'Territorialising sustainable development'

The politics of land-use planning in Lao PDR

Guillaume Lestrelin
Jean-Christophe Castella
Jeremy Bourgoin

13th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) – Hyderabad, 2011

Land-Use Planning in Laos and beyond

- General evolution of land-use planning (LUP) worldwide:

Sustainable development

⇨ Objective has shifted from '*assessing land capability/suitability*' to '*creating a territorial balance between development and conservation*'

(e.g. FAO and UNEP 1999; Silberstein and Maser 2000; Randolph 2004)

Global discourses and multi-scale issues

⇨ 'Complexification' of LUP systems to include a wider range of scales and actors

(Meadowcroft 2002; Adger et al. 2005; Cash et al. 2006)

Land-Use Planning in Laos and beyond

- LUP system in Laos is representative of this evolution:

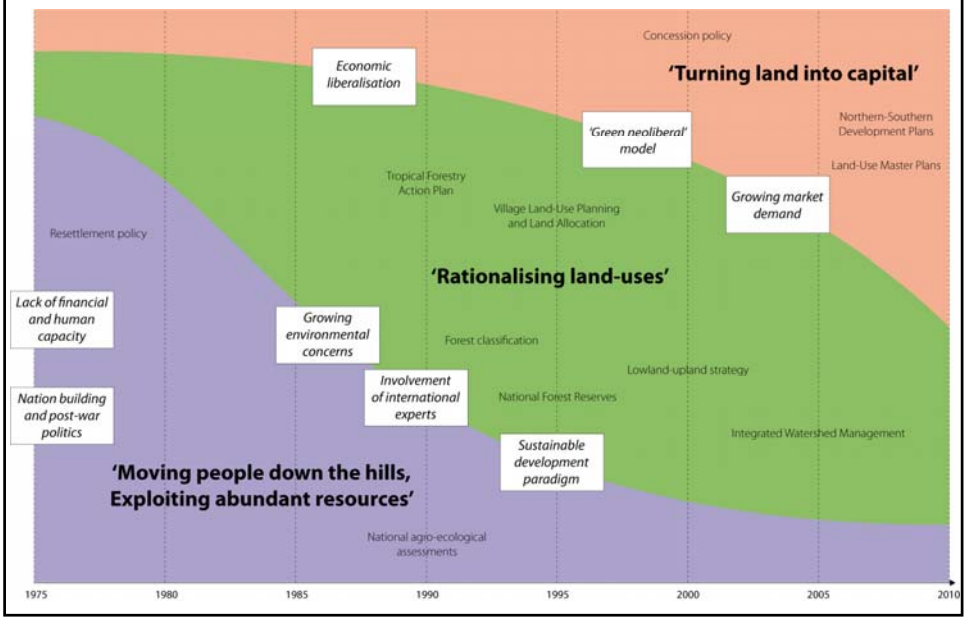
Poor and rural country, yet 'ecologically wealthy'

⇨ Sustainable development has become a key rationale and objective for LUP

Strong international support for improving natural resource management

⇨ Intensification and diversification of LUP efforts

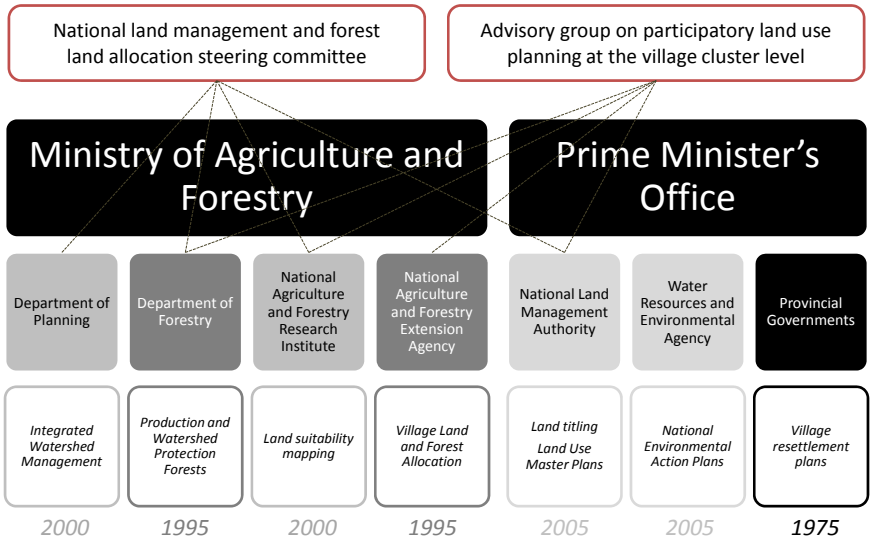
Land-Use Planning in Laos and beyond



From plans to practices

- History of LUP in Laos marked by:
  - Multiplication of the planning actors (each one with its own mandate, priorities and approach)

From plans to practices



From plans to practices

- History of LUP in Laos marked by:
  - Multiplication of the planning actors (each one with its own mandate, priorities and approach)
  - Sustained, yet not necessarily coordinated efforts towards better plans and planning instruments

From plans to practices

- **Land & Forest Allocation** has evolved towards more intensive use of geo-spatial technologies (GPS, remote sensing, GIS) and better data collection, management and storage

From Land and Forest Allocation (LFA)…

… Land-Use Planning and Land Allocation (LUPLA)

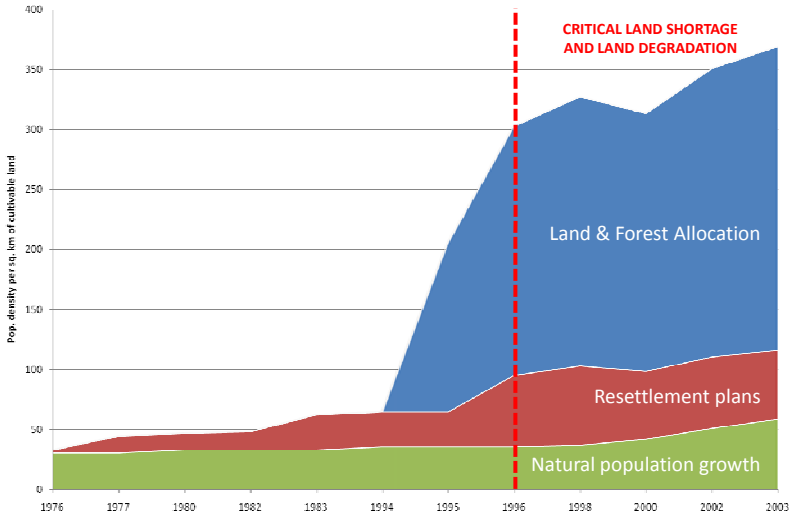
… to Participatory Land-Use Planning (PLUP)

- **Resettlement schemes** have been codified within a number of strategic documents; legal frameworks have been established to address related social issues

  e.g. Village Relocation and Consolidation strategy (1989), Focal Site strategy (1998), PM Decree No. 192 on Resettlement and Compensation (2005)

From plans to practices

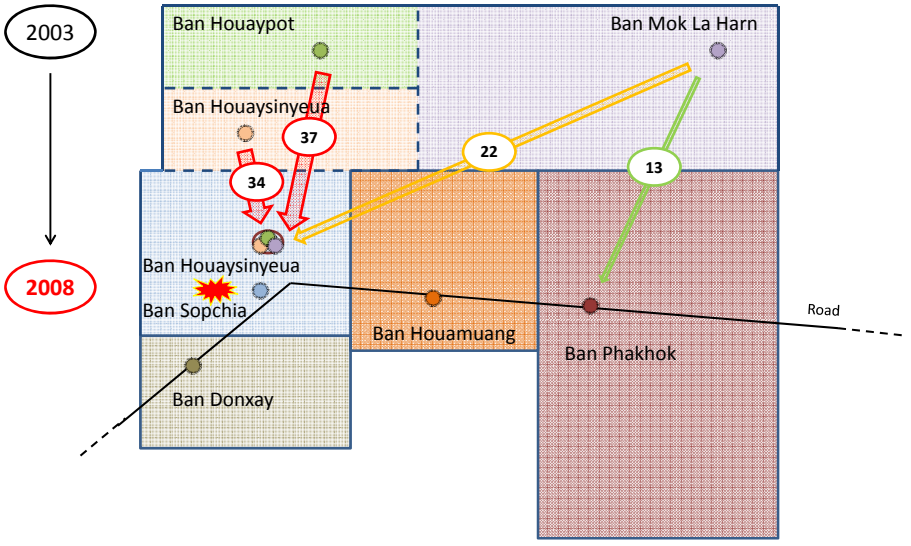
E.g. Conflicts between resettlements and Land & Forest Allocation (Ban Lak Sip)



Lestrelin, G., Giordano, M. (2007). Upland development policy, livelihood change and land degradation: interactions from a Laotian village. *Land degradation and development* 18, 55-76.

From plans to practices

E.g. Conflicts between resettlements and Land & Forest Allocation (Sopchia village cluster)



From plans to practices

E.g. Conflicts between resettlements and Land & Forest Allocation (Sopchia village cluster)

Village Land & Forest Allocation in 2008:

Protected forest

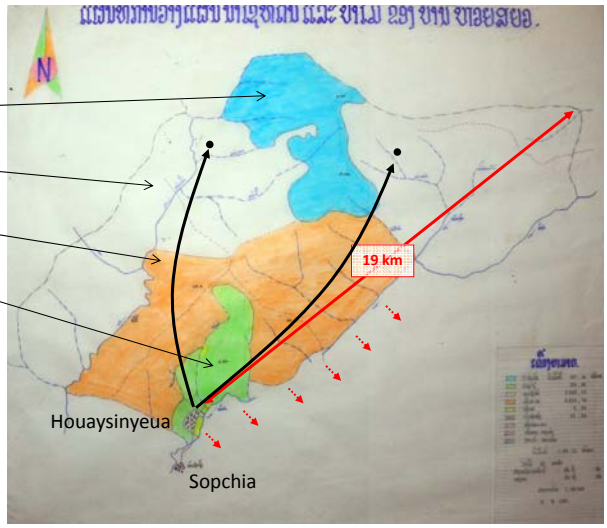
Pastureland

Agricultural land

Production forest

Some Houaysinyeua villagers establish temporary remote settlements,

Others encroach on Sopchia village land and trigger important conflicts



Conclusion

- Significant social and environmental issues have been reported to arise from superimposed land use plans in Laos

  (e.g. Vandergeest 2003; Evrard and Goudineau 2004; Ducourtieux et al. 2005; Lestrelin and Giordano 2007; Fujita and Phanvilay 2008)
- These issues reveal important disconnections (if not direct conflicts) between the concurrent projects of planning agencies
- There is a great need for facilitated communication and discussion, not only between local populations and planners but also, between planning agencies themselves

Conclusion

- The rapid 'complexification' of the planning system and instruments reflects a capacity of planners to adapt to changing socio-environmental challenges
- This sustained effort towards adaptation and 'improvement' needs not only to be better informed. It also needs to be better coordinated and channelled
- Better science and greater expertise are not necessarily the key ingredients for enhanced planning, what is primarily needed is the development of new forms of partnership, and new tools for creating political dialogue between a greater number of actors (Robinson 2004)

Thank you!