

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: Spring of Hope or Winter of Despair?

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Three insights from Nepal and three provocations

Integrated settlement in Dolakha



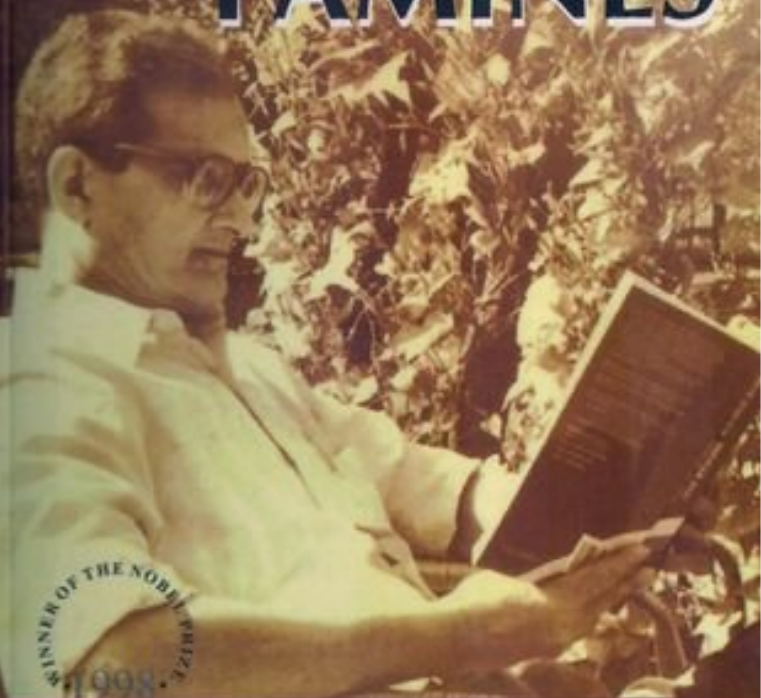
Three interviews, three mobility insights... (from the day before yesterday)

- A 23-year-old single woman who had returned to this resettlement village from Kathmandu to visit her family for *tihar* said she would like to return and live in the village, but there were no opportunities and that her future was best secured by staying in Kathmandu
- A married man of 33 years with two children had land sufficient to feed his family for two months and worked as a manual labourer for a private sector electricity firm erecting cables. He liked to think of himself as a farmer even though he depended on his labouring job to sustain his family
- The 40-year-old Ward Chair said that the single most transformative thing that could happen for his Ward was people having secure employment and an income

Three provocations...

OXFORD INDIA PAPERBACKS

POVERTY *and* FAMINES



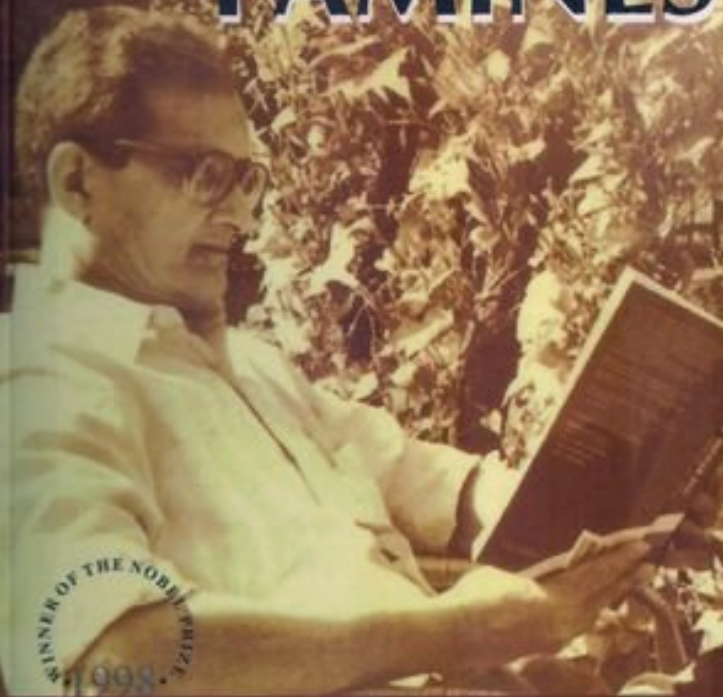
AMARTYA SEN

1. Famines are not about a lack of food

Three provocations...

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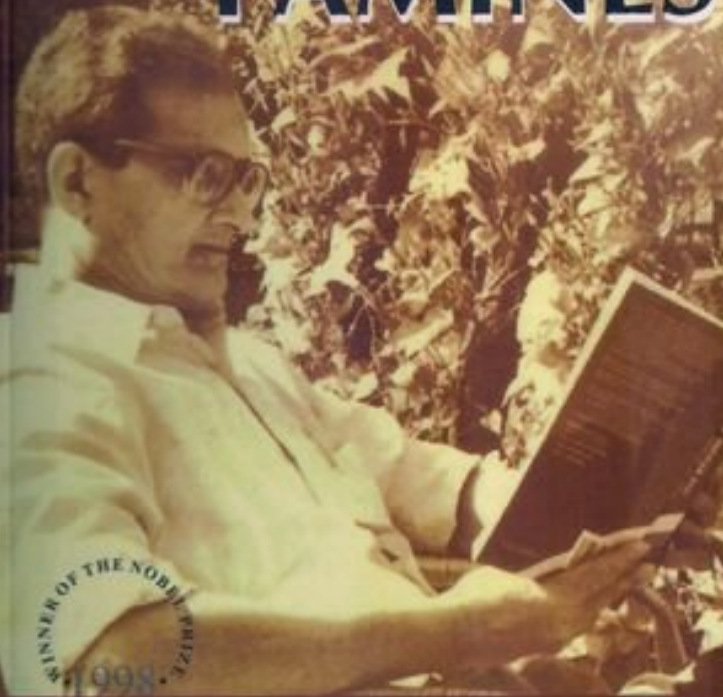
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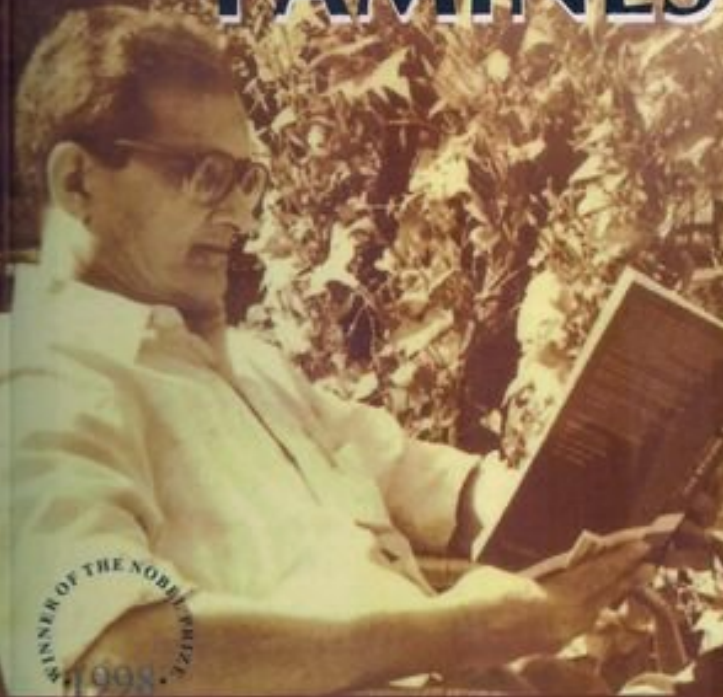
3. The development outcomes of migration are not about migration



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1. Famines are not about a lack of food

2. Climate change vulnerability is not about the climate

3. The development outcomes of migration are not about migration



This means that we do not 'fix' migration; we fix development



A brief sojourn into migration theory and practice

There are two broad approaches in migration theory...

Approach 1: the 'Migration Optimists'

- Grounded in neoclassical principles, not least multilateral agencies, and for whom migration is considered a vast process of labour optimization, peopled by utility-maximising migrants.
- 'Countries do not prosper without mobile people. Indeed, the ability of people to move seems to be a good gauge of their economic potential, and the willingness to migrate appears to be a measure of their desire for advancement' (World Bank 2009: 18).
- "...there is overwhelming evidence that internal migration can lead to positive change in both sending and receiving areas" (Bird and Deshingkar 2009: 3)

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Approach 2: the 'Migration Pessimists'

- View migration from a Marxian, historical-structuralist position, as a function of spatial disparities brought about by capitalist expansion. Connell et al.'s pioneering comparative study captures the essence of this view:
- 'migration is indeed the child of inequality. It is from the village where land is most unequally distributed that migration rates are highest ... Migration, however is also the father of inequality. ... It confers cumulative gains upon the richer migrant's family ... for the poorer migrant, migration is increasingly a wandering search for work' (Connell et al. 1976: 197).

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Individual capabilities

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Structural impediments

The 'mainstream' view

“For many people in developing countries moving away from their home town or village can be the best – sometimes the only – option open to improve their life chances. Human mobility can be hugely effective in raising a person’s income, health and education prospects. But its value is more than that: being able to decide where to live is a key element of human freedom. ... In migrants’ countries of origin, the impacts of movement are felt in higher incomes and consumption, better education and improved health, as well as at a broader cultural and social level” (UNDP 2009: 1 and 3).

“People move to make their own lives better. ...when agriculture is doing well, migration makes not just them better off, but also the villages they leave and the cities in which they settle.” (World Bank 2009: 9).

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The migration quadruple-win

Migration is good for:

- Those who move
- Those who stay
- Destination settlements
- Origin communities

The 'left behind'

“In migrants’ countries of origin, the impacts of movement are felt in higher incomes and consumption, better education and improved health, as well as at a broader cultural and social level. Moving generally brings benefits, most directly in the form of remittances sent to immediate family members. However, the benefits are also spread more broadly as remittances are spent—thereby generating jobs for local workers— and as behaviour changes in response to ideas from abroad. Women, in particular, may be liberated from traditional roles.” (UNDP 2009: 3).

Two sleights of hand at work

1. Measuring and judging migration success mainly in income (remittance) terms
2. Suggesting that migration’s effects are smoothly spread across geographical and social space

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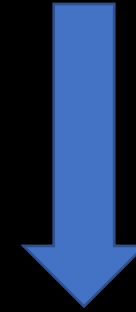
Nepal (Sept 2022)

“Migration studies suffers from a mobility bias. ...this article will argue that a systematic neglect of the causes and consequences of immobility hinders attempts to explain why, when, and how people migrate” (Schewel 2019: 1).



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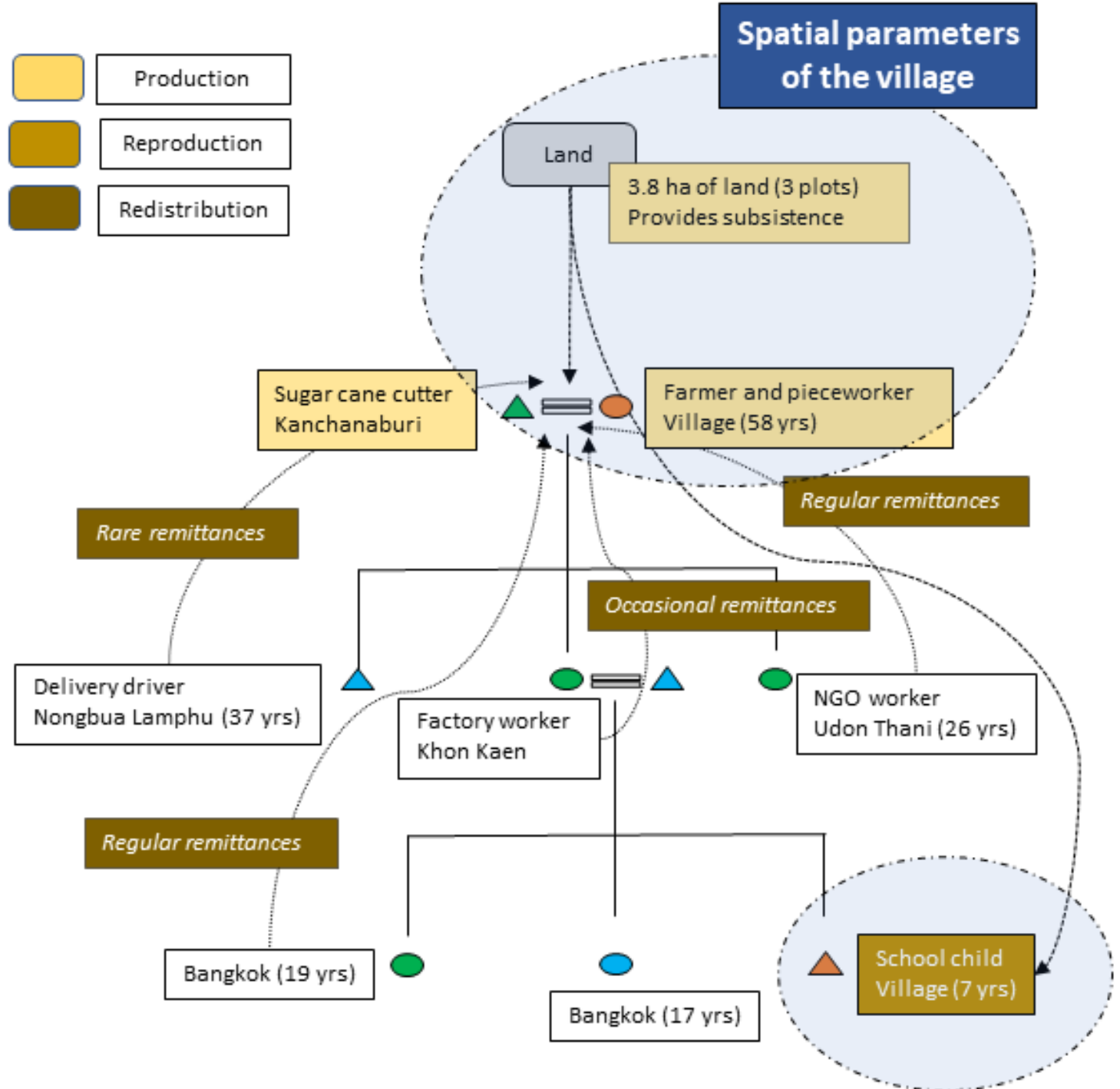


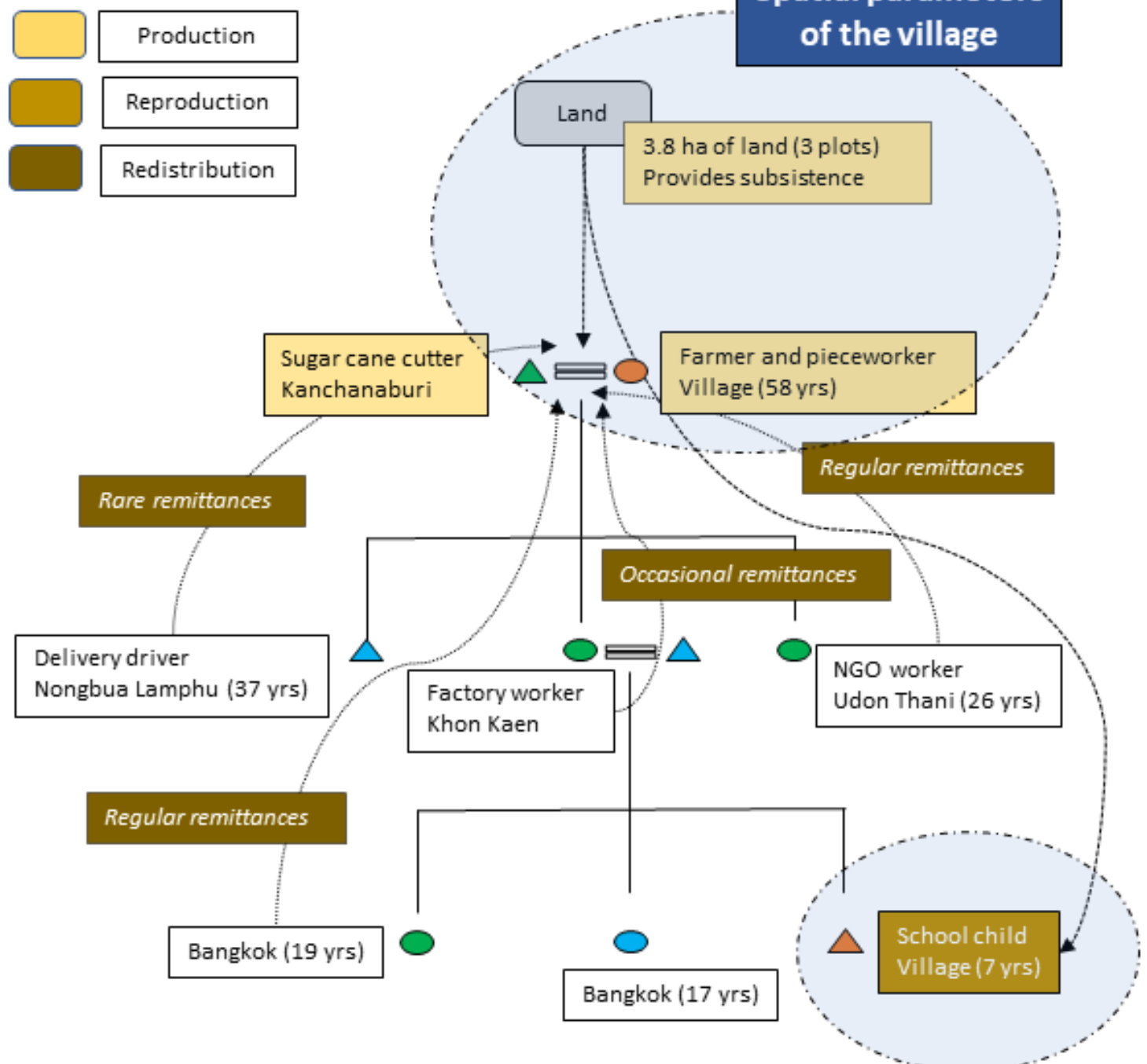
In focusing on the immobile ('stayers', 'left behind'), the lens of analysis shifts:

- From production to reproduction;
- from those who work to those who support such work; and
- from economics to care.

- Production
- Reproduction
- Redistribution

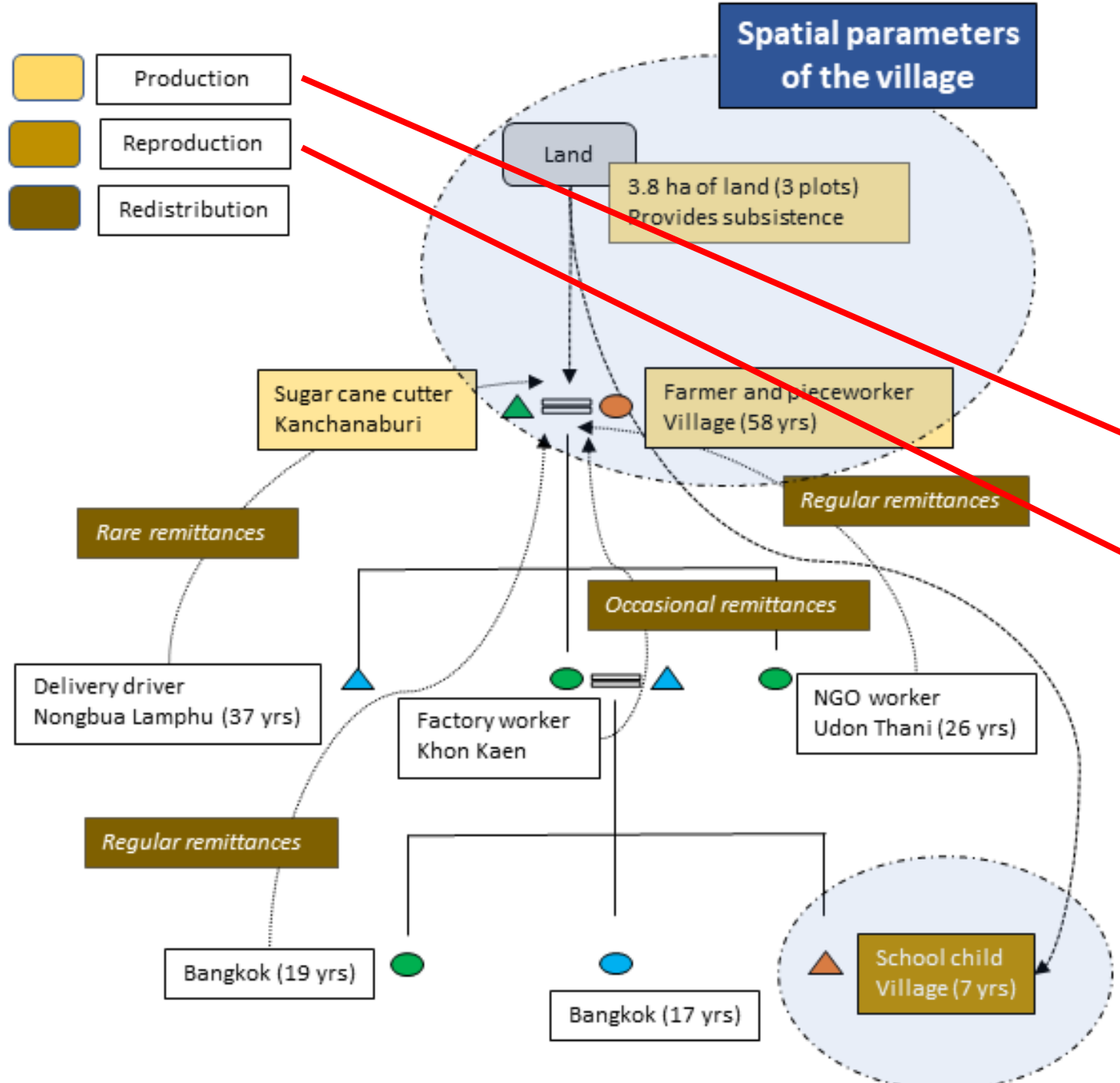
Spatial parameters of the village





A Vietnam migrant explains her migration dilemma:

'If I want to provide for them [my children], I have to migrate. But when I migrate, I cannot take care of them' (Locke et al. 2012: 73).



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Thailand: from sedentary peasants to mobile workers

2022





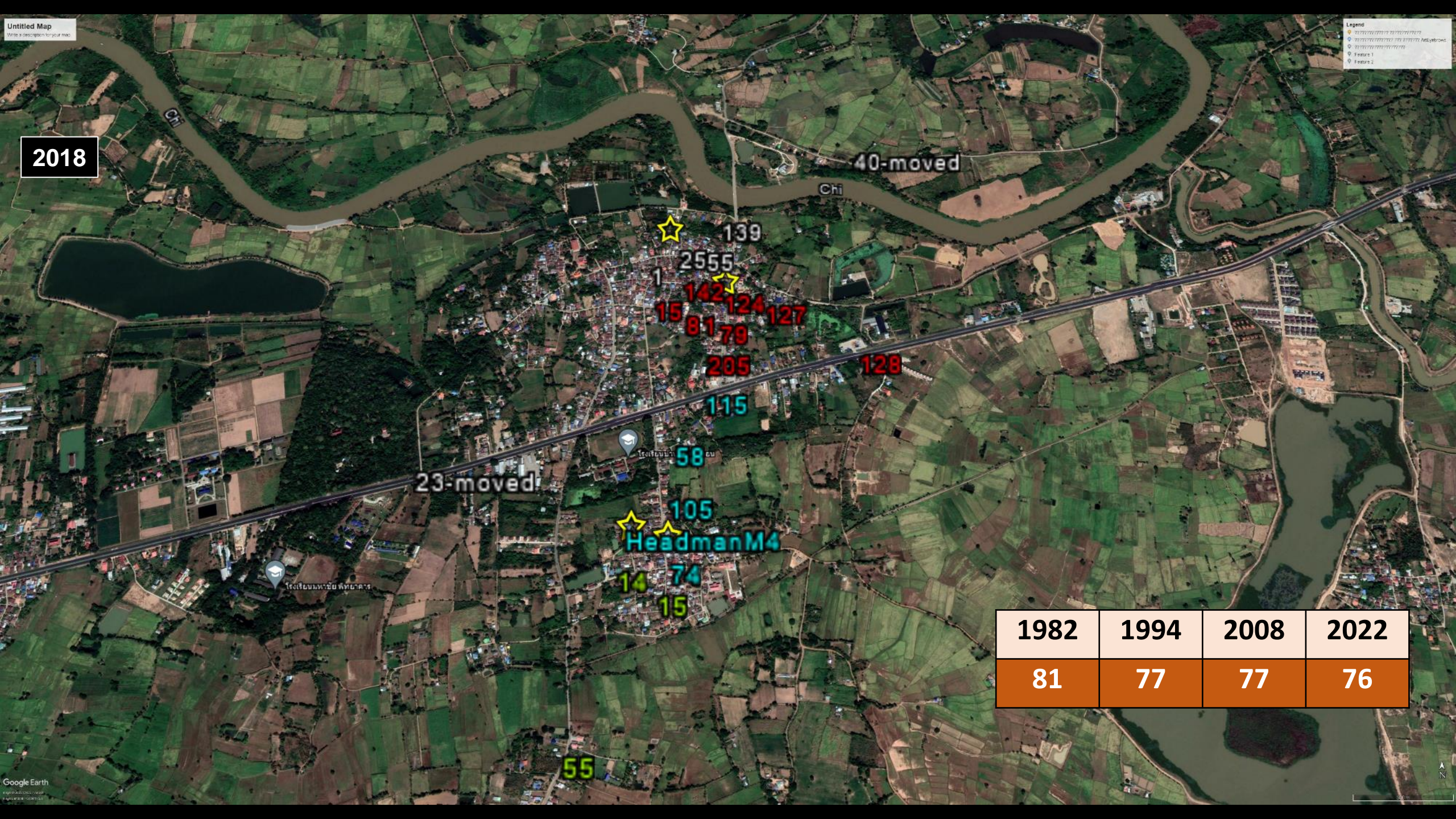
July 2022

July 2008



July 2022

2018



40-moved

23-moved

139

2555

1

142

81

79

205

115

58

105

Headman M4

14

74

15

128

124

127

1982	1994	2008	2022
81	77	77	76

55

1982



1982



1994



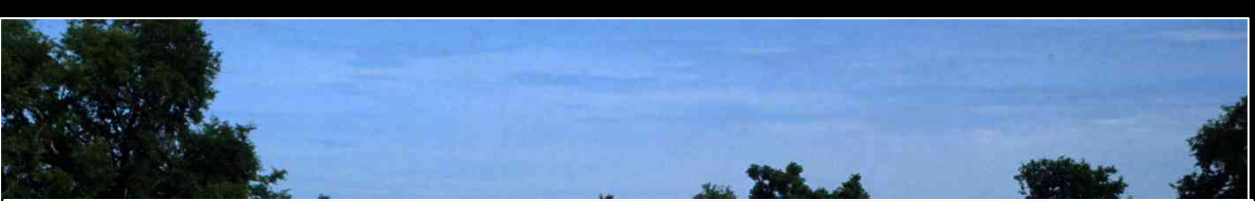
1982



1994



2008



1982



1994



2008



2022



1982



Migration profile



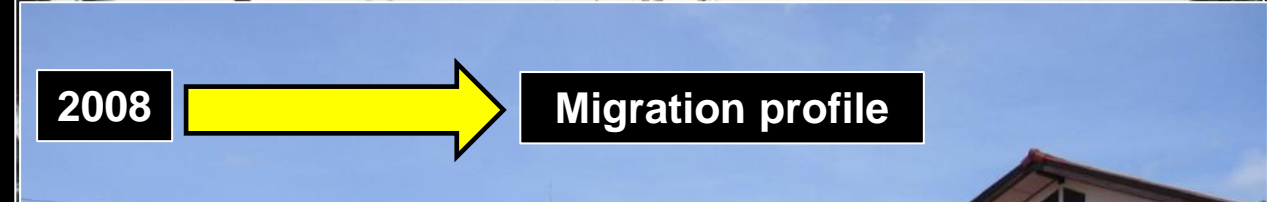
1994



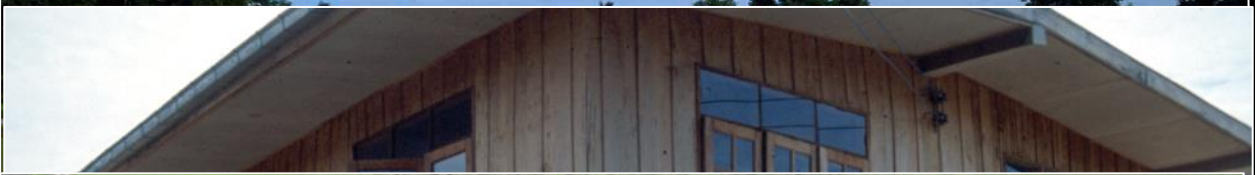
2008

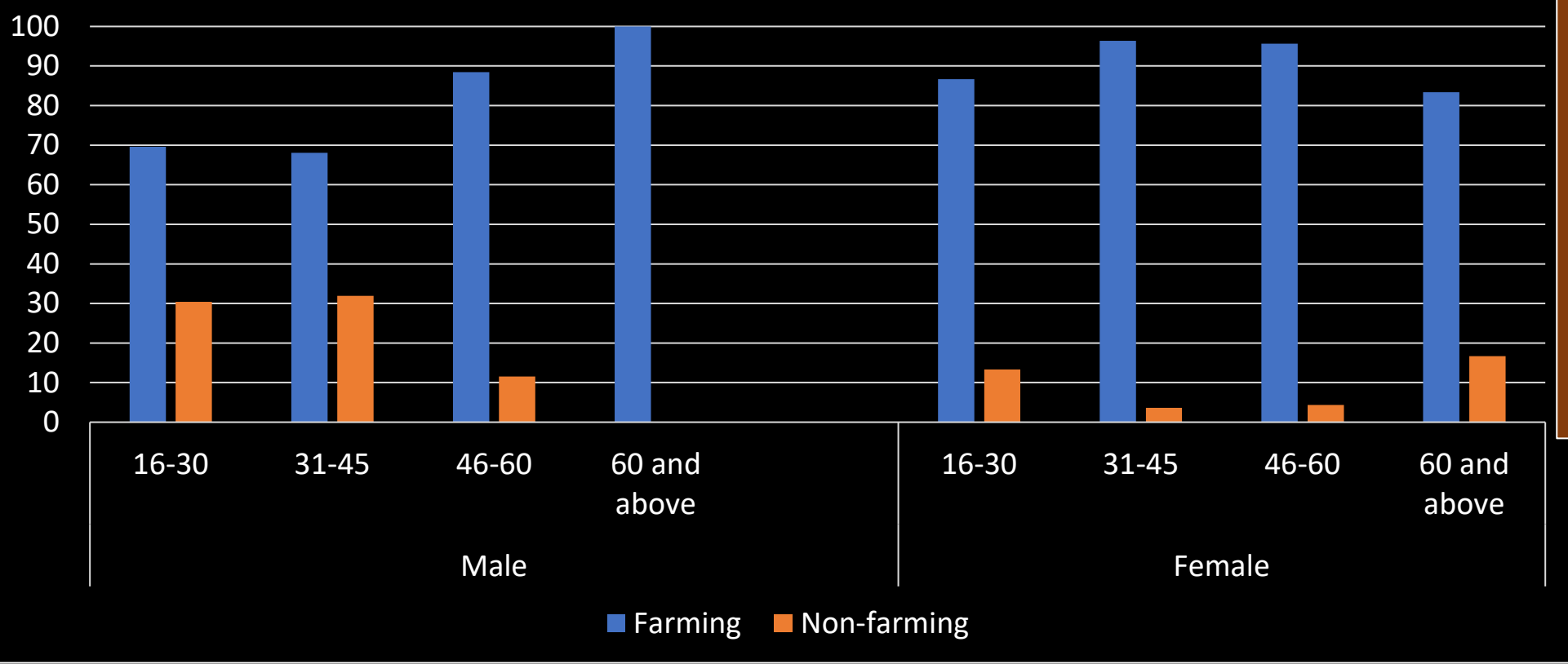


Migration profile



2022





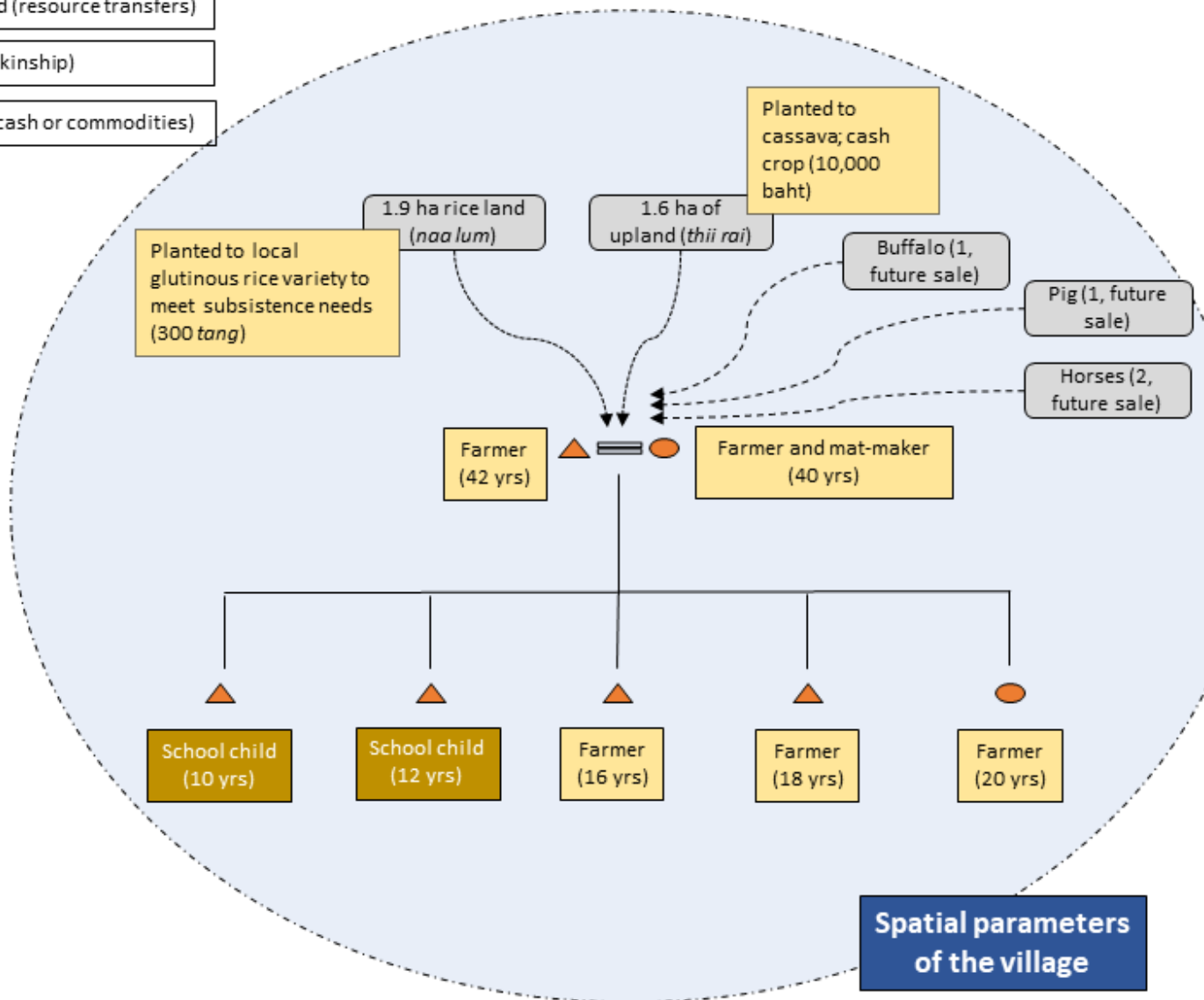
Migration, reflected in non-farm working was:

- Mostly undertaken by younger villagers (<45)
- Mainly by men
- Largely by peasants
- Still unusual
- (And was also mainly circular and seasonal)

Farm and non-farm work, Ban Non Tae and Tha Song Korn, by gender and age cohort (% , 1982)

A rural livelihood, c.1980

- Co-residential household (propinquity)
- Functional household (resource transfers)
- Family (kinship)
- Resource transfers (cash or commodities)
- Production
- Reproduction
- Redistribution



Spatial parameters of the village

๐๗ ๐๕๑ è ó *baan sa-u* or Saudi

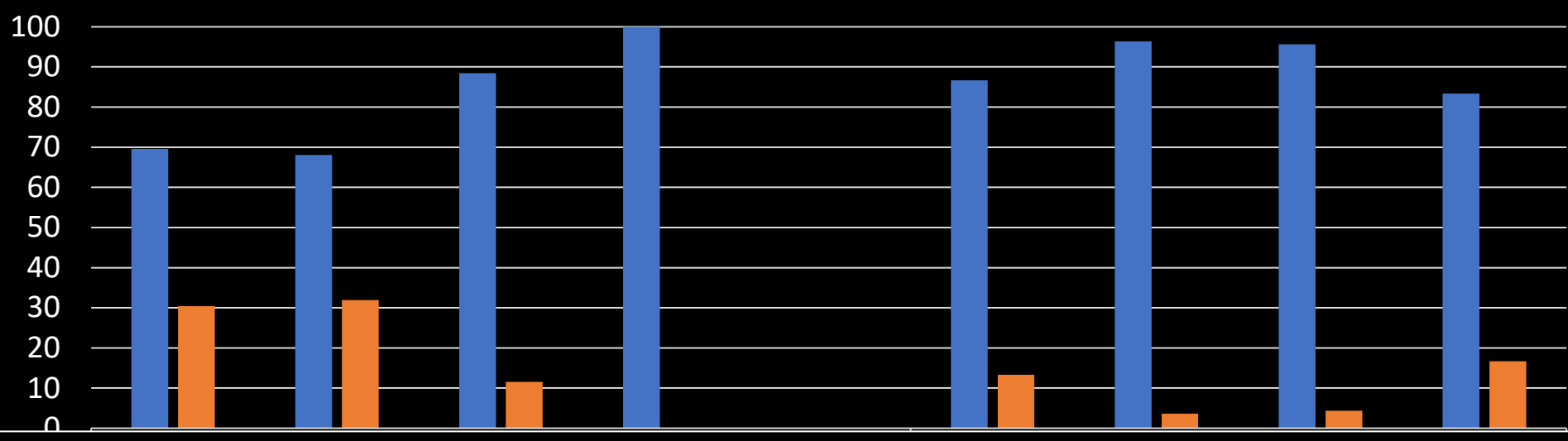
House



Remittance landscapes in source communities and migration imprints in destination sites

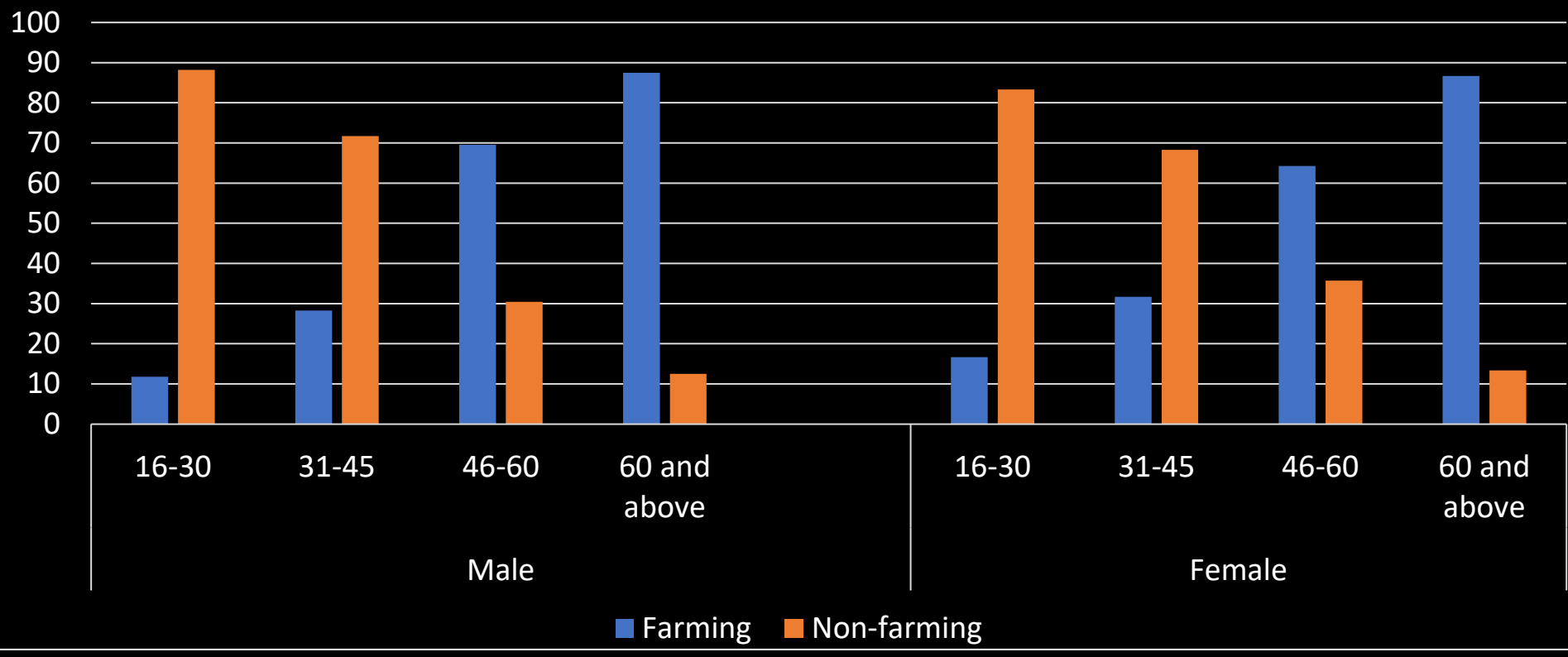


๖ ๐๓๕๐ ๐๕ ¼ *khon ban nok* or country
bumkin



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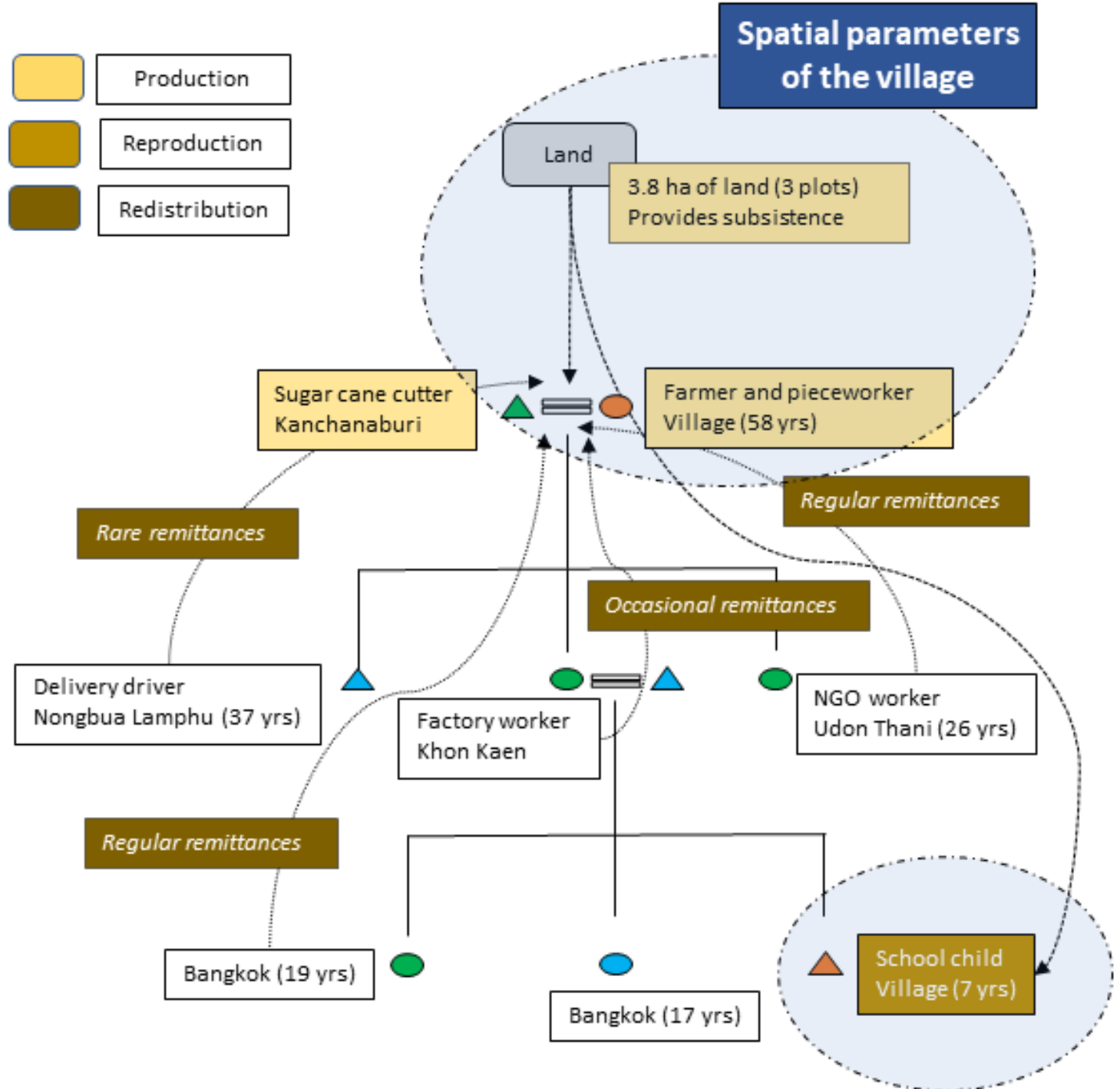
By 2008 migrants and migration were:

- Not just younger villagers
- Female as much as male
- Undertaken by post-peasants
- Normal
- (And increasingly longer term)

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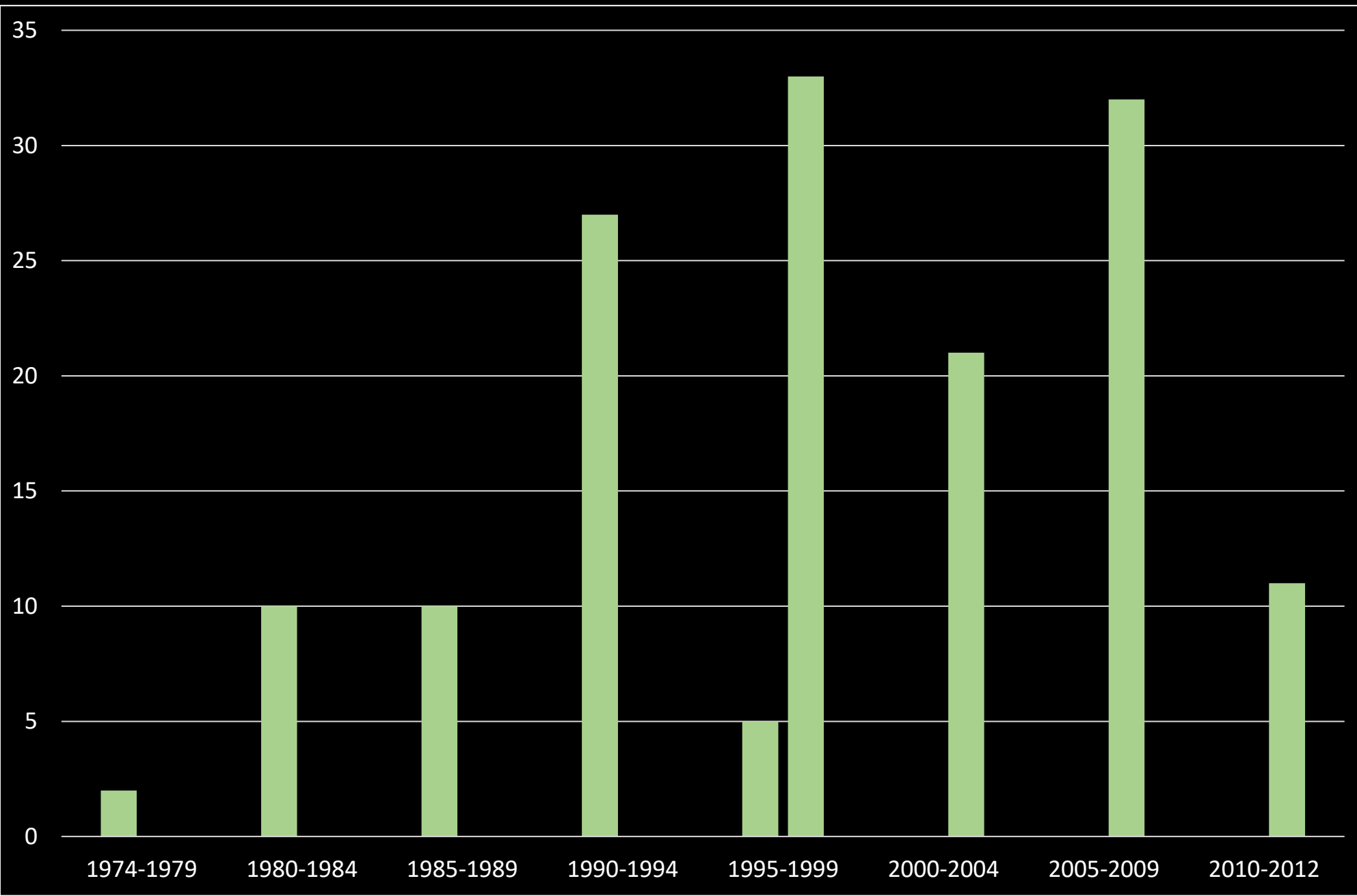
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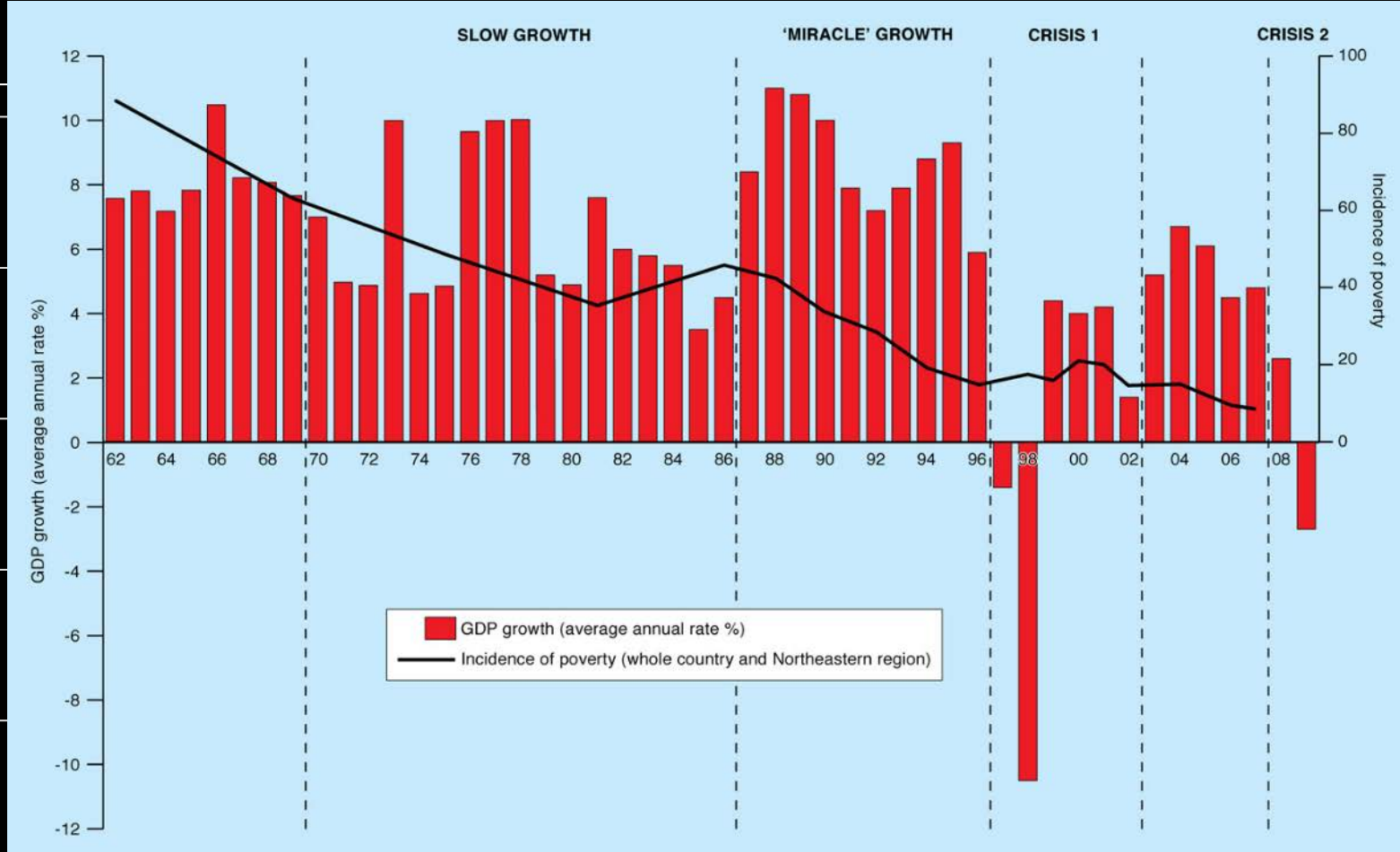
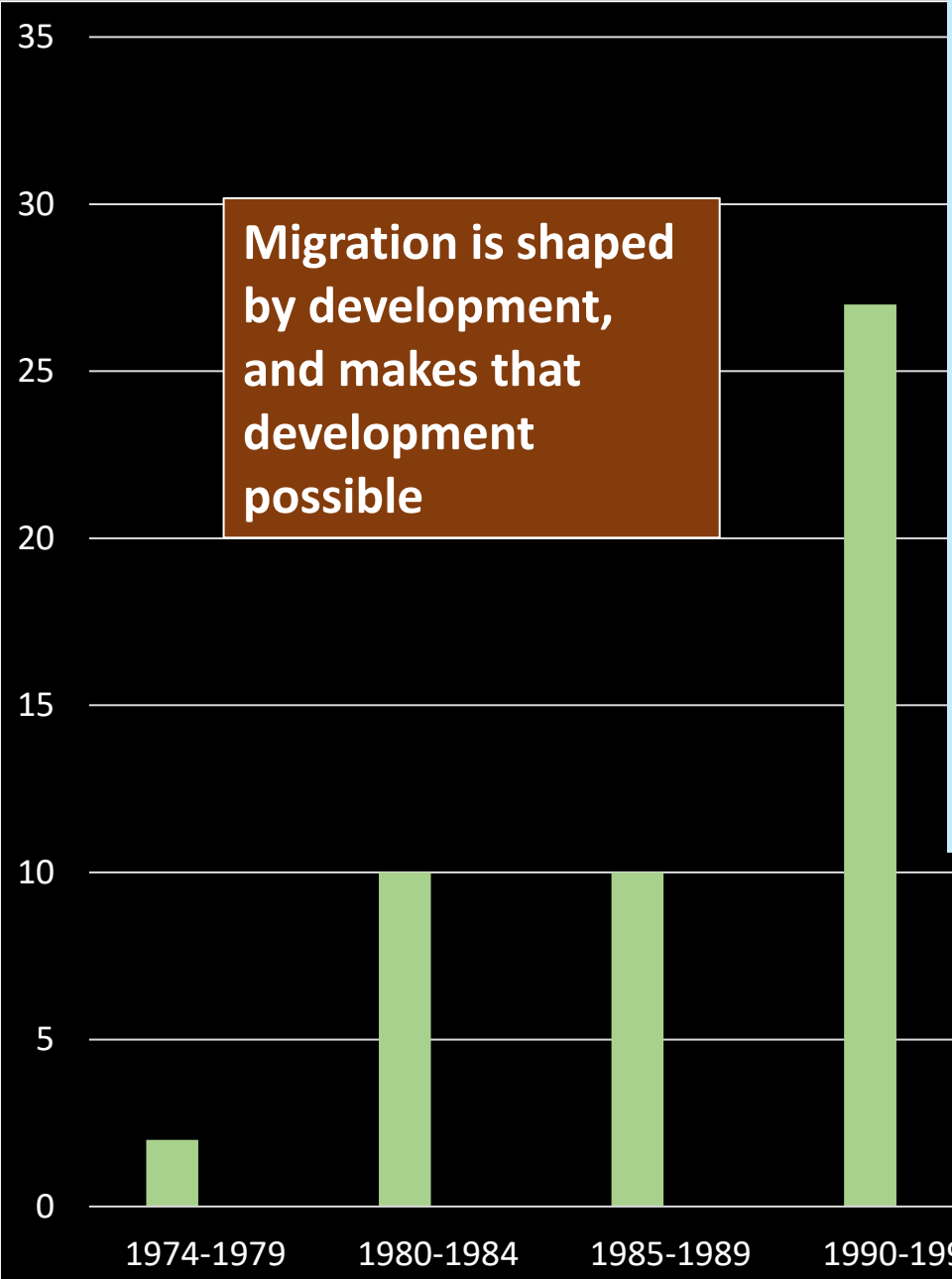


Date of departure of migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand



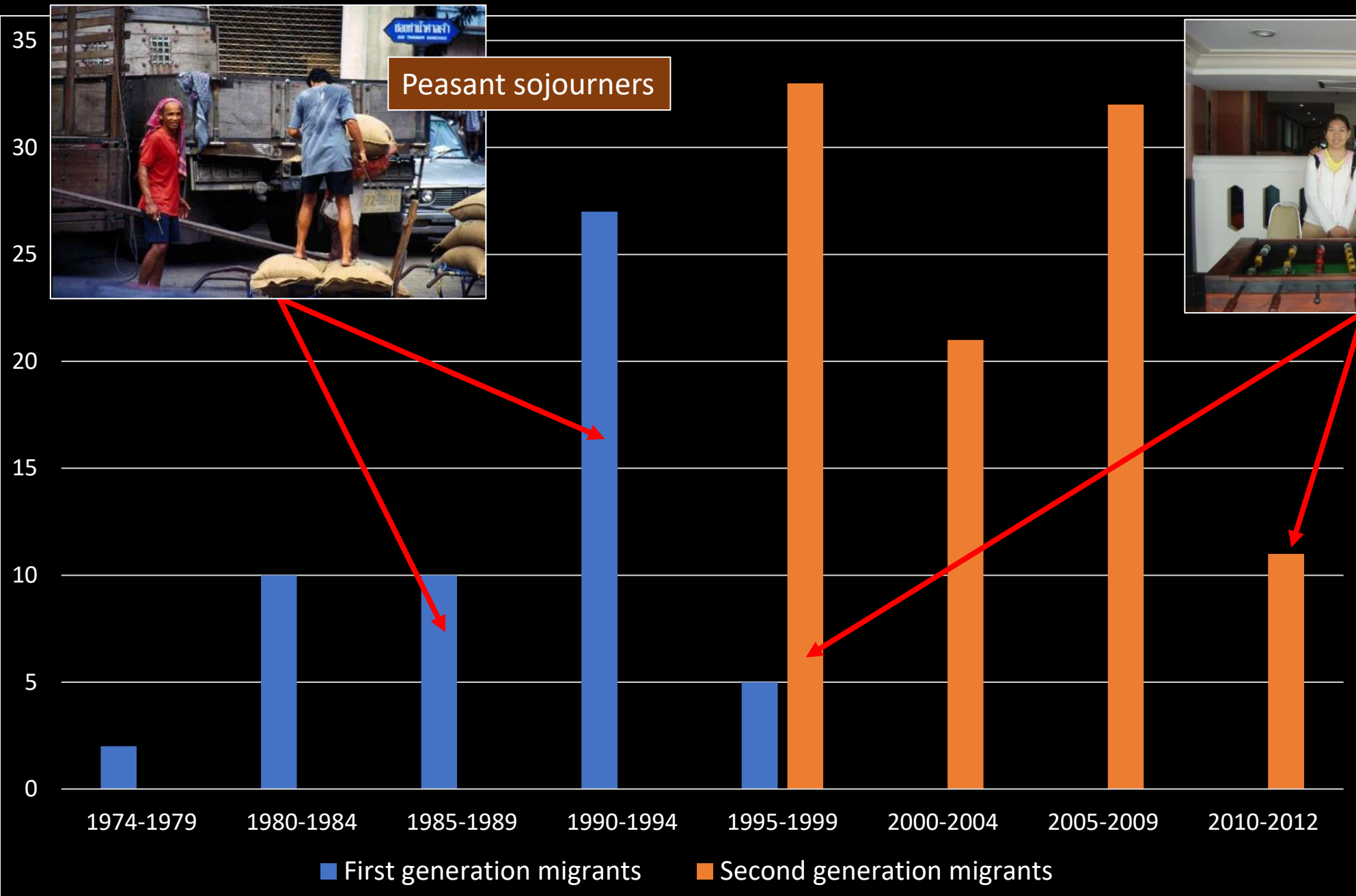
Source: survey, Nov-Dec 2012; n = 54 (first generation migrants) and n = 97 (second generation migrants)

Migration is shaped by development, and makes that development possible



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Date of departure of first and second generation migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand



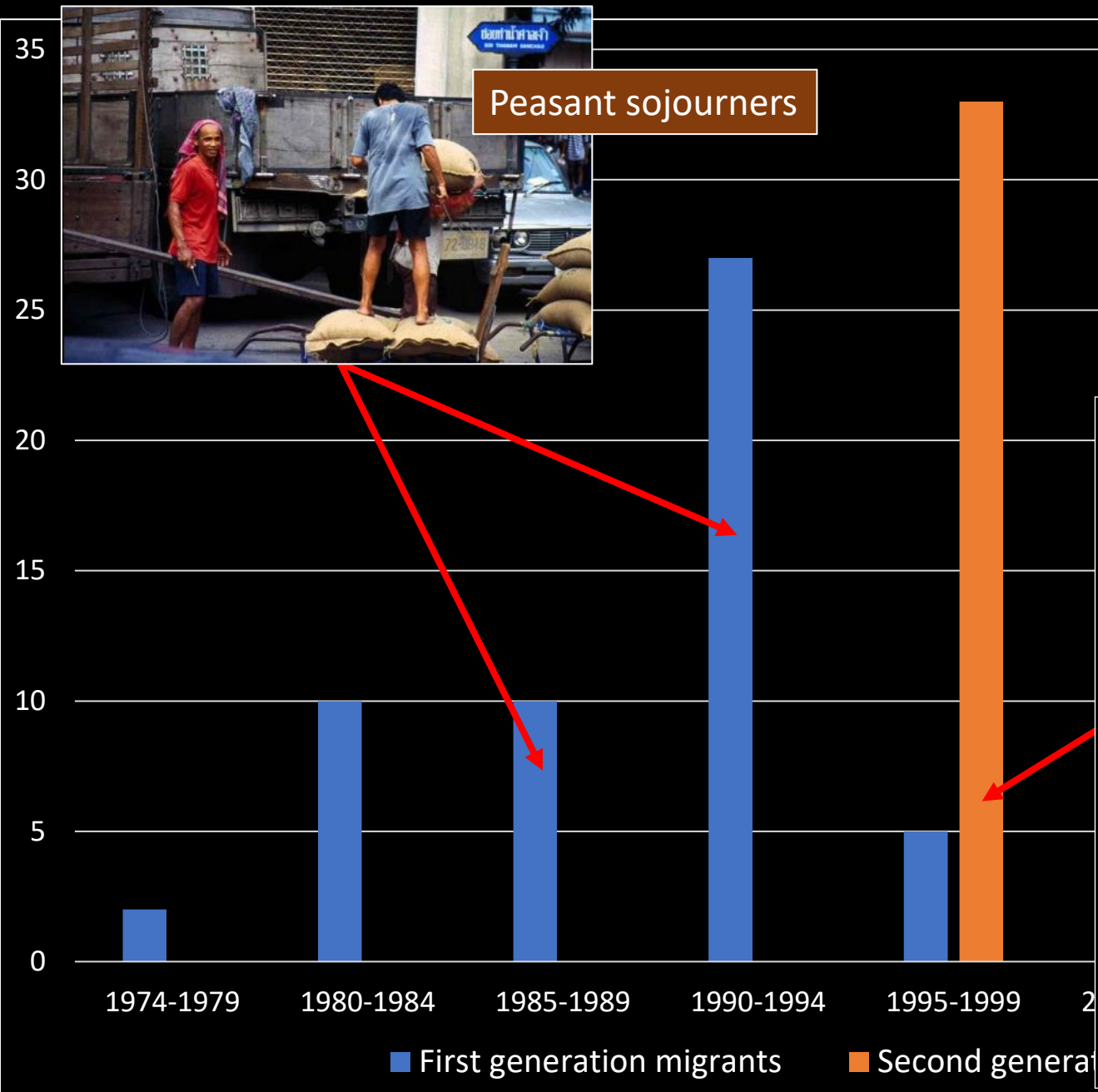
Peasant sojourners



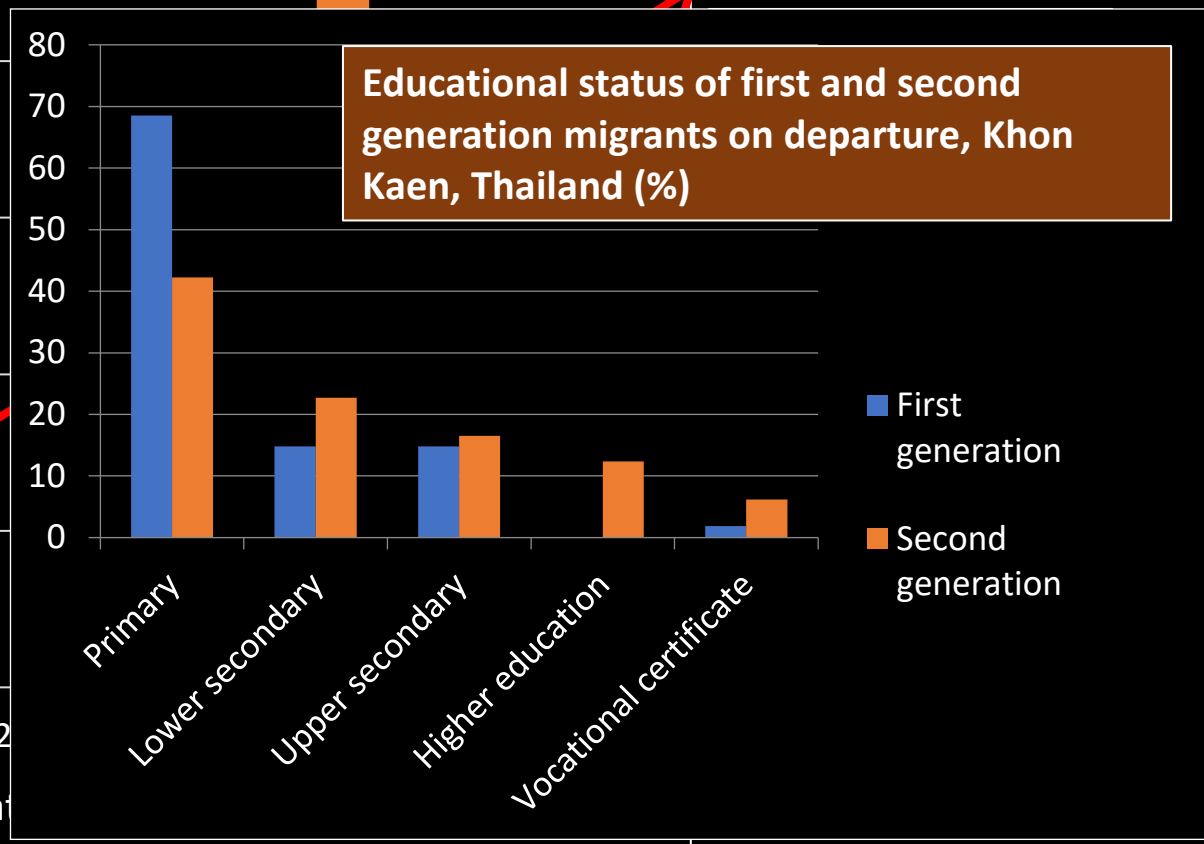
Worker sojourners

Source: survey, Nov-Dec 2012; n = 54 (first generation migrants) and n = 97 (second generation migrants)

Date of departure of first and second generation migrants in Khon Kaen, Thailand



Peasant sojourners



Educational status of first and second generation migrants on departure, Khon Kaen, Thailand (%)

First generation
Second generation

Why does migration take the shape it does?

How we frame our migration research, the methods we use, and the conceptual lenses we employ create the world we seek to understand, by:

- Focussing on migrants rather than non-migrants, movers rather than stayers
- Privileging production over reproduction
- Valuing something things (the economic, material and *effectual*) more than others (the social, emotional and *affectual*)
- Employing concepts that constrain our understanding
- Viewing policies as background noise
- Assuming that people can make their own futures rather than be trapped by history



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“Fields of analysis often develop a convention for introducing their object. Such tropes come to be seen as too obvious and straightforward to question. ... Objects of analysis do not occur as natural phenomena, but are partly formed by the discourse that describes them. The more natural the object appears, the less obvious this discursive manufacture will be.” (Mitchell 2002: 210).



Here is another such trope...

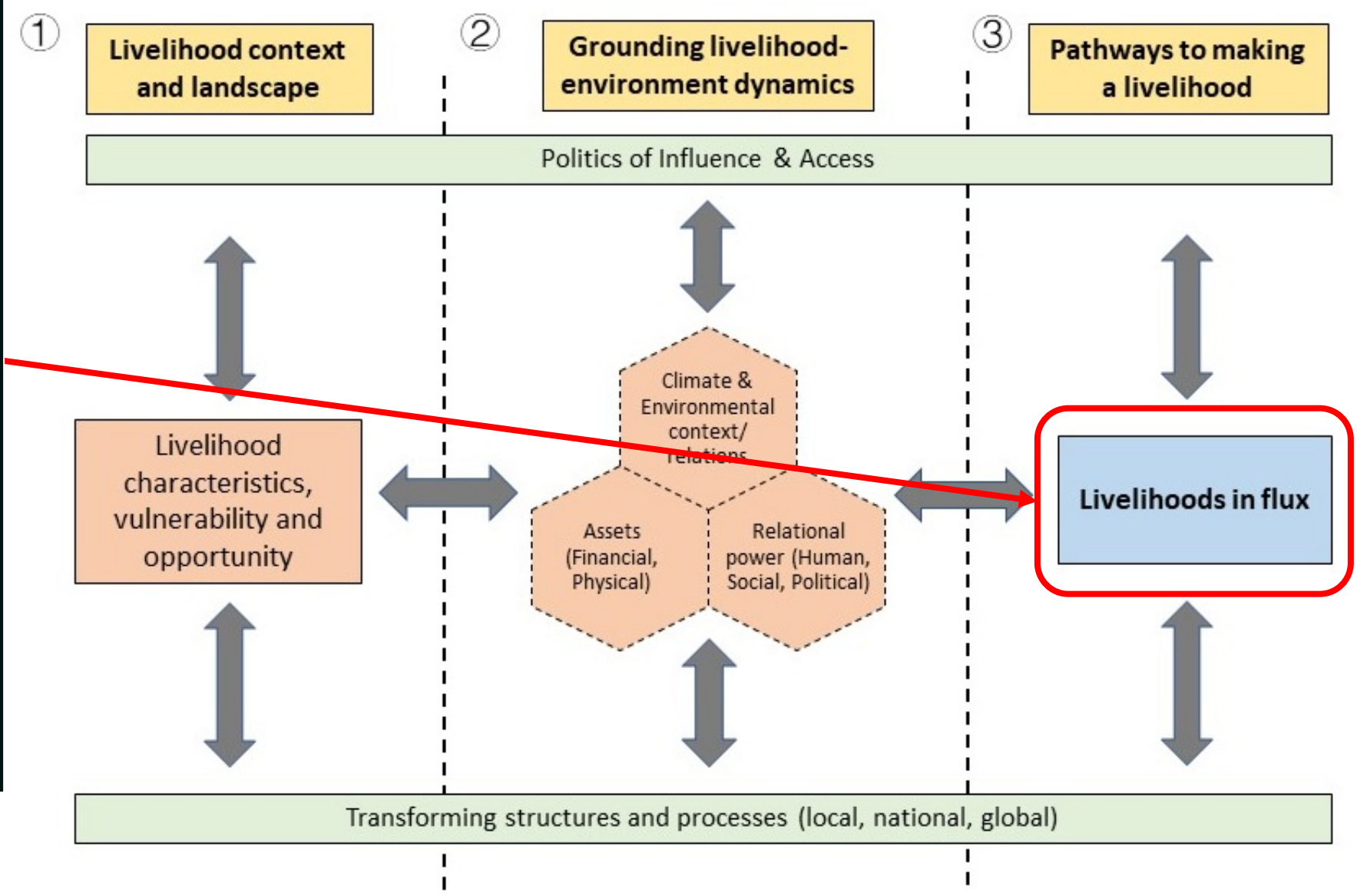
Migration and mobility, like livelihoods, need to be understood relationally.

Some more obvious relations:

- Class and caste
- Men and women
- Old and young
- Rural and urban
- Farm and non-farm

And some less obvious relations:

- Now and the future
- Now and the past
- Affects and effects
- The living and the yet to be



What is our entry point for thinking about the question of whether migration is developmental or not?

Thinking about Nepal's migration experience is our entry point:

- **National economy**
- **Rural spaces**
- **Agriculture/farming**
- **Communities/settlements**
- **Households/families**
- **Individuals**



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- National economy: 'richer'
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Ban Non Tae, Thailand (inset photo) 40 years later (and after much migration)

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- **National economy:** 'richer'
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- **Communities/settlements**
- **Households/families**
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**Abandoned terraced fields,
Dolakha (this week)**

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Thinking about Nepal's migration experience is our entry point:

- **National economy:** 'richer'
- **Rural spaces:** more developed
- **Agriculture/farming:** less productive
- **Communities/settlements:** less cohesive and hollowed out
- **Households/families**
- **Individuals**



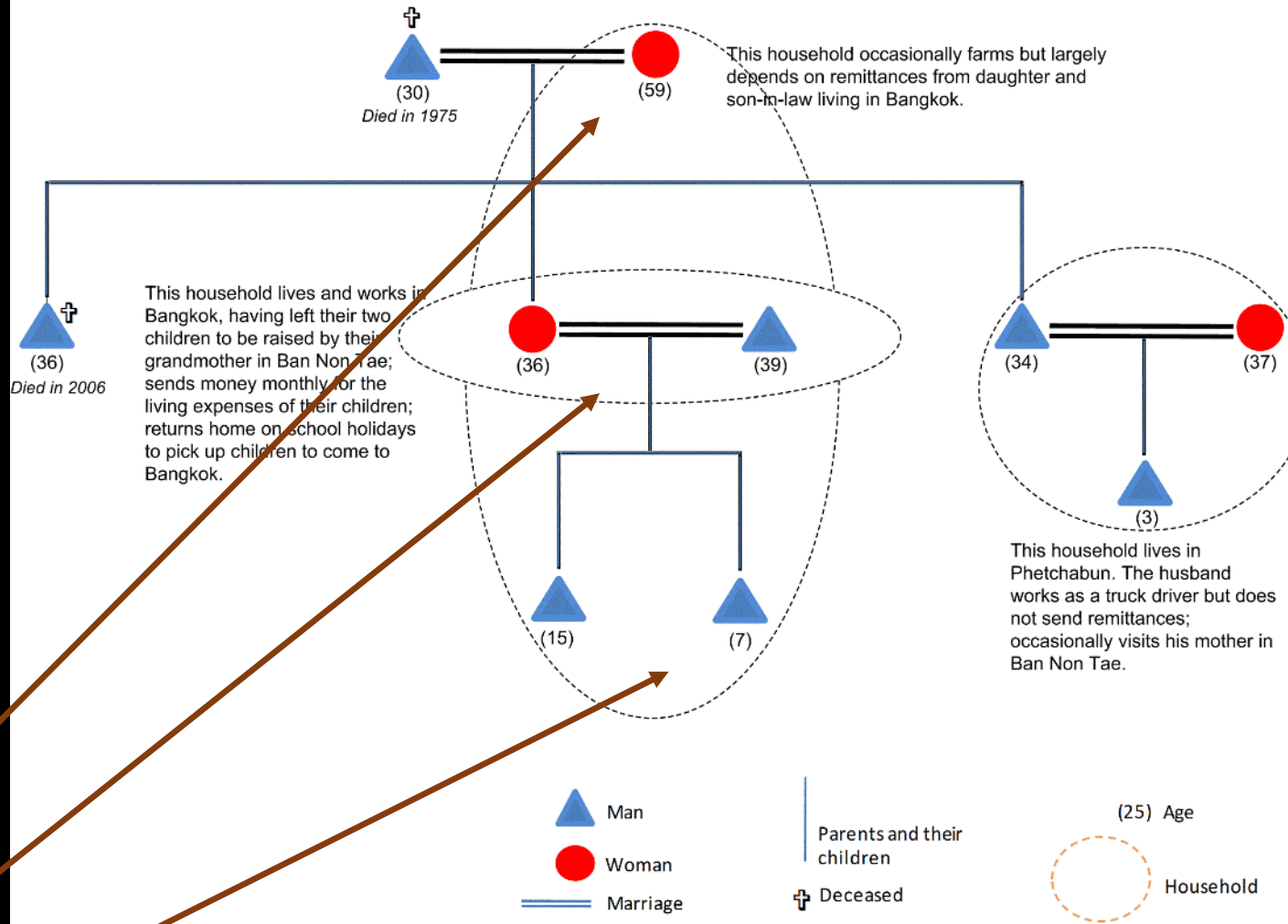
Empty homestead, Thanh Hoa, Vietnam

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- **Communities/settlements:** hollowed out
- **Households/families:** more prosperous but also more divided
- **Individuals**

- Elderly alone
- Satellite parenting
- Left behind children



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- **Households/families:** more prosperous but also more divided
- **Individuals:** richer and (perhaps) more exploited and less satisfied



Migrant worker, Singapore

But here's the thing: 'what else can I do?'

ເສັ້ນທາງສູ່ຊີວິດໃໝ່

ປະຈຸບັນ

ໃນອານາຄົດ

