

## Land tenure and farming system transformations in the North Central Vietnamese Uplands – Village studies from Nghe An Province

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1<sup>st</sup> LaSyS workshop  
Human dimensions of global change

### The purpose of this presentation is

to present an analysis of the farming system transformations of ethnic minorities in the Vietnamese uplands occurring as a result of the governmental land allocation programme

Land allocation → farming system transformations in the uplands

### Overview of presentation

- Land allocation and farming system transformations - agricultural intensification & livelihood diversification
- Research questions
- Case studies from Nghe An Province
- Preliminary findings
- Further analysis

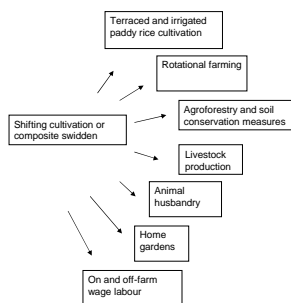
### The land allocation in Vietnam

- part of Vietnam's ongoing transition towards a market economy
  - from cooperatives to transfer of land usufruct rights to individual farmers
- the Vietnamese government's rationales behind:
  - to increase land productivity and ensure a better land management
  - to improve forest cover by the elimination of shifting cultivation and promotion of agricultural intensification and livelihood diversification
- a process of changing definition (1993 → 2003) and implemented with various local modifications and adaptations

### Agricultural intensification according to Boserup (1965); in short:

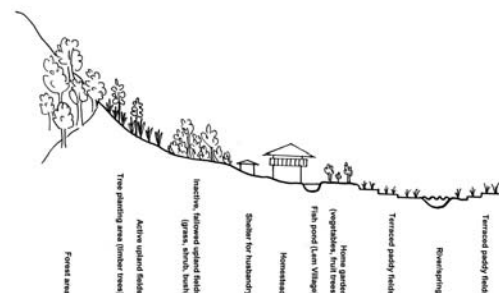
- Shifting cultivation uses fallow as a means of maintaining soil fertility through temporal nutrient accumulation
- Under normal conditions of population growth within a delimited area, the land per capita gradually decreases, fallow length gradually decreases and other means of maintaining soil fertility must gradually be implemented in order to avoid land degradation
- Such an agricultural intensification involves a farming system transformation from emphasis on land to emphasis on input of labour and capital as means of maintaining soil fertility
- The land allocation in Vietnam is a policy-driven and relatively sudden constrain on land per capita

### Livelihood diversification in the Vietnamese uplands



### Composite swidden

Sketch showing the different components in the composite swidden agro-ecosystem in the case areas



(Folving & Christensen 2002; based on Tran Duc Vien 1997)

## Composite swidden



## Farming system transformations in the Vietnamese uplands

- **Land tenure changes** (overlapping regimes of customary tenure, statutory tenure, private tenure)
- **Land use changes**
- **Environmental changes** (forest cover and quality; fallow composition; erosion; land productivity)
- **Food security changes**
- **Resource availability changes** (forest products (timber and NTFP); water for household consumption and irrigation; fallow for cattle grazing and NTFP)
- **Social equity changes** (intra-village differences and inter-village differences)

## Research questions

- How is the Vietnamese government's land allocation affecting the farming systems and livelihoods of different ethnic minorities living in the Vietnamese uplands?
  - Is an agricultural intensification taking place?
  - Is a livelihood diversification taking place?
- Why is the land allocation affecting the farming systems of different ethnic upland minorities in these ways?

## Case studies from Nghe An Province

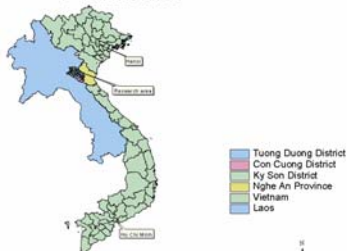
**Fieldwork** conducted in **2003 and 2005** in collaboration with the University Support for Environmental Planning and Management (USEPAM) Project – Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia (2002-2006)

Implementing partners in **Vietnam**:

Institute of Geography, University of Copenhagen (IGUC)  
Centre for Agricultural Research and Ecological Studies (CARES) at Hanoi Agricultural University

## Research location

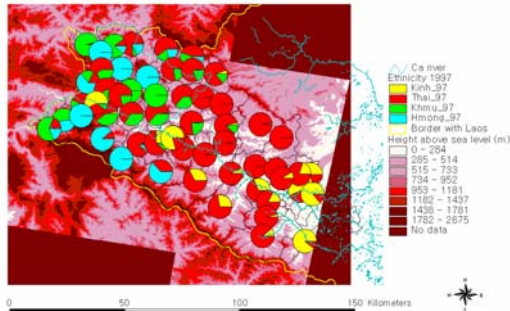
### Pathfinder



## Ethnicity in Vietnam

- Kinh 87% (app. 56.000.000), in addition 54 ethnic groups are officially recognised, most of whom inhabit the Vietnamese uplands
- Ethnic minority population: Thai 1.040.000; H'mong 558.000; Khomu 43.000 (*"Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam", 2000*)

## Ethnicity and height above sea level



## Case villages: characteristics & development pathways

	Ban Can	Ban Lau Phong	Ban Que	Ban Lau Thong	Ban Tha Lang
<b>Traditional farming system</b>	Composite swidden	Composite swidden	Shifting cultivation	Shifting cultivation	Shifting cultivation
<b>Favorable terrain for paddy rice cultivation</b>	Yes	Yes	Limited	No	No
<b>Accessibility</b>	Good	Good	Limited	Limited	Poor
<b>Integration into the Vietnamese society</b>	Good	Good	Relatively good	Poor	Poor
<b>Support from outside</b>	High	High	Limited	High	Very limited
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Thai	Thai	Thai	H'mong	Kho-mu
<b>Land allocation</b>	Implemented 2003	Implemented 2001/2002	Implemented 1998	Implemented 2003	None
<b>Main development pathway</b>	Livestock & paddy (soil conservation measures)	Livestock & paddy	Paddy & shifting cultivation (livestock)	Shifting cultivation & Livestock	Shifting cultivation (livestock)
<b>Main problems</b>	Erosion; conflicting land use	?	Lack of land & water	Lack of land; marketing difficulties	Erosion; conflicting land use; no market

'Remoteness' trajectory →

## Preliminary findings

- livestock production, paddy rice cultivation and shifting cultivation are the main components of the livelihood portfolio of the ethnic minorities in the uplands
- whereas paddy rice cultivation is limited by bio-physical conditions (terrain and water availability) and socio-economic factors (know-how, access to inputs) livestock production appear to be an important development pathways of both traditional shifting cultivation and composite swidden communities alike
- shifting cultivation remains an important component of the livelihood portfolio of ethnic minorities without access to paddy rice cultivation and no tradition of composite swiddening, ensuring food security in a time of dramatic change
- time and extension service are needed to ensure local adaptation
- environmental degradation – due to of overgrazing and trampling and a short fallow rotation practice with limited or no soil conservation measures – is a realistic threat in the uplands

## Further analysis

In order to **assess & evaluate** the effects of the land allocation on the farming systems and livelihoods of the ethnic minorities;

- A land cover / land use change detection analysis from the early 1990ies based on satellite image interpretations, in order to examine;

- local variations in the implementation of the land allocation
- level of (dis)obedience to the land allocation
- land availability & land productivity
- signs of environmental changes such as forest fragmentation; fallow regrowth; erosion, etc.

(see Jens Jakobsen's poster & show example)

- Livelihood survey
- Food security assessment

In order to **account** for these effects of the land allocation - **why** are these changes occurring in the Vietnamese Uplands?

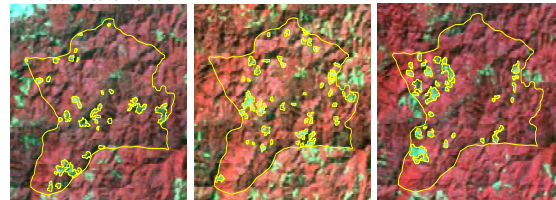
- Effects of post-socialist transformations – institutions, politics & power structures
- The rationale peasant - Labour productivity analysis
- Challenging received wisdom on shifting cultivation & deforestation
- Challenging received wisdom on tenure & property rights

## Shifting Cultivation Areas in Que Village

20th November 1991  
Total Area: 92.3 ha

27th December 1993  
Total Area: 110.2 ha

7th November 1998  
Total Area: 109.6 ha



0 2 4 Kilometers

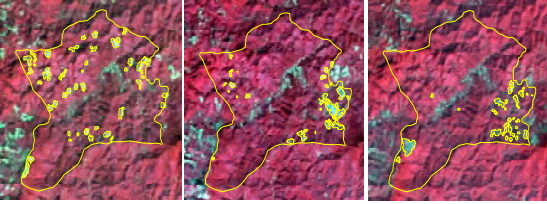


### Shifting Cultivation Areas in Que Village

23rd November 2001  
Total Area: 80.1 ha

10th November 2002  
Total Area: 54.0 ha

18th December 2003  
Total Area: 48.9 ha



0 2 4 Kilometers

