not be able to match the homestay policy from the national government's viewpoint. Local people thought that homestay was a house, separate from the villagers' houses, purpose built and provided solely for visitor use. This can be seen from the following interview responses from three farmers in the three case study areas in 2006: *'...It was a house built for visitors...Yes, it is a separate house from our (villagers') houses...Yes, it looks like a resort for visitors, but it is not... It is only a small house for visitors to stay overnight'.* In contrast to the understanding of the local people, the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Ministry of Tourism explained homestay as accommodation provided for

visitors in local people's own houses, perhaps in a separate room in a local person's house (TAT, 2004; Ministry of Tourism, 2005). Therefore, the conceptual views of local people and government appear to have been different. However, one difficulty that must be acknowledged here is that the Ministry of Tourism was trying to spread a standardised concept to all communities in the country.

	Rong Born Village	**Yang Kham Nu Village**	**Ruammit Village**
Homestay service up until 2006	Has not set up homestay service yet.	Has had homestay service from 2003-2006	Provided homestay from 1974-1999. From 2000-2007, there was no homestay service. It just provided three traditional style houses by the local villagers.
Homestay planning in the future (from 2006 onward)	The village leader and committee are planning to set up a homestay project and they plan to service it by the end of 2007.	Have no other plans for increasing homestay provision.	Have no other plans for homestay, but there will be a small resort provided by a teacher in the village in 2008.

Table 8.1: Homestay accommodation services from the past to the future in the three case study areas.

A small-scale project for homestay was found in one of the case study areas, Doi Hang TAO. The plan was actually pushed by the Chiang Rai provincial planning department to set up local accommodation for tourism in a village. It is called a homestay project by the provincial office and Doi Hang TAO. The project aims to encourage visitors to stay in the area overnight or longer. It provides accommodation

separate from the villagers' houses at Phasert, a village near Yang Kham Nu, that is situated close to the Phasert hot spring. Therefore, both the village and the TAO set up the accommodation, which they called homestay for tourism. The idea of the project is to bring warm mineral water from the hot spring into the homestay accommodation. In the rooms, bathing and showering like at a spa resort will be provided. The project offered funding of 60,000 baht (857.14 British pounds) to the village. The village provided this funding to only six households (10,000 baht [142 British pounds] for each house), though the village has more than 15 households. In fact, the owners of these accommodations had to pay more than 10,000 baht for the building. The project was only for villagers (6 households), who could earn some more money for the funding of the construction, so it could be said that homestay in this situation is for richer people rather than for all villagers. Some of the project members (2006) said they paid more than 30,000 baht (428.57 British Pounds) for one room. Thus, this project is not inclusive to the entire community, as it only helps some people, the wealthier villagers. Additionally, it cannot be technically called 'homestay' because it creates separate houses just for visitors, instead of providing accommodation within villagers' own homes.

Despite this, local people would like to provide accommodation for tourists in order to gain some additional income for their family. This is the feeling of local people, for example, in Yang Kham Nu, Ruammit and Rong Born, even though Rong Born has not yet provided homestay in the village. However, local people, including some interviewees at Rong Born village, did not feel happy to provide their current accommodation for visitors because they thought their accommodation did not yet met the requirements of visitors and they wished to improve it to meet what they thought the visitors wanted.

In fact, the villagers had never actually received any complaints from visitors about the service they provided. The local representatives from Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit villages spoke about their accommodation: *'I like to see visitors come to my village, but I am afraid my house is not clean enough for them to stay in, such as my kitchen...No, the visitors have never complained about that...But, I feel it is not good enough for them'* (a woman at Yang Kham Nu).; and *'Yes, I provide rooms for visitors...they stay in those two rooms [pointed to the two rooms]...I try my best to make*

my guests happy...Sometimes it might not be good for them, compared to accommodation in the city centre, but I know they are ok to stay'. (a homestay provider at Ruammit)

At Rong Born village, which has not yet opened any homestay accommodation in the village, some of the village leaders and the committee had toured and carried out some inspections at another homestay village. They are also preparing to open homestay in their village soon (planned for 2008). This issue was explained by some housewives at Rong Born (2006). They said they undertook a homestay educational trip in Chiang Mai province because they would like to provide homestay accommodation in their own village. From the survey (2006), they said it would be difficult to set up the homestay project because their houses needed improvement, such as in terms of visitor facilities and cleanliness.

Because of the confusion in the country over what constitutes homestay and the many communities wanting to open homestay services in their villages, the Ministry of Sport and Tourism realised that there was a problem. Consequently, it tried to address the best way to help all communities in the country. One noteworthy idea about homestay developed by a representative of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism (2006) was that '*...In the country, there is a programme to set up homestay standards for all areas. As there are many different kinds of homestay projects round the country, the organisations relevant to homestay projects, such as the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, need to make the homestay concept clear to the villagers. If possible, the new providers can also be trained in all communities by using a homestay workshop provided by the organisation'.* As a result of this clear communication and training, it was intended that the villagers would be able to provide the appropriate homestay accommodation for their visitors. This means that all forms of homestay must be investigated by the Ministry or some similar authority organisations to meet the requirements of national homestay standards.

However, there might be different criteria in communities around the country because there are different factors in regard to the relationship of communities to their environment. From the interview with a representative of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism (2006), it was apparent that the representative acknowledged that there were

many kinds of homestay accommodation. The homestay project standard that has recently been set up by the Ministry to arrange and manage homestay projects, however, applies to all types of community homestay service throughout the country.

In reference to homestay planning and management, it was found that there are two key things which drive how homestay planning and management work in communities. The first thing is unclear conceptualisation about the types of homestay around the country. Many communities use the word 'homestay' to describe the service which they provide to their visitors and which are different from one another. This can create an imbalance in planning and budget arrangements as had happened at Doi Hang TAO, where it provided funding for only some households rather than for all villagers in that village.

Another key aspect is the government, via the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, which is trying to set up forms and standards for homestay for all communities in the country. If this idea progresses then having standardised quality control might help to make the concept clear to local people, which is important for them to properly plan for homestay services and development in their communities. However, there may potentially be negative, as well as positive, ramifications after the standards are set up in that any standards would have to accommodate variations in homestay accommodation provision, especially between urban and rural areas, for example.

A positive outcome after the standards are set up should be that it will be easier for the Ministry to control the provision of homestay accommodation for better ecotourism management because the homestay communities will have to meet clear criteriaon , such as accommodation cleanliness and the owners will be getting more training in tourism and service. Also, having standards might help communities to deliver homestay accommodation in accordance with specific guidelines - thereby easing the transfer of concept into practice Moreover, it should be easier for the Ministry to encourage and ask the homestay owners to share their ideas on homestay and ecotourism planning and management for sustainability.

A negative outcome might be that some of communities, who could not reach the standard requirements, might be rejected from homestay membership. As a result,

they might try to set up their own alternative accommodation service which might not be comparable to the homestay project allowed by the Ministry. This potentially uncontrolled accommodation service might be harmful to tourism; for example, if there was overcharging or unsafe or untidy accommodation for tourists. Some of villagers at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu (2006) worried about their homestay service saying, *'I am afraid our houses are not clean enough for visitors...I did the cleaning...but I do not know if it was clean enough for them (visitors)...I am a farmer and I do not have much time to tidy up the house...but I think I have done it well...I'm not sure if it is going to make visitors happy to stay here...The visitors have not complained about anything'.*

8.5 Implementation of ecotourism planning and management for sustainability

This section discusses the implementation of ecotourism planning and management for sustainability at the case study sites, and it is based on the third broad sub-theme in the central block in the conceptual framework (see Figure 3.2). The discussion then analyses the ideas of all actors, both inside and outside the communities about these processes. The focus is primarily on considering the planning and management by local people in the context of the plans from higher levels, such as provincial and national levels, to see how they linked ecotourism planning and management to each other. This section also evaluates the ecotourism planning and management between these levels and the communities. The focus of this discussion of ecotourism planning and management implementation involves aspects of both environmental planning (including environmental protection and resource conservation) and tourism planning (that provides aspects of area, social and economic development) (Murphy, 1985, Duffy, 2006). In other words, this evaluation of ecotourism planning and management implementation links environmental and social aspects of tourism development for sustainability.

8.5.1 Current ecotourism practices for sustainability

Ecotourism, as it is generally known, is a pattern of tourism that demonstrates the relevance between tourism and the environment or natural and cultural resources (Fennell, 2003; and Dowling, 1997). It is believed that there can be an alternative form of tourism for sustainability of tourist destinations. However, some case study areas used the term 'conservation tourism' rather than 'ecotourism', in particular at Rong Born. That was because the village was concerned with the conservation of their forest. Additionally, it was because the Tourism Authority of Thailand had used the word 'ecotourism' to mean 'conservation tourism'. TAT later separated the meanings of ecotourism and conservation tourism (after TDRI set the National Ecotourism Policy in 1998), saying that ecotourism concerns ecology and tourism, while conservation tourism is about resource and environmental conservation and tourism (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2001).

Regarding the term 'ecotourism', local people understand it as being synonymous with 'conservation tourism' as explained above. It does not have any barrier implications for management whether the people use the word ecotourism or conservation tourism. Instead, local people are happy that they can control and provide for tourism as well as manage the environment to suit their ways of life. Local people welcome ecotourism as 'conservation tourism' for sustainability. The word 'conservation tourism' was explained by some of local people thus: *'It is tourism and environment conservation'* (an elderly person at Rong Born, 2006).*;* *'It is to welcome people into the village and it must protect the forest and the village's culture'* (an elderly man at Yang Kham Nu, 2006).*;* and *'It is tourism and it must not destroy natural resources, but conserve them instead'* (an elder man at Ruammit, 2006). Additionally, before 1998, the term 'conservation tourism' was used in the review of tourism development in Thailand, instead of 'ecotourism' as explained by TDRI as above.

In a practical way, the opportunity for local people to manage and plan for sustainable ecotourism seems far off. This is because local people did not have a good understanding of tourism and planning when the government asked for communities to participate in sustainable local development and tourism policy plans. There was a gap between the government and local people, so the government did not understand what

the local people wanted, and the local people did not understand what the government wanted. It had no action plan for local people to share ideas on tourism management, even within their communities. From the interviews, it seems that the farmers did not want to participate in tourism because they thought there would not be any tourism jobs in the area. For example, an elderly person at Ruammit (2006) said *'I do not want to join any plan for tourism...I am a farmer, not a tourism worker...I do not know about the plan and I do not want to join the plan...They [the people with tourism jobs] could do it well'*. This means the other workers, except those working in tourism, thought it was not their responsibility to plan for tourism in their community. In fact, if they were trained, they could support tourism business in the area, such as by providing their products, for example farm products and handmade products, to tourists.

Within the current ecotourism practices for sustainability in the case study areas, it was found that one important hindrance to successful management was the lack of well-managed cooperation between leaders and the local people. It has hindered the success of ecotourism and sustainability planning and management in the community although local people have been pushed and pulled into ecotourism activities by their leaders and the government through such channels as the village leaders and TAO. In some village meetings, the leaders said they asked for ideas and agreement from the villagers but, many times, the villagers did not respond to their ideas. This was because they did not see any benefits from the ideas. Alternatively, some of them thought that their leaders had not asked them to change anything. They believed that all plans were already set up by their leaders.

Thus, the plans would probably not achieve the goal of sustainability because the organization and cooperation had not been well managed. The local people believed that if they had good cooperation, tourism will reach its management goals. A religious leader at Ruammit (2006) agreed saying, *'It is good if leaders or TAOs have good cooperation...in between villages and also in between a community...for example, Doi Hang TAO (where Yang Kham Nu is) and Mae Yao TAO (where Ruammit is) are planning to manage a new route for tourism between these TAOs...I think it must be a good programme...for visitors and for tourism'*. The local villagers said tourism planning and management came from their leaders and the TAO. As a shop owner at Rong Born (2006) said *'All plans for the village came from the leader team...I do not*

want to argue with them...the plans they have done are not bad... nobody wanted to argue with the leader's team'. They also believed that some organizations did not work well together. They said that they needed good cooperation between the organizations and themselves while planning. As the research mentioned before, the homestay project at Doi Hang village was not managed and planned by the local people. This project was disappointing to some local people in the village.

8.5.2 Improvement in ecotourism practices for sustainability

One particular thing that poses difficulties for ecotourism practices for sustainability concerns local people's empowerment. Empowerment helps local people to make a strong community and it might help the community move forward towards sustainable living. However, it is not easy to engender empowerment in local people, in rural areas in particular. This is because local people do not understand about their decision-making rights in their communities due to a lack of higher education. It is also because of a lack of media exposure. From the survey, few local people read a newspaper despite there being a reading place in some of these villages, such as at Yang Kham Nu (though even in this village there was often no newspaper provided for the villagers). Some of villagers at Yang Kham Nu said the following about news updates: *'I normally know about the most recent news from the television and from the village leaders and other villagers'* and *'I never read any newspaper...I did not have a good education and I am too lazy to read it [the newspaper].'* Therefore, it is hard to help local people to understand their roles and rights as human beings in decision-making and presenting their ideas in public. Additionally, they respect and believe in people with high social status, rather than believing in the rights of the individual at any level of society, and this is the culture of Thai people in general (Arghiros, 2001; Boyle, 1998). In the three case study areas, there was no evidence of understanding of bottom-up decision making (as accepted in western theory), so there could not be true empowerment of the community in ecotourism practices for sustainability.

Because local people in these three villages lack empowerment, it has been easy for someone to lead the communities whatever way the leader wants. The three villages have had strong leaders, who have led their communities in their own ways. These

ways were probably not wrong and were sometimes even possibly beneficial, such as at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu where they had planned for their local community forests and worked in terms of forest conservation and in environmental management. These two villages used their natural resources, nature trails for instance, as their tourism products. Moreover, they had planned for their villagers to join the natural conservation projects. Villagers were trained to conserve the forest and provide tourism services for visitors. These practices, both natural conservation and tourism service provision, seem to have been successful in terms of ecotourism management.

A particular practice in ecotourism planning and management between two organisations, Doi Hang and Mae Yao TAOs, was about helping each other to promote tourism between their areas to encourage visitors to visit both of the sub-districts. The two TAOs made plans to merge trips between their communities to prolong the length of stay of visitors. The two TAOs are on different sides of the Mae Kok River, as are Yang Kham Nu and Ruammit villages. They planned to arrange alternative tourist activities to link in between the two sub-district's tourism areas. For example, Ruammit village has elephants for trekking, whereas Yang Kham Nu is known for its diversified agriculture tourism and near the village there are hot springs for visitors to enjoy. This network was recommended by the two TAOs (Doi Hang and Mae Yao TAOs) at the time the research data was collected (in February to May 2006, May 2007 and April 2008). In interviews, village leaders and a representative of Mae Yao TAO (2006) talked about their plan to merge the tourism from these two TAOs: *'We are talking and planning to share a network between our two TAOs, Mae Yao and Doi Hang. We are discussing different resources between the two sides of the Mae Kok River. Mae Yao has elephant riding and trekking while Doi Hang has hot spring spa places. It can become a reality, but we have to discuss and wait for planning ...between both of the TAOs'.*

Thus, with the improvement in ecotourism practices for sustainability, it is reasonable to say that there seems to be success in ecotourism management within the communities, particularly at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. These two villages can manage their natural and agricultural resources as ecotourism products and they are happy to present their products to visitors. Moreover, they have trained new generations to understand and appreciate their valuable natural resources and also their natural conservation as well. However, one thing that might be a barrier for sustainable

ecotourism practice is their lack of empowerment of local people in the areas. Almost all the plans and management came from the ideas of leader's teams rather than from all members in the village. However, increased education and more participation might help local people understand their role and their right to be involved in ecotourism planning and management for sustainability.

8.5.3 Improvement of the environment for sustainability

Tourism and the environment cannot be separated from one another because the products of ecotourism are environmental (Whelan, 1991). So, in this context environment improvement for tourism and sustainability is considered. The environment here is regarded by actors as the forest, environmental quality and their local ways of life.

Basically, local people have clear ideas for preserving their environment and they have undertaken significant conservation work in their community, especially in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu village, such as conserving their community forest. Conservation is a good way to improve the environment. Local people have accepted that they have a better environmental atmosphere in their communities with conservation. Moreover, they have had benefits from the conservation, such as food products and sources of water for their farms. The success of community forest conservation shows that the communities in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu village can manage and improve their environment for sustainability. Almost all of the villagers in these two villages appreciated a better living environment as a result.

The first related aspect found at the case study areas was local people's agreement to set up rules for using benefits from their community forests. Whether the rules came from their leaders (village leader and his/her committee) or were presented by some of the local people, it seemed to work for the local people to respect the rules. These rules aim to protect the forest from unnecessary use. The survey found that all three of the case study villages had set up rules for using benefits from their forest. All villagers knew about the rules and they respected them. At Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages, they had put signs and details about their community forests near roads

leading to their villages. The signs were easily seen by all visitors to these two villages because the forests and the signs were situated near the road. Figure 8.4 and Figure 8.5 below show the rules, details about usage rules for the community forest at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages, and some information about fines if someone breaks the rules and damages the forest.

Figure 8.4: The sign shows usage rules for the community forest nearby Rong Born village for all people

Figure 8.5: The signs show details of Yan Kham Nu community forest and also some rules when using the community forest

The second aspect, found at the case study areas, of environment improvement for sustainability was related to the local people using their local beliefs and good social relations within their communities to improve their community forest and environment. For example, Rong Born village compared their forest to the past (around 50-60 years ago) by asking elderly people how they used and preserved their forest in the past. Additionally, the leader of the village was eager to work for the community and she could use her good relations with all villagers to ask them to join the forest conservation. At Yang Kham Nu village, where all members were tribal (Karen) people, they used their traditional tribal beliefs for community forest conservation. Their beliefs stem from their love of living with the forest because the forest gives them valuable things, such as food, medical treatment and a good environment. As some of the villagers at Yang Kham Nu said about the benefits of living in a fruitful forest: *'We believe and were taught by our elder people and by our ancestors that the forest gives us many things...food, such as bamboo shoots, mushrooms, and herbs and we can get water from the forest as well...We will not damage the forest, even our community forest, our forest preserved...the Karen people believe that they can live with the forest without destroying it'.* This idea was supported by a representative of the National Forest Department in Bangkok (2006): *'The Karen people believe that they are a group of tribal people who love and protect their forest from deforestation. They also relate to the forest, such as their first born being marked by a tree in the forest as they designate a tree in the forest that represents their child. This is one reason why they will not destroy the forest. Apparently, they can manage forest conservation well, as many community forests in the country are managed by Karen people'.* Thus, both of these two villages use their traditional ways to protect and preserve their forest environment. Also, the villagers all know each other and live closely together. Their good relations are used to encourage everyone to work together on their community forest and this system works well within these two communities.

The third aspect of environment improvement for sustainability, found at the case study areas, was that local people had joined with other communities and offered their environmental conservation network to them. It started as a small idea for a local community to invite some other communities to share in the conservation of community forest. At Rong Born village, which is believed to be a good example of community forest conservation in the area, the community set up a community forest conservation

network with some other local villages in the area. It seemed to be working in terms of the forest conservation process. Some of leaders related to the village said this about the network: *'It is very good network that Rong Born village recommended some other villagers to join for community forest conservation...Many villages' boundaries are connected with Doi Luang National Park...Some of the villages understand and have given great assistance in protecting the forest in adjacent areas'.* (Doi Luang National Park Leader, 2006); and *'Rong Born is known as a strong community forest conservation village. They have succeeded in their community forest conservation and they are leading some other villages nearby in community forest conservation. It is good that local people in this sub-district (Muang Kham sub-district) are becoming good conservers, especially about forest conservation... Rong Born has set a good example because other villagers can see the benefits of forest conservation for their communities'* (a representative of Muang Kham TAO, 2006).

Moreover, the network process is a good opportunity for all local people to learn and share their ideas on environmental issues and exchange their conservation experiences between their communities for greater sustainability.

Thus, the investigation of environmental improvement for sustainability in this context found that local people knew and seemed to have a good understanding of the importance of the environment in their lives. They started with and focused on their community forest conservation, as at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages. Fortunately, the two villages had good relations within their communities, so they could push their community forest conservation in a sustainable way. In contrast, the village of Ruammit was not yet famous for their community forest. Almost all of the villagers, however, seemed to understand and know about the value of forest conservation. This was because they lived around mountains and they had been using the forest for conducting ecotourism trips. Thus, it should not be hard to take them along the right track for forest conservation, especially as the village was starting to do it.

8.6 Resources: winners or losers

This section discusses the resource outcomes of ecotourism planning and management – and who wins and who loses from this – and it explores the outcomes of the community use of local resources in the three case study areas. It relates to the bottom box in the middle block in the conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 3.2. The section looks at two topics. The first was what local people in the three villages and groups of people from outside the villages had received and what they had lost. In other words, it looks at who has won and who has lost in ecotourism planning and management in the areas. The second topic focused on whether resources (such as forest and environmental status) were winners or losers in relation to ecotourism planning and management by local people and outside actors.

8.6.1 Local people and ecotourism planning and management: are they winners or losers?

When discussing local people and ecotourism planning and management in the case study areas, it is quite clear that they are often losers. The question about winners and losers in this context can be focused on four topics. The topics are: local participation and decision-making; the fairness and benefits from ecotourism; the managing of ecotourism products by local people in the areas; and comparing winners and losers between groups of people inside and from outside the villages having benefits from the planning and management.

The investigation of local participation and decision-making in ecotourism planning and management found that the local people had just joined village meetings as listeners, without commenting or presenting any ideas of their own. There were two reasons that the local people were less involved in the decision-making process for planning. The first was that they had no self-confidence to present or to share their ideas in the meetings. They thought that their leader and the leader's team had better ideas than them because the leader and the leader team knew and understood the plans well and they had more experience than the villagers. Also, it was because Thai people respect those with high status, such as their leaders (as discussed in Chapter 6). The

second reason was that local people did not want to have any conflict with their leaders because sometimes their leaders might use their power in an indirect way, such as looking at the members with disapproving stares. The power of the leaders influenced local people in their decision-making. Thus, local people in the study areas were often not the winners in the participation and decision-making context in ecotourism planning and management.

Considering fairness and benefits from ecotourism for local people in the case study areas, it was found that local people were happy with their farming activities, such as rice farming. This was especially the situation at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages, because these two villages were new to tourism and did not have tourism businesses in the villages. The people seemed happy with their limited ecotourism activities. However, when they worked hard for the community ecotourism activities, they felt that it was unfair to them because they did not receive any payment from their leader. For example at Rong Born village, some people complained about their loss of time and benefits (money) from their work. Likewise at Ruammit village, many people complained that when the tour companies from outside brought visitors to the village, the visitors sometimes just walked around and looked at the village without shopping or joining any activities in the village. They felt that they had lost benefits from tourism. Therefore, because the benefits from ecotourism seem far away from most local people in the case study areas, especially at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, the majority of local people might not be considered winners in this context.

The third topic that was evaluated concerned the managing of ecotourism products by local people. It can be said that only two villages, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, were able to manage their own ecotourism products, such as their community forests, their diversified agriculture and their traditional ways of life and culture. This might have been true because they had not been involved much in ecotourism business (visitors seldom came to see their villages) and they had some organisations supporting them in their ecotourism planning and management (universities and an NGO). Moreover, these two villages had advance notice of visits, and time to prepare their products and activities for visitors before they arrived in the villages, because the visitors came in groups. This was not the case in Ruammit, which was much more involved in the ecotourism business. There, almost all shops in the village had the same

products as they no longer sold their unique traditional products. Shop owners said that almost all of the products were brought from the border of Chiang Rai and Myanmar, in the Mai Sai district (the northernmost point of Thailand that borders Myanmar). The village had set up a standard price for all shops to prevent competition between the shops in the village. Therefore, it can be concluded that only Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages could be considered winners (though in a limited form) with regard to local people managing their ecotourism products for visitors. Ruammit village, on the other hand, had difficulty managing their ecotourism products because almost all of the visitors were organised by tour companies from Bangkok and some other provinces.

The last topic concerns winners and losers between groups of people inside and from outside the villages having benefits from ecotourism planning and management. It was found that local people often felt that people from outside the village received more benefits from ecotourism, especially tour operators and groups of traders who settled in Ruammit village. A farmer at Ruammit (2006) said the following about outside people getting more tourism benefits: *'Of course, groups of people from outside get more benefits than us [villagers] because they bring visitors into the village. They get paid by the visitors for the tour...We [villagers] have received money when the visitors paid for elephant riding and for shopping in our village...that has been very little'*. This is similar to a tour operator in Bangkok (2006) who talked about the benefit to the villages saying, *'Sure...businesses want benefit from what we are doing...I accept that we receive money from our visitors, but local people could get benefits when our visitors spend money for travelling, shopping or any tourism activities in that village...I know...I know it is not as much as we get'*. This means that local people or villagers had gotten fewer benefits from ecotourism than groups of people from outside. Moreover, some of the outside people had become members of a village. An example of this was at Ruammit village, where outside people decided to settle in the village to carry out some small tourism trading like opening a local souvenir shop in the village. However, this situation of the traders who settled in Ruammit village was confusing. It was hard to know whether they should be considered villagers or people from outside, because some of them still had homes in other places and would return to those other homes to be farmers during the rainy season.

8.6.2 Natural and ecotourism resources and the use of them: do they win or lose?

Natural and ecotourism resources might be considered as one product that is used as a tourism attraction. As the research mentioned before, natural and ecotourism resources cannot be separated from each other because ecotourism products are naturally derived from natural and cultural resources. For example, in the three case study areas it was found that their ecotourism resources were the forest, the environment and their own unique culture. So, in this context 'resources' refers to both natural and ecotourism resources.

One key finding was that it was still important to most local people, such as these three villages, the local people had used their natural resources for recreation and for their lives, such as for food or health problem treatments. One key finding was that it was important to local people that they used natural resources for their lives. For example, at Rong Born the local people used their forest to support their lives and to receive farming benefits. Likewise, Yang Kham Nu used the community forest for their lives and in accordance with their beliefs in terms of forest conservation. In contrast, local people at Ruammit used their natural resources for recreation and for tourism for visitors. Some local people said that tourism could break and destroy their natural ecosystem. Therefore, in this context of resource use for their lives, it can be concluded that only two villages, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, were resource winners because the resources can be preserved for sustainability.

In many communities, tourism resources have been adapted from natural resources. Likewise, the three case study areas found that their attractive resources included forests and their agricultural processes. Two villages, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu, planned and managed their community forest arrangement. Fortunately, the management was good and so it linked ecotourism with the villages. Equally, the villagers saved and managed the natural resources as tourism resources well and seemed successful in terms of sustainability. On the contrary, Ruammit had tourism in their village long before having conservation management of their resources, so they could not preserve the tourism and natural resources in the proper way. Therefore, it can again be concluded that tourism resources can be winners for ecotourism planning and management at only two villages, Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu

8.7 Conclusions

This chapter has identified actors' involvement in ecotourism planning and management and also their outlook on ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in the case study areas. The involvement in those tourism destinations were analyzed according to sub-themes identified in the study's conceptual framework.

The first sub-theme considered ecotourism planning and management and sustainability, with a particular focus on ecotourism planning and plans at different spatial scales. It was found, first, that there were both the same and different organizational arrangements in the three case study areas. The same organizations were in national and regional planning because the case study areas are in the same province, while there were different organizations because the villages were different from each other in terms of their society and external connections with their villages. So, they had unique connections, in particular with their TAO and some outside organizations. A second finding was that the ecotourism plans had been made at three different spatial scales: national, regional and local. The national plans focused on general development and improvement for all communities in the country, and the regional plans especially concentrated on the province's long term progress, and they had an economic focus, which included businesses and tourism. At the local and the village level, the focus was on infrastructure and facility development for the community. Thus, the ecotourism plans did not seem to be mutually supportive as different spatial levels had different visions and ideas, and they did not combine or balance these differences. Apparently, government and higher management levels had much more influence on ecotourism planning than local people for a variety of reasons.

The third key finding about the ecotourism planning and management and sustainability sub-theme was that there was both authority and power within the community, especially with the leader's team, for planning and making decisions in the community. This power and authority again reflects Thai culture, which encourages people to respect others with high social status like leaders. The leaders used their power in community planning and management to encourage villagers to agree with what they planned. In turn, the villagers did not argue with them, whether they agreed or disagreed with the plan, as they accepted and respected their leaders.

With the second sub-theme – of managing specific ecotourism products and businesses – a first key finding was that local people who owned their land loved to work on their own farms, whereas some people from outside had settled in the village to work in local tourism businesses, such as opening small shops in the village. Moreover, some land areas were used for tourism business, such as the area at Ruammit village that was intended to be developed as a small resort for tourism. Additionally, some places prepared accommodation services called homestay projects in their villages, although here homestay standardization was being set by the Ministry of Tourism and would be applied in the future to these homestays.

With the third sub-theme – of implementing ecotourism planning and management for sustainability – it was found that local people generally used the term 'conservation tourism' rather than 'ecotourism', with this being a long-established notion in Thailand. It was shown, secondly, that there had been important improvements in ecotourism practices for sustainability in the case study areas, such as villages improving their natural resource conservation and villages joining community forest conservation networks to exchange their experiences. Third, it was evident that local people recognized and thought about environment conservation, and that they set rules for resource use for all villagers, in particular to protect their forest.

The last sub-theme concerned resources, and who were winners or losers in the use of local resources. One notable finding here was that local people that practice environment conservation and live in a homogenous ethnic group, seemed to succeed in their ecotourism planning and management. This was very evident for local people at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages. This was because they had learned to focus on both forest conservation and tourism services, rather than just carrying out tourism businesses as happened at Ruammit village. A second finding here concerned the winners or losers around resource use, with evidence that the results were most positive for the two villages of Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. This was because the resources could be used both for local people in their lives, and for tourism, such as for nature trails. Moreover, more people there recognized the importance of protecting their environment for sustainability.

Chapter 9 Conclusion and Implications

9.1 Introduction

The research has evaluated ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development in three case study areas in Chiang Rai province, northern Thailand. The assessment was related to principles of ecotourism and sustainable development, and also to a new, integrative analytical framework for the evaluation of ecotourism planning and management and outcomes in the context of sustainability. Moreover, the research aim also was to discover the practical implications for ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in the case study areas, more widely in Thailand, and also elsewhere in the world where the framework may prove useful for the study of ecotourism planning and management.

The three rural case study areas have differing management regimes: the first can be categorised as indigenous Northern Thai people controlling their ecotourism within their village, the second is characterized by a stronger local community, where the Karen tribal people have influence and control, and the last is characterized by both indigenous and different tribal people and external tourism companies and in more recent times by increasing local government involvement (as part of a recent, Thailand-wide attempt to strengthen local government).

The study developed and applied a new analytical framework, used a political ecology approach, and developed an adaptive perspective to the specific Thai context, with these all having valuable implications for other researchers interested in ecotourism and sustainable development elsewhere in the world. The study used a political ecology framework which was holistic and integrative, bringing together themes from the natural sciences and social sciences, exploring relations between ecology, the economy, society, tourism and sustainability, and considering different actors from local communities and their relations with other external actors. The study also sought to identify practical implications for the planning and management of

ecotourism and sustainable development in Thailand. In order to achieve the research aims, six specific research objectives were considered. These were:

1. To review and evaluate the literature on ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development both in general and also in the specific contexts of developing countries and of rural areas of Thailand. Particular attention was directed to literature that adopts an adaptive perspective and that considers actors' views on sustainability and local community relations and sustainability.
2. To develop an analytical framework to assess ecotourism planning and management processes and outcomes in relation to the principles of sustainable development, with this framework being more integrative and comprehensive than those developed by other researchers.
3. To apply the analytical framework in the context of three case study areas in Northern Thailand where ecotourism is important but where the planning and management regimes differed because of the different combinations of homogenous groups and ethnic groups.
4. To evaluate the social relations and the ideologies of sustainability among the actors relevant to ecotourism management in the three case study areas and to assess their implications for ecotourism planning and management, including in relation to local empowerment and community development.
5. To develop and apply the new analytical framework, use a political ecology approach, and develop an adaptive perspective to the specific Thai contexts, and to consider their wider implications for other researchers interested in ecotourism elsewhere in the world.
6. To identify practical implications of the study for the planning and management of ecotourism and sustainable development in Chiang Rai, and potentially for Thailand more generally.

This concluding chapter has been elaborated in four sections, related to the research objectives and the limitations and strengths of the study. The first part concerns the theoretical purpose and practical use of the conceptual framework, which relates to Objectives One and Two. The second part concerns key findings from the application of the conceptual framework, which links to Objectives Three and Four. The third part is about the value of the framework to an understanding of ecotourism

planning and management, which is relevant to Objectives Five and Six. The last section of the chapter explains the limitations of this research, and it suggests some ideas about how the research will work for other researchers in ecotourism.

9.2 Theoretical purpose and practical use of the conceptual framework

The purpose of this section is to examine the study's conceptual framework in relation to ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development. The section relates to the First and the Second research objectives. Attention is directed to the theoretical purpose and practical use of the conceptual framework, as well as the relationships between the framework and the research findings.

9.2.1 The conceptual framework and its implications

After the researcher had made clear his understanding of key contributions from the literature reviews, the body of the conceptual framework was developed for the study and it was based on key concepts from the literature.

Firstly, the framework was fundamentally underpinned by the approach of political ecology, as developed in research by Peet and Watt (2004), Gossling (2003) and Robbins (2004). These researchers hold the view that political ecology can help to understand the complexity of nature and society, including the connections between environment, economy, society, ideology and politics. These ideas were used to evaluate the use of environmental resources and the social relationships that underpin those patterns of resource use. Secondly, the patterns of social relations relevant to sustainable development were examined using ideas developed from Singh et al (2003), Mitchell and Reid (2001) and Meyer (1988), where attention is directed to how actors use resources for tourism development and how they perceive and react to that. Thirdly, the ideologies relevant to sustainable development were explored using ideas developed by Mowforth and Munt (2003), Richards and Hall (2002), Bingen (2005) and Scheyvens (2002). This is based on the view that these ideologies often support the power of dominant economic and social groups, but that they can also be opposed to the

prevalent bases of power and can be used to pursue changes in those power relations. Lastly, ideas about the policies and practices of ecotourism planning and management relevant to sustainability were drawn from other relevant literature, including Fennell et al (2000). This literature suggests that the development of particular sectors such as tourism can be shaped in a way presumed by the relevant authority to be desirable. The conceptual framework was developed drawing on these relevant theories and concepts from the literature. It attempted to provide a loose ordering of the varied interconnected issues that were related to the assessment of the views of actors about ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development.

Regarding the second specific research objective, to develop an analytical framework to assess ecotourism planning and management processes and outcomes in relation to the principles of sustainable development, the researcher intended this framework be more integrative and comprehensive than others developed by other researchers. The framework also helped to inform the data collection, the presentation of the results, and the form of the guidelines and recommendations resulting from the research. In effect the conceptual framework has allowed for a continuous and self-learning process of knowledge creation. This framework offered some important benefits. Firstly, it integrated concepts from both the natural sciences and social sciences which help to understand the complexity of nature and society in the use of the natural environment and resources, and of the social relations in using resources. As discussed in Chapter 3, other frameworks related to ecotourism planning and management did not combine the insights of both natural science and social science, which made for an imbalance in the practice of ecotourism and sustainability, whereas this study took advantage of a combination of the two sciences. Secondly, the conceptual framework was influential in developing the interview questions, both in relation to details and theoretical elements. Thirdly, its detailed elements were important guides for the data analysis. Fourthly, the framework helped organise the thesis chapters. Fianlly, it helped in understanding ecotourism planning and management in Chiang Rai Thailand, and thus it has potential value for application to other places in Thailand, and potentially elsewhere in the world.

9.2.2 The elements in the conceptual framework

Three themes derived from the literature review were essential within the framework. They are: social relations and sustainable development; ideologies relevant to sustainable development; and the ecotourism planning and management related to sustainability. As discussed in Chapter 3 (The conceptual framework), the framework was not intended to be a rigid, predetermined analytical framework, but rather a tool to guide the study in gaining insights through interviews with relevant actors in the case study areas. The conceptual framework was also influenced by the aims of the study. All elements of the framework were important to the research in order to evaluate the nature of ecotourism planning and management in the study areas. The framework is also shown in this Conclusion chapter as Figure 9.1.

The theme of social relations and sustainable development concentrates on the social interactions and relations in the use of resources, both natural and tourism resources. These social relations are concerned with communities and with the actors' involvement in resource use and management for sustainability. Therefore, this part of the study posed the questions (interview and survey) to actors about their thoughts and practices with regard to resource use and resource management in sustainable ways. Within the theme of social relations and sustainable development the investigation was divided into three sub-themes. The first sub-theme concerned resource use, resource management, and the deliberations within communities concerning resources. The resources refer to both resources that support local ways of life and also resources that support ecotourism in the area. The second sub-theme considered power and governance. It examined matters relating to the balance of power for the communities, including issues around power and their leaders, and power in relation to external relations and actors. It also considered issues around control in the villages. The final sub-theme examined the internal and external relations to assess the connections between the villages and their relevant activities, incorporating internal and external involvement in ecotourism management and sustainability. It explored relations between internal actors and external actors.

The second theme of ideologies relevant to sustainable development was based on suggestions from literature reviews that there has been a tendency for previous

ecotourism researchers to consider ecotourism management and sustainability as somehow divorced from the wider issues of sustainability as conceptualized by community actors (Stonich, 2000; Stonich, 2003). The literature review suggested there was a need to focus on the ideologies of sustainable development held by different relevant key actors. The main ideologies explored were: notions of "appropriate livelihoods"; notions of "fairness"; and notions of "appropriate participation" in policy decision-making. These sophisticated key notions were interlaced with community actors' ideas about ecotourism management and sustainability. One key issue in relation to the study was that the types of development that were believed necessary varied according to local circumstances and needs. This ideological theme suggests that it is important to accept local people's ideas rather than follow concepts, approaches, standards and principles of development that originate in the West when examining developing countries.

The third theme, of ecotourism planning and management and sustainability, concerns the practical implementation of ecotourism planning and management, woven into the above two themes of social relations and sustainability and ideologies of sustainability. This theme linked the social relations and ideologies of sustainability issues into action around the development of ecotourism planning and management. This practical theme concentrated at both a national and a local level on ecotourism planning and management, in particular to consider appropriate ways to incorporate local community perspectives. It was examined both from top-down and bottom-up policy and planning perspectives on ecotourism in the case study areas.

As explained before, the framework combined ideas from political ecology, ecotourism and sustainable development, and it was arguably more integrative than other existing frameworks. In its application in the case study areas it focused on community conceptualisations of ecotourism planning, development and sustainability. This framework explores actors' relations and their ideologies in relation to the principles of ecotourism and sustainability. It also seeks to discover how the communities win and lose in ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in the use of particular resources.

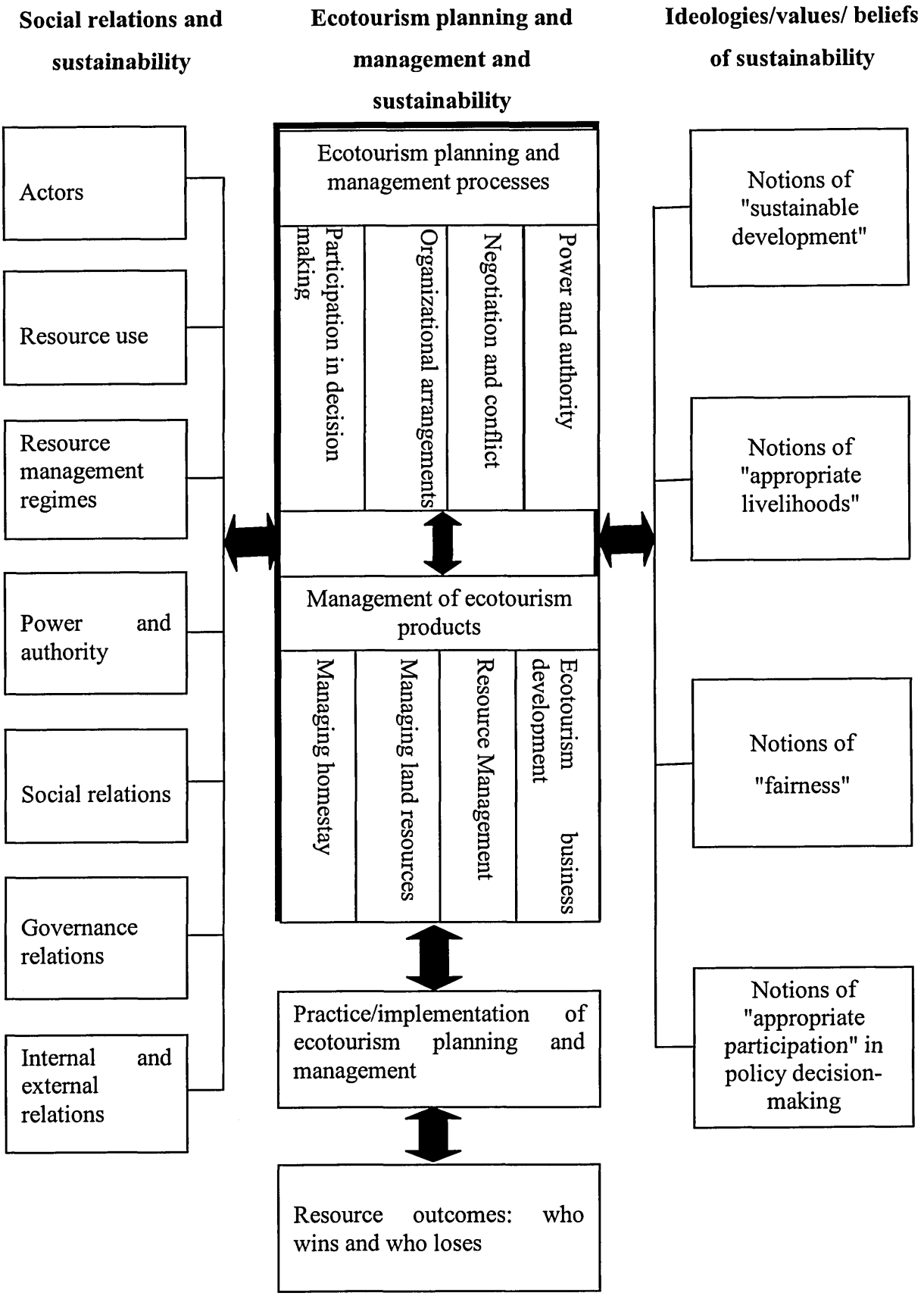


Figure 9.1: Conceptual framework to evaluate ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development in the three case study areas in Chiang Rai province, Thailand

9.2.3 The conceptual framework and understanding in tourism research

The conceptual framework for the research guided the study and helped to keep it on the right track with regard to the study aims. As discussed in Chapter 3, the framework was designed from underpinning political ecology and ecotourism theories. It helped the research to obtain strong data to provide relevant and sound results for the study.

In the conceptual framework, the notion of sustainability was taken to represent the smooth (yet sometimes conflicting) and transparent integration of economy, society and environment with the sustainable development of ecotourism. It involved not just an appreciation of the physical and natural environment, but also a deeper understanding of the economic, social, political and ideological systems. Further, the political ecology approach integrated socio-economic, socio-cultural, political and environmental concerns with the study of ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development. It emphasized the importance of the economy and of relationships between power, ideology and social interactions and practices – relationships that have important "political" dimensions. The conceptual study also acknowledged that social actors and their relationships to natural resources are important if one wishes to understand decisions made in relation to ecotourism planning and management. The political ecology approach helped to connect local social relations and the discourses and values in local communities to the notions of sustainable development and ecotourism. Moreover, the conceptual framework helped to consider differing views on ecotourism and sustainability among both local actors and the national-level actors involved in those local contexts. The actors had different roles and were in different fields that intersected in the local development of ecotourism, and this affected people's ideologies or ways of thinking about natural resource management.

The conceptual framework was also based on an adaptive view of sustainable development through ecotourism that emerged out of the specific local circumstances of the three case study rural areas, and the views of the actors involved in that context. It meant that the study rejected a universalistic view that there are international standards

of sustainability that can be applied in all contexts, including their transfer from developed to developing world contexts.

In conclusion, the conceptual framework was developed from the literature review about the principles of ecotourism, sustainability and political ecology. It was considered more valuable than other frameworks used to study ecotourism planning and management and sustainability. Before coming across this framework, the researcher had evaluated some other ecotourism frameworks, such as Carrying Capacity (CC), the Limit to Acceptable Change (LAC), Visitor Activity Management Process (VAMP) and Visitor Experience Resource Protection (VERP). But, the integrative and adaptive framework developed for this study differed from others as it was based on a political ecology approach which did not divorce the social sciences from the natural sciences. The resulting more critical and integrative framework was applied to assess ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in the three case study areas in Thailand.

9.3 Key findings from the application of the conceptual framework

The conceptual framework outlined in chapter 3 and the research findings reported in Chapters 5 to 8 are intimately related. The integrative analytical framework was the key guide for obtaining relevant data derived from the semi-structured interviews and also field work surveys. Importantly, the framework also provided a valuable structure for the organisation of the three main results chapters, which were organized according to the three themes in the conceptual framework and their related sub-themes.

9.3.1 Social relations and sustainability

The first theme in the conceptual framework – of social relations and sustainability – provided key findings about the social interactions and relations related to ecotourism planning and management in the case study areas. The relations and the interactions often focused on the use of resources by actors (both from inside and

outside the areas) and on whether and how the actors might seek to manage the resources for improved sustainability.

Selected key findings on social relations and sustainability		
Actors and resource use and resource management	*Power and authority*	*Social relations with internal and external actors*
The natural resource, especially the conservation products (community forest), became an important resource for tourism.	The village leaders had more power to influence the ecotourism planning and management.	The villagers had more positive relations with internal and external actors when they received clear benefits from them.
	Certain ethnic groups exercised less power and influence in relation to ecotourism planning and management	More homogenous communities could manage their ecotourism planning and management more effectively than could the more mixed communities.

Table 9.1 Selected key findings on social relations and sustainability

Some key findings in relation to social relations and sustainability are shown in Figure 9.1. A first notable finding concerning social relations and sustainability was that social differences often meant that local people played different roles in ecotourism management. It found that those with higher social status, such as village leaders, were more influential in ecotourism management. Many plans and projects for resource management, such as local community forest conservation and ecotourism management, were run by the village leaders and their village committees. The leaders played significant roles in ecotourism planning and management within their village, and they often took pride in gaining acceptance as leaders through elections in their own community. They all believed the villagers accepted them as good leaders. Their power

meant that they often presented their own ideas on village development projects, including ecotourism schemes, and they were rarely challenged. Thai culture, especially in remote areas, meant that people generally would accept that the high social status of their leaders allowed their own decisions to be carried out (Nartsupha, 2004; Mulder, 1990). The leaders were also allowed to play a substantial role in ecotourism planning and management in the community because the villagers generally believed that whatever their leaders had done was right, in their view. Perhaps this reflected a hope that anyone whom they chose to be their leaders would be willing to work for the best interests of their villages. In fact, some people might have done that, but some people might not because they were motivated to secure power and authority in their communities and to gain from that (Hewison, 2000). While the national government has set rules on being a village leader - that their tenure can only be 4 years - the government has neglected to set a rule for the same leader returning to be a leader again after re-election. One leader in the case study area had been the leader longer than 12 years (over at least 3 electoral periods, after they had won the second and the third village elections). Thus, there is little doubt about where much power lies in village ecotourism planning and management.

In the case of the indigenous Thai people and tribal people in the case study areas, it was found that the indigenous Thai people had more influence on ecotourism planning and management than did the tribal people or the ethnic groups. This was largely because the Thais thought that the ethnic groups were a minority and poorer than themselves. Tribal people normally live in the hills or remote areas (http://www.tayara.com 21/12/2008), and often it is difficult to get to them due to the roads and transportation being inconvenient or difficult. Moreover, almost all of them worked in agriculture and as labourers for Thai people (Chamnankij, 2006; Sriwattananukij, 2003). These reasons meant they were widely considered to be of a lower class than the Thai people, and thus they had difficulty in joining in with ecotourism planning and management in their villages. However, some of them could turn themselves into souvenir sellers, or small shop owners for tourists in tourism areas, such as had happened on quite a significant scale in Ruammit village. It was found that, while the tribal people could play a substantial role as sellers, they had much difficulty in becoming part of ecotourism planning and management. This was both because they

were minority groups and were considered lower class than Thai people, and also because in the past they had no education (Hewison, 2000, Sriwattananukij, 2003).

A second key finding was that a homogenous community had a stronger involvement in tourism management than a group with varied ethnicity living in the same village. This was because, within the group with varied ethnicity there were different cultures and ways of life, so it was hard to unify them. Homogenous communities had more unity in terms of their ways of living, and they seemed to be much more successful in ecotourism planning and management compared with the group with varied ethnicity living in the same village. This was probably greatly influenced by the homogenous group having the same culture (language, norms, belief etc.) (Hewison, 2000), while the group with varied ethnicity had differences that made it less easy to understand each other's cultures. Moreover, within the homogenous community, it was easy to share out the benefits from ecotourism management to all the village members, such as from homestay and cultural shows for tourists. In Yang Kham Nu village the homogeneous community had made such arrangements for their villagers. Thus, some of the benefits from ecotourism appeared to be easier to distribute when a large group of similar people lived in the same place because they had greater control within the community.

A third key finding was that conservation products (the community forest in particular) became an important resource for ecotourism, as found at Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages. Both the conservation processes and the conservation resources attracted visitors to the community. Some tourists came to the villages to see their local conservation work, while others more generally came to learn about different cultures and to see and stay in a good environment within the villages (Ounwichit, et al., 2003; Wiboolsiri, 2005). The visits by tourists also played an important role in villagers becoming more cognisant of environmental conservation. It was found that ecotourism here did bring significant benefits into these communities, through economic improvements in particular, but also through the wider valorization of conservation activities (World Tourism Organization, 2003). However, it was often the adverse impacts of tourism on the environment and on local culture that had led the villagers to consider long term resource conservation in order to secure a more sustainable form of ecotourism management (Chaisook, 2004; Ounwichit, et al., 2003; Noosaeng, 1998).

Although the basis of their conservation was to protect the community forest for their villagers, this community forest conservation worked for the communities in terms of getting benefits from the local resources, such as for food, for agriculture, for recreation purposes, and – most relevant for this study – for ecotourism development purposes.

A final key finding involves the relations between local communities and outsiders who were external to these rural areas. The villagers generally had positive attitudes towards both their internal and external relations when they resulted in them gaining advice about conservation, or suggestions about how to bring more tourists to their villages, or when they gained some financial rewards in community improvement projects, both in ecotourism and also for their living activities. This did not mean that good relations between local people and people from inside and outside the village were simply based on them requiring money to support their activities and development projects. Nevertheless, the villagers are normal humans and they would like a better way of life, such as good infrastructure within their villages (Ounwichit, et al., 2003; Chamnankij, 2006). And there is no doubt that positive relations would develop when local people were supported by people from outside in their village planning and development, including in their ecotourism planning and development.

Social relations in the communities were very strong in these villages, partly because there were very strong personal ties among the villagers, based on their relatives, and partly also based on long term social interactions and friendships. Such community bonds were especially strong in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages where most villagers were from the same society (one was indigenous and the other was based on the same tribal groups). Their shared ethnicity allowed them to get to know each other more easily and share their living all together. Moreover, they were not big villages, so they would know each other well. These kinds of social relations could also make them strong communities in terms of shared living patterns and also resource use, which then often led the communities towards greater sustainability. However, there were changes affecting all these communities related to modernity, which was quite often brought to the communities by tourism and the perceived requirements of responding to the needs of visitors. These changes in social life were especially evident in Ruammit village, which was heavily involved in the tourism economy, and which also embraced many different tribal people. The diversified tribal groups, the pressures

of modernity, and also the ill-conceived planning of tourism here caused much selfishness and a great deal of competition among tourism businesses in the community. Modernity and gaining a higher social status were barriers to social relations and sustainability, and ecotourism was one factor encouraging this.

9.3.2 Ideologies of sustainability

The second theme – of ideologies of sustainability – considered the respondents' ideologies, that is their beliefs and values about sustainability and ecotourism management. It investigated actors' views about ecotourism planning and management, sustainability, and their relationships around ecotourism. The key findings for the case study areas were elucidated in three sections, based on the sub-themes in the conceptual framework. They were: notions of sustainable development and of "appropriate livelihoods"; notions of "fairness"; and notions of "appropriate participation" in policy decision- making. Some key findings in relation to the ideologies or beliefs about sustainability are shown in Figure 9.2.

Selected key findings on ideologies of sustainability (shaped by the findings on social relations)		
Notions of "appropriate livelihoods"	*Notions of "Fairness"*	*Notions of "appropriate participation" in decision-making*
As farmers the local people tended to be satisfied with their livelihoods (this being shaped by the resources supporting their farming).	Their local knowledge could encourage them to be cooperative, such as through the "Long Khaek" system (which was shaped by living in a more homogenous community).	Local people lacked a clear understanding of the idea of local participation (this being shaped by the power of leaders and lack of support and knowledge from both internal and external actors).

Selected key findings on ideologies of sustainability (shaped by the findings on social relations)		
Notions of "appropriate livelihoods"	*Notions of "Fairness"*	*Notions of "appropriate participation" in decision-making*
The local people could adapt their livelihoods to be tourism products, such as the diversified agriculture (shaped from their concerns about resources and environmental management)	Different cultures tended to make it difficult to work cooperatively within the community (Shaped by different groups living in the same village)	

Table 9.2: Selected key findings on the ideologies of sustainability (shaped by the findings on social relations)

A first key finding here related to what people believed to be satisfactory as a way of making a stable and reliable income and of having a reasonable standard of living. These are likely to be central ideas behind indigenous definitions of sustainability in tourism-related development. It was evident here, for example, that local people were skilled at adapting their livelihoods appropriately to where they are. Most of them were farmers and worked on their agricultural land producing rice, local fruits (longans, lychees and pineapples) and some vegetables. Indeed, 80 percent of people in the province were farmers (http//:www.chingraiprovince.com 23/12/2008). However, some were landless, and this encouraged some to became souvenir sellers catering to tourists, such as had happened for many tribal people in Ruammit village. By contrast, most farmers felt happy to work on their own farms, even if there were tourism opportunities in their village. They were tied to the land, and they aspired to improve their farm products for greater economic returns and also to introduce more natural growing methods, such as through the use of non-chemical products on their farms. However, some of the villages could combine their agriculture processes with

tourism, for example, through the introduction of farm tours, or what may be called diversified agriculture (Maneepitak, 2007): Yang Kham Nu village is one example in particular. Thus, in the case study areas Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages were agricultural rather than tourism-based, and this agricultural society itself led them to re-evaluate about the value of natural resources and it also led them to recognize environmental conservation, changes that had been introduced in these two villages. This then offered opportunities for ecotourism development. This sequence in these two rural areas seemed to offer a very appropriate way forward for ecotourism planning and management, with the community plans and management encouraging them to conserve resources, natural resources in particular, which could then attract tourists.

A second key finding relates to notions of "fairness" in the use of their resources and in the distribution of the benefits from tourism. Here ideas about "fairness" among relatives within their own family networks can sometimes also apply to the same group of people living in the same village, which tended to encourage them to work together cooperatively. This kind of cooperation was based on the system of beliefs that has existed for at least the past century and is called "Long Khaek" (Mulder, 1990). This set of beliefs involves working as a group within their community, in particular in farming. The idea was very useful to the villagers in terms of helping them to work together and to share their ideas while they were working. Moreover, this working method could save on the cost of their labour in their farmwork. Additionally, "Long Khaek" encouraged locals to share benefits. This system of beliefs related to "fairness" within the community, and potentially it could be applied to other village activities in to order to achieve shared benefits, in other words for "fairness". This idea is widespread in the two villages of Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. By contrast, in Ruammit some of the villagers work in tourism and the benefits of that industry had only partly been distributed there. This relates to Rong Born and Yang Kam Nu being homogenous communities, while Ruammit includes varied ethnic groups living in the same village. As explained before, the varied ethnic groups had differed cultures and ways of living, so it would have been very difficult to invite all the villagers to share in the "Long Khaek" process, and the concepts of "fairness" would have been different for the varied ethnic groups in Ruammit.

A last key finding related to the notions of appropriate participation in policy decision-making, where it was found that the local communities often had no idea about their potential active role in local participation in decision-making. This was in part because they respected and believed in their villager leaders and their leaders' nominated teams. The reason for this related to Thai culture and the respect attributed in it to high social status (Boyle, 1998; Mulder, 1990). However, there was one activity found within the villages that potentially might help them to improve their participative roles in decision-making, and that was the village meeting. Field observation by the researcher indicated that the village meeting sometimes could help the local villagers to share their ideas about the village development projects, including ecotourism planning and management. Unfortunately, in some villages, such as in Rong Born, the villagers were seldom asked to share in the village meeting. It was said that this was because they thought it would be easier to use a new technology in the form of loud speakers in order to inform the villagers about news and events. The use of this new technology, however, meant that local people had no way to share their ideas, and it was very difficult to be a participant in this communication method. This may be a reason why the leaders looked so powerful in policy decision-making in planning and management in this village compared to the villages where meetings were regularly called.

In conclusion, the local ideologies of sustainability were related to locals' views about "livelihoods", and these were often affected by their farming jobs. It was seen that the communities were often adept at adjusting their lives and their farming jobs to the social and environmental context. For example, they had returned to using non-chemical products on their farms and they tried to work together or help one another finish their farm work on time through shared group working. But this did not apply to all the villages, because it was different between the homogenous and varied ethnic groups living in the same village. The differences in ethnicity were also reflected in local participation in decision-making in planning and development, where the homogenous group was more actively participatory. Moreover, activities that encouraged local people to meet up together, did help them to share benefits and to participate in decision-making, and this was not possible if they had no or infrequent village meetings. However, tourism was a relatively new activity for them to manage and local people had few ideas about ecotourism planning and management, partly because they lacked local participation in ecotourism decision-making. However, when

they were consulted or were trained by some related department, they were often effective at managing this activity. This was seen at Yang Kham Nu where villagers had been trained by an NGO, and here they shared their involvement in ecotourism within their village. The findings do suggest that ecotourism planning and management were likely to be improved if local people had a better understanding of the issues and if they participated in the management.

9.3.3 Ecotourism planning and management and sustainability

The third theme – of ecotourism planning and management and sustainability – examined respondents' attitudes towards ecotourism planning and management and sustainability, and related this to their ideologies and relationships in that planning and management. Within this theme the key findings were explained through the following inter-connected sub-themes: ecotourism planning and management (power and authority, negotiation and conflict, organizational arrangements and participation in decisions); managing ecotourism products (ecotourism business development, managing the resources, managing land resources and managing homestay); the practice or implementation of ecotourism planning and management; and resource outcomes.

One cluster of findings in relation to the first of these sub-themes, was associated with power and authority in decision-making. Here it was found that many aspects of ecotourism planning and management in the case study areas were decided by government and industry associations. This included local and national government (such as the local TAO and the provincial office) and also the provincial chamber of commerce. These organizations had both power and authority and organizational capacity in ecotourism planning and management within the province and also within the case study areas. Almost all the policies made by these organizations were tightly focused on economic benefits for the province, and this helps explain why they were all largely focused on mass tourism rather than ecotourism or conservation tourism. The province has been famous for tourism for perhaps 30 years (Yoo-dee et al., 2004), and these government organizations and trade associations might have wanted to obtain higher income from tourists in order to stimulate wider economic improvements in the province. Moreover, the Chamber of Commerce and the provincial tourism association

drew their members from businesses, and tourism business in particular, and it was important for them to promote tourism in order to boost their own business interests, rather than necessarily to take wider account of the needs of local people. This may be a reason why local people derived less benefit from tourism than they might, with the ecotourism policy not putting much emphasis on providing benefits for local residents.

Another aspect of local ecotourism planning and management was that when it was led by local villagers there was a concentration on conservation, especially natural resource conservation. In one village the local residents had developed resource conservation for local people to use rather than for tourism. However, tourism was later brought into the village, with an emphasis on recreation and educational purposes. In this way the planning and management for conservation by local people had become a tool for ecotourism management. Rong Born has continued to make progress in its conservation work, and the villagers have accepted that they benefit from tourists coming into the village in terms of resource conservation, simultaneously for both local use and for tourism purposes. The one thing, however, that might have made the project fail was that there were relatively few organizations, the government in particular, that support conservation projects for tourism. Consequently it was difficult for local people, who by themselves had to struggle and to find alternative ways to succeed in this resource conservation.

A second key finding on ecotourism planning and management and sustainability was that the management of many ecotourism products was carried out by businesses, tourism businesses in particular. Nonetheless, some places like Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu had started out by managing resources for conservation for their own local use from the first. Later, however, when tourists visited their communities, they realized the possibilities of tourism and business from their local resources. Managing "resources" was part of the ecotourism business, and generally this involved commoditizing natural and cultural resources for tourism purposes (Fennell, 2003; McCarthy, 1999; Dan and Cohen, 1991). Moreover, some aspects of local cultures were "remade" for tourism business, such as dressing in traditional costumes and using certain tools that they had used in the past. It can be assumed that the use of ecotourism resources was once for local use, but when tourism was brought into the villages, the purpose and use had changed to be for income gains. However, arguably such changes

can be valuable for local people and the environment if it can assist in preserving the natural and cultural resources.

Once resources are managed for ecotourism there are potential dangers for the resources and environment and also community ways of life. As many academics have argued, tourism can destroy good environments and good relations within the community (Hewison, 2002; Noosaeng, 1998; Meyer, 1988). Certainly, ecotourism business without effective management and controls can harm both nature and local people. Ruammit had had the experience of adverse environmental impacts resulting from tourism, and in consequence there had been a decrease in the number of people visiting the village. However, the adverse impacts from tourism can encourage communities to rethink how they could save their resources for sustainable tourism. Perhaps this has encouraged local people in the case study areas to try to conserve both their natural resources and their cultural ways of life, as seen in the return to wearing traditional clothing.

Two key findings related to the practical implementation of ecotourism planning and management. First, the local people in the case study areas understood 'ecotourism' as 'conservation tourism'. This is because ecotourism was used as a term for activities that previously were called conservation tourism in Thailand. This meant it was confusing and complicated for local people to understand ecotourism, especially as the word 'ecotourism' comes from ecology and tourism (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2001). Most of the villagers here had completed only primary school education, which had not focused on ecology systems at all, and that was another reason why they found it hard to understand 'ecotourism'. However, they seemed to understand the word 'conservation tourism', rather than the word ecotourism. The two villages of Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu in particular understood the idea of conservation tourism as they had successfully managed their community forest for conservation. However, some local villagers could understand ecotourism and conservation tourism because they knew the words were similar as they had heard information about them from the media (news and television). Whatever word was used for ecotourism, however, the key was for local people to understand the processes of ecotourism planning and management. And if local people understood and could carry out resource conservation, then they

might also be able to follow the sustainability concepts underpinning ecotourism or conservation tourism.

Another key finding for the implementation of ecotourism planning and management was that there have been many improvements in ecotourism practices for sustainability. These improvements have stemmed from natural resource conservation, community forest conservation activities, and from some communities also exchanging their experiences. The improvements were due to local people being willing to conserve their local resources for a better environment and also for the purpose of using that environment for their local ways. The study has found that one major purpose of conservation locally was for environmental improvement after they had bad experiences through suffering resource losses, such as had happened in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu. The conservation could improve the environment and also provide a product for ecotourism within the community. Tourism played a positive role in the community through the continuation of forest conservation and also its support for livelihoods and for their traditional ways of life. Moreover, some communities, such as Rong Born, had joined in forest conservation with villagers from outside, and had encouraged them to follow their practices. This suggests that they knew that the practicalities of ecotourism planning and management worked well for the community, and that they wanted other villages to get the same benefits from conservation.

There were four clusters of findings related to the sub-theme of resource outcomes, or of 'who wins and who loses'. First, there were differing resource outcomes for the villages with a homogenous group of people, compared with the village with varied ethnic groups living together. The villages with a homogenous group (Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu) succeeded better in ecotourism planning and management, compared with Ruammit, where many tribal groups lived. This was perhaps because the homogenous group had lived together in the same place for a long time, while the varied ethnic groups had lived together for a shorter period. Also, the homogenous group shared the same culture and ways of life, whereas the varied groups were different, and it was probably easier for the former to engage in discussion and the sharing of ideas (Leepreecha, 2005). Thus, it seems that a homogenous group may be better placed to manage ecotourism planning and management effectively.

Second, people from outside the villages, such as tour operators and their managers, were often well positioned to control aspects of ecotourism planning and to secure many of tourism's commercial and economic benefits. This was because they sometimes took the initiative in tourism development and they often led the marketing of tourism outside the villages. There were many instances in Chiang Rai province of tourism planning and policy being controlled by provincial and other external tourism associations (chambers of commerce, travel agencies and tourism associations) as well as by individual tourism operators. Inevitably, these business actors have tended to focus on commercial and economic returns for ecotourism businesses, while local people may only secure a modest return. In Ruammit, for example, the tourists were largely brought to the village by travel agencies, and thus local people only received what tourists paid for the products they bought while there, which was not that much compared to that received by the travel agencies. Also some people running tourism businesses in Ruammit, such as many souvenir sellers, had only joined the village after they engaged in its tourism activities, and they derived much of the tourism benefit that stayed locally. Thus, it can be said that tourism business people had introduced tourists into the village, and those people secured more tourism benefits than the longer-established local people within the village.

To summarize, ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in the case studies was affected to some extent by people with higher social status or people with power, both internal and external to the village, making decisions. As explained, the planning and policies were sometimes made by the village leaders, or they were made by external business interests and were focused on business returns rather than the needs of local people. These constraints are likely to mean that ecotourism planning and management within the communities will move forward more slowly than it could. However, some of these communities had used their own influence to negotiate with government to ask them to support their ecotourism planning and management, and this seems to have worked in Rong Born and Yang Kham Nu villages.

9.4 Value of the conceptual framework for an understanding of ecotourism planning and management

This section evaluates the value of the conceptual framework for an understanding of ecotourism planning and management based on the three case study areas. The framework was developed based on the literature review concerning ecotourism planning and management, sustainable development, and political ecology. It investigates the interactions among actors regarding their relations with, and ideas about, the use of resources for ecotourism. It was used to explore relations within the case study communities, including between insiders and outsiders, in the context of ecotourism planning, management, and sustainability. The framework is intended to help evaluate the influences on ecotourism planning, the character of that planning, and the integration of that planning with sustainable development objectives.

9.4.1 Value of the conceptual framework for an understanding of ecotourism in the case study areas

As mentioned, the conceptual framework was developed from various relevant theories and concept about ecotourism planning and sustainability, and it was sufficiently broad and flexible to identify the unique aspects of the case study areas. There are several arguments why the framework was valuable for an understanding of ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in the case study areas. Just two will be discussed here.

First, the framework was seen to be applicable despite the three case study areas differing through their varying community characteristics and through their distinctive tourism resources. This was because the framework focused on generic or general patterns of social relations and ideologies around sustainability and ecotourism planning and management. While the case studies were in the same province, the local circumstances were quite different. The first case related to community forest conservation, and was controlled by the villagers, which comprised a homogeneous group of Northern Thai people, in cooperation with local government and educational institutes. The second case was also controlled by a homogenous group, but they were a

tribal group with a distinct tribal culture, and this group was outstanding in community forest conservation and diversified agriculture. The last case involved a variety of ethnic tribal people living in the same village, with the village known to be engaged in tourism since 1974 (Chamnankij, 2006; Hongsabhan et al., 1994; Wiboolsiri, 2005). It was famous for natural and cultural resources and also trekking trials. While these villages varied significantly, it was shown how the framework helpfully identified key differences and similarities in their ecotourism planning and management. In part this was because the study was based on political ecology, a broad and integrative conceptual approach that focuses on general interactions between environmental and societal issues.

Secondly, in the context of ecotourism planning and management and sustainability, it was considered very important for this academic research to focus on the involvement of the community and of actors internal and external to the community. It is asserted that local people probably ought to exert as much control as practicable over the planning and management because they live there, they have to live with the changes there, and they often have a relatively deeper understanding of the local context, including its environment, society and politics. The conceptual framework helped to focus attention on the roles of the community and other actors in ecotourism policymaking, and the research design associated with it focused on community views on local resources, social relations, ideologies and ecotourism planning practices. It was considered important to understand local relationships and local values as these are essential ingredients for an indigenous and adaptive approach to ecotourism planning and management. The framework also examined the general character of relationships between internal and external actors, of local resource outcomes, and of the balance of benefits between locals and external actors. These were considered important generic considerations for an appreciation of power and of the distributional outcomes of ecotourism development in different contexts. Yet the specific local character of all these features could be explored using the framework as it adopts only broad, generic categories.

9.4.2 Value for an understanding of ecotourism in Thailand

Developing countries, including Thailand, have often identified tourism as one of their major export or foreign exchange prospects, and they often also see tourism as a development tool. Yet tourism has come to be seen as an important political as well as a social, economic and moral issue in these countries (Harrison, 1992; Hewison, 1997; Hewison, 2000). However, the development of many resources used for tourism in these countries has often been directed using the tourism management standards of Western countries. This is despite the geographical, socio-economic, political and cultural issues often being totally different in developing countries. For this reason the conceptual framework was developed to be broad, flexible and generic. It is also designed to focus on local community beliefs, values, ideologies and practices, as well as on the distinctive resources and other circumstances of local areas. This adaptive character means it may well be a valuable framework to understand ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in other regions of Thailand. It is contended that the framework could be applied despite the variations between different regions in Thailand.

First, in Thailand there is a wide variety of ethnic groups and tribal people in the country's remote areas (Sethakul et al., 2003; Cohen, E. (1996). This study has shown to be applicable for both a homogenous community and also for a community with varied ethnic groups. The different groups had different relationships, both within their own groups and also with people from outside their communities. Thus, the framework could accommodate broad ethnic and social differences. Some previous studies have also found that different forms of ecotourism management might be appropriate in different destinations (Ounwichit et al., 2003; Sheldon, 1999), yet some of these studies have focused just on the social, and others have concentrated just on the environmental dimensions. The present framework, by contrast, concerned itself with both social relations and ideologies and natural resources. Moreover, the case studies here operated under the same set of national policies in Thailand related to ecotourism planning and management. Above all, the set of generic themes and sub-themes allowed for an understanding of each of the different case study contexts, and it seems likely that it could do the same for other rural and remote areas in Thailand where ecotourism is being developed.

Secondly, an objective of the study is to suggest practical implications for the planning and management of ecotourism and sustainable development for Thailand. Thus, the framework could be used to identify alternative approaches to the planning and management of ecotourism and sustainability, such as through collaboration and partnership and through both bottom-up and top down approaches. Due to Thailand having recently reformed its approach to governance in the country, it is important for local people to play an increasing role in ecotourism planning and management, underpinning local participation and decision-making (Santasombut, 2001; Mitchell, 2001; Samart, 2000). The framework used in the present study clearly helped in identifying whether or not this is happening. It was found that often local people did not have a substantial role in decision-making. Certain barriers to participation in these Thai communities were explained, including the lack of understanding of participation, and the concentration of power by local leaders. This study does indicate that the framework could usefully be applied to other rural areas in Thailand in order to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of local ecotourism planning and management. It can assist, for example, in exploring the gaps between national policies (top-down) and local practices (bottom-up).

9.4.3 Value for an understanding of ecotourism in other countries

It is important to understanding ecotourism in countries around the world as tourism is often one of the main sources of foreign exchange and economic growth, especially for developing countries (Mitchell, 2001; Britton, 1987; Holden, 2006; Gossling, 2003). So, ecotourism planning and management and sustainable development is necessary for these countries. This wider context was a justification for the objectives of the present study to develop a new critical framework to understand ecotourism planning and management. The intention from the start was to develop a broad framework that potentially could be applied to many countries. Thus, this research uses very broad concepts of ecotourism, human-environment and economic concerns (political ecology), and also the very general concept of sustainability. The use of political ecology theory in the new analytical framework also enhances the potential relevance of the framework for other researchers interested in ecotourism. This is because the theory itself is generic and is intended to apply to development in all stages

of the emergence of market exchange and of capitalism. It is an integrative approach which avoids local specificity before being applied to local cases.

Another value of the study for other developing countries is that they all have different, if not necessarily unique, influences on the character of ecotourism planning and management. There is unlikely to be one international set of standards that apply to ecotourism in all such countries. Western ecotourism standards may not be valid in other contexts because their environments, economy, society, cultures and political and administrative systems are often very different. This study, for example, has suggested that different countries may well have their own definitions, expectations, and operating contexts for their ecotourism activities. It could also be argued that the approach used in the study is sufficiently broad and adaptive to be valuable for the study of ecotourism planning and management in the developed world too.

9.5 Limitations and strengths of the study, and future research directions

It was found that there were both strengths and limitations of the study and of its research processes. This section explains the research limitations and strengths, and also some future research directions are discussed.

9.5.1 Limitations

A first limitation concerned difficulties in researching Thai culture and Thai society. It was discovered that Thai people respect their leaders and people with high social status, such as governors and rich people (Mulder, 1990; Boyle, 1998). This meant that care had to be taken when asking about issues that related to the influence of leaders and influential actors, especially in a rural region such as Chiang Rai province. This entailed taking a long time to get to certain potentially sensitive questions in the interview schedule, and on many occasions some questions could not be asked directly to the interviewees. However, the researcher asked some people with special relations to the interviewee to find out more about these issues and relationships. Indeed, without

personal contacts and good understanding between the researcher and certain respondents, then the study may not have exposed some of the key processes operating in the case study areas. But it is never possible to be certain that all of the more sensitive processes have been identified.

A second limitation of the study concerned language, this being due to the case study areas having a partly tribal population, with their own cultures and languages. It was sometimes difficult to understand the responses when the researcher questioned them about the study, and it took time to get to know what they were trying to say. However, the researcher had worked in the areas before and there were some local people who agreed to help with translation while these respondents were being interviewed. Moreover, people in the case study areas understood that the study was purely for research purposes, although they were also told that there might be practical implications for their local ecotourism planning and management. This background was explained to them, and it was emphasized that the research would not harm their lives and living. These explanations and assurances helped to gain the trust of the respondents, so they agreed to help and share their ideas on ecotourism. Importantly, research ethics had to be used for the study, and this controlled the researcher in his modus operandi for data collection and presentation.

Another limitation on the study was the time constraints for interviews for many local interviewees. This applied particularly for the farmers in the villages, who worked during the day time on their farm land, so it was difficult to interview them then at home. In these cases the researcher carried out the interviews in the evening and night time instead. This also had the advantage of looked like non-official interviewing, so the interviewees often seemed more relaxed and they often then answered all the questions more fully. However, the researcher could not complete many interviews within one evening as the interviewees had to prepare for work the next day. In those cases the researcher sometimes continued the interviews at their farm, such as in the fields. These flexible methods appeared rather useful for the research because often the local people disliked official interviews as they thought they entailed questions that were difficult for them to answer.

9.5.2 Strengths of the study

A key strength of the study is that it has developed and assessed an analytical framework that is arguably more integrative and comprehensive than other existing ecotourism frameworks identified in the literature. This is in part because it combines ideas from political ecology and ecotourism as well as sustainable development and planning. Thus, natural scientific ideas are complemented by a social science perspective. The policies and practices of ecotourism planning and management relevant to sustainability were also keys to the contextualization of the study in the case study areas. The framework was also seen to be relevant for the different case study areas, which were characterized by differing planning and management regimes. It was found that there were different local social relationships and beliefs which affected how the relevant actors thought about ecotourism planning and sustainability. The framework was shown to be useful for understanding the case study areas, and it was contended also to have potential value for understanding similar issues elsewhere in Thailand, in other developing countries, and possibly also in more developed nations.

9.5.3 Future research directions

Future research studies might focus, firstly, on the use of the conceptual framework to promote the empowerment of local communities in ecotourism planning and management and in working towards more sustainable forms of development. The present research found that local people often did not have a clear understanding of their potential participation in decision-making within the community and also with outsiders. Especially in Thai society people respect others with a perceived high social status, so that ordinary people rarely argued with those people, and this kind of relationship has encouraged a further concentration of power in the hands of the community leaders. Thus, future research might study the gaps between the local community and influential actors both inside and outside of their village and how those gaps might be bridged more effectively.

The second suggestion for future research would be to focus on a comparative study of ecotourism planning, management and sustainability across the cultures of

developing and developed countries, with that study employing this study's conceptual framework. This will allow for an assessment of the value of the framework in very different contexts.

The last suggestion for future research would be to explore the specific similarities and differences between people's perceptions of 'ecotourism' and 'conservation tourism' in Thailand and elsewhere. This might also explore the connection between these ideas and the concept of sustainable development. This study found that the local communities often had a better understanding of the word 'conservation tourism' rather than 'ecotourism'. One difficulty with the term 'ecotourism' was that people in the country often lacked an educational background where they had been introduced to the idea of ecosystems, so that some people found the notion of 'ecotourism' quite difficult to understand. However, it is possible that the two words can be used together, as the purpose of both arguably is to promote sustainability in tourism management.

9.6 Conclusion

This study critically examined ecotourism planning and management and sustainability in rural areas in Thailand. A theoretical framework was developed related to ecotourism, political ecology and developing countries, which was then used to meet six specific research objectives. To meet the first objective, the study reviewed key literature relevant to the research from various academic fields, notably literature on ecotourism, political ecology, ecotourism planning and management, social relations and sustainability, ideologies of sustainability, and tourism and actors. It has shown that (1) there is limited research about relationships between ecotourism and political ecology, especially in developing countries;(2) Many researchers looked at ecotourism and environment impact issues, but fewer of them have focused on environment, society, economy, ideology, politics and sustainability; and (3) the relationships highlighted in political ecology can help to better understanding ecotourism planning and management.

Related to the second and third objectives, the study developed a conceptual framework which links issues such as ecotourism, political ecology and sustainability. The examination of these issues assists in the exploration of the tensions around social relations and sustainability, ideologies of sustainability, and ecotourism planning and management in rural areas in Thailand. The conceptual framework was based on both Western literature and Thailand's practices, with the intention that it would have some wider applicability for ecotourism planning and management and wider debates on tensions between society, economy, environmental concerns and sustainability. Due to its flexible and interactive nature, it is also believed that the conceptual framework has potential value for other researchers examining ecotourism in other situations.

To meet the fourth and fifth objectives, the study applied the framework to evaluate three rural areas in Thailand in Chiang Rai province. Assessment of the views of relevant stakeholders showed that, first, the homogenous community had stronger involvement in ecotourism and environmental management than a group with varied ethnicity that lived in the same village. Second, after one of the rural areas had suffering the loss of resources which supported their living, they then re-evaluated their use of local resources and adopted improved environmental conservation practices, which helped to promote sustainability. Third, indigenous traditions, or philosophies and values, have influenced the local perceptions of modernity. It was found, for example, that many indigenous people in the rural areas enjoyed working on their own farms, rather than working in tourism businesses. They often felt that those businesses needed more investment and experienced significant competition from traders both from inside and outside the community. Finally, it was shown that local people often had only limited participation in ecotourism planning and management as this tended to be led by their leaders, with Thai culture encouraging them to accept the views and priorities of these leaders.

The last study objective found that, under global economic pressure, Thailand's national policy context has often strongly focused on economic priorities and modernization, and that this can often weaken planning and policies for ecotourism planning and management and sustainability, with the concept of sustainable development often being simply sustainable economic development.

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