

Re-utilizing Space: Accommodating Tourists in Homestay Houses in Northern Thailand

การปรับใช้พื้นที่เพื่อรองรับนักท่องเที่ยวในเรือนแรมทางภาคเหนือของไทย

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Abstract

This paper discusses the way in which rural houses in Northern Thailand are adapted to meet emerging demand for tourist accommodation in a private 'homestay'. It is based on qualitative fieldwork in three homestay villages in Northern Thailand. The research combines the studies of vernacular tradition, tourism and 'home' in order to explain the changes in homestays by analyzing the interrelationships between space use, social interaction and the meaning of home and homestay. The findings reveal that the norms concerning guest space, patterns of life and the perceived meaning of home in the Northern Thai context play significant roles in adjusting the lives and outlooks of residents, as well as their space, to homestays. While this has positive implications in terms of re-using space to supplement the family income, homestays also bring about profound shifts in the moral values and meanings of home. The research differs from other home and homestay studies as it bridges the three fields of architecture, tourism and the study of home. It thereby contributes to our understanding of transformation and continuity within a vernacular environment and tradition undergoing significant internal and external forces of change.

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ถกประเด็นเกี่ยวกับการปรับเปลี่ยนเรือนชนบทในภาคเหนือของไทยเพื่อรองรับความต้องการที่พักนักท่องเที่ยวแบบโฮมสเตย์ โดยมีฐานจากงานวิจัยภาคสนามเชิงคุณภาพในหมู่บ้านโฮมสเตย์ 3 แห่ง โดยใช้กรอบแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับการสืบทอดประเพณีพื้นถิ่น การท่องเที่ยว และความหมายของบ้าน เพื่ออธิบายรูปแบบและความเปลี่ยนแปลงบ้านเป็นโฮมสเตย์ วิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่าง 3 ส่วน คือ การใช้พื้นที่ในบ้าน ปฏิสัมพันธ์เจ้าบ้านกับแขก และความหมายของบ้านกับโฮมสเตย์ในมุมมองของสองฝ่าย เพื่อนำไปสู่การสังเคราะห์ผลของการเกิดโฮมสเตย์ในบริบทพื้นถิ่นไทย ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ธรรมเนียมการรับรองแขกในบ้าน วิถีชีวิตชนบท และการรับรู้ความหมายของบ้านในชนบทภาคเหนือของไทย มีบทบาทสำคัญอย่างยิ่งในการปรับเปลี่ยนบ้าน ตลอดจนปรับตัวและปรับใจของเจ้าบ้านที่ทำโฮมสเตย์ ข้อดีของโฮมสเตย์ คือ การนำพื้นที่บ้านมาใช้เพื่อสร้างรายได้แก่ครัวเรือนในหมู่บ้านที่การท่องเที่ยวเข้าถึงอยู่เดิม แต่โฮมสเตย์ก็มีผลกระทบมากต่อชีวิตและความหมายของบ้านที่เปลี่ยนไป งานวิจัยนี้แตกต่างจากงานศึกษาเรื่องบ้านและโฮมสเตย์ผ่านมาด้วยการผสมผสาน

ศาสตร์ที่ไม่มีการศึกษาร่วมกันมากนัก คือ มานุษยวิทยา การท่องเที่ยวและสถาปัตยกรรมที่อยู่อาศัย ดังนั้น ผลวิจัยนี้จึงนำไปสู่ความเข้าใจที่เกี่ยวเนื่องกับการเปลี่ยนแปลงและดำรงอยู่ของสภาพแวดล้อมและประเพณีพื้นถิ่นที่อยู่ภายใต้กระแสความเปลี่ยนแปลงภายในและภายนอก

Keywords

Home (บ้าน)

Homestay (โฮมสเตย์)

Vernacular (พื้นถิ่น)

Tourism (การท่องเที่ยว)

Spatio-Social Analysis (การวิเคราะห์เชิงกายภาพและสังคม)

Meaning (ความหมาย)

1. Home Commercialization

Home is perceived as one of the most significant places in our lives. Home is not only an artifact, but in fact a particular kind of culture. Despite this, many scholars have noted problems and gaps in its study. Neglect of the significance of home is an often noted shortcoming. Short (1999, pp. ix-x) argues that home functions as a repository for complex, inter-related and contradictory socio-cultural ideas about the relationships between people, places and things. However, there is very little knowledge and understanding about the dynamic relationship between these aspects.

Several literatures have highlighted the distinctions between 'home' and 'house', including: home is abstract while a house is physical (Marcus, 1995); home is an elusive notion, incorporating psychological resonance and social meaning; a house is a commodity, involving substantial economic commitment; by commoditization home becomes house and a sense of homelessness is likely to be created (Dovey, 1985). As yet not much work has touched upon these distinctive concepts.

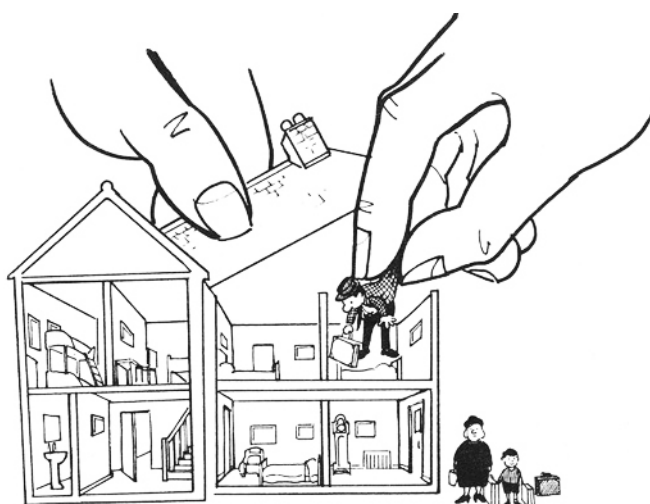


Figure 1. Image of homestay (Vellacott and Christmas, 1982).

Home is a place which one owns and uses, which may, at times, go beyond the scope of living, eating and residing to income generation through commercialization. The idea of the commercialization of home is not new, but in fact rooted in many societies worldwide (Hochschild, 2001). The extent to which home is commercialized varies, but the impact of commercialization is especially profound when a home is used to accommodate those other than the family, including as a homestay. Several authors have discussed the idea of homestays in relation to that of home and house. Douglas (1991, p. 304) said the idea of a hotel is the perfect opposite of a home, because it allows the clients to buy privacy as a right of exclusion; a similar idea to house as commodity, as noted by Dovey (1985). The idea of opening up one's home to strangers was noted by Stringer (1981, p. 368) as 'foreign, and therefore suspect'. He said that 'it could be assumed that nobody with a nice home would do such a thing'. Lynch (2003, p. 4) explains that when guests enter into a homestay, they thereby enter into the realm where hosts express their reflections of self, and this process contributes towards the hospitality experience.

But, if the homestay had no distinct characteristics, especially for tourists, it would have not have become a recognized form of tourist accommodation worldwide. Some authors have noted that tourists choosing homestays instead of hotels expect various things that other forms of accommodation cannot offer, including lower rates and first-hand experience of other cultures. Cohen (1988) has said of rural-based homestays that the real, authentic experience of staying with a family, enjoying their hospitality, activities and pursuits, learning about different cultures, can best be found in rural areas, where people still have time and genuine friendship to offer to strangers. These rural-based characteristics, which allow one to experience the aspects of a local culture, distinguish rural homestays from those in other contexts.

In many cultures, both western and non-western, homestays are noted for their historical significance as an early type of lodging for international travelers (Borchgrevink, 1999). Despite their long history, studies about homestays are marginal. Some research fields, including the anthropology of tourism, have touched upon homestays but it is nevertheless one of the aspects of tourism that is not explored in depth (Smith, 1977). So far, a number of explorations on socio-cultural impacts by western anthropologists and sociologists have appeared, including, for example, the conceptual relationship between hospitality and space (Lynch, 2003); host and guest interaction (Stringer, 1981); and labor division and authority in the household (Maher, 1984; Bouquet and Winter, 1987; Herzfeld, 1987). In Asia some works have been produced with a similar focus, such as those in Bali (Wall and Long, 1996) and Southern Thailand (Finch, 2001). Of this small number, there is rarely evidence of how homestay interplays with other dimensions of home and how the dialectic process affects home, the domestic environment and its tradition. Even fewer researches have explored the dynamic cycle of the homestay, linking rural tourism policy, the adoption of homestays by rural villagers, the transmission of homestay patterns across geographies, and how the cycle of the homestay intervenes in the continuing process of tradition in rural communities. This dynamic explains the whole homestay phenomenon and provide significant findings about home commercialization for tourism in traditional contexts.

2. Research Objectives, Questions, Case Study and Method

The research objective was to explain the spatio-social relationships of rural homestays in Northern Thailand. The three main research questions were: 1) how the spatial system of the home was arranged for homestay; 2) how 'host and guest'

interacted with each other; and 3) how the 'meanings' of home were perceived by inhabitants.

The case study selection was done through a pilot survey of homestays in Northern Thailand. The criteria for the selection were the cultural variety and the spatial arrangement of homestays in the region. Finally, three homestay villages consisting of a local Northern Thai village (Mae Kampong), a Palaung tribal village (Pangdang Nai) and a Karen tribal village (Huai Hee) were selected from approximately thirty active homestay villages in the pilot visit (see Figure 2). An ethnographic study was selected as the research method. The researcher and two assistants stayed individually inside homestay houses for five to seven nights in each house. Together a total of eighteen homestay houses were explored in the three villages over four months. The categories of observation were the spatial arrangement, daily lives and social interaction, and the inhabitants' perceptions of meaning. Coding of these categories was the main method of analysis and triangulation of these data was a means to internally link research findings. Theoretical discussion was related to home commercialization, rural tourism and vernacular tradition.

From an overview, the three villages have been major tourist sites since their village settlement. In 2001 homestay tourist lodging was promoted as a tourism policy for rural development. This coincided with a period of agricultural decline due to the destruction of agricultural resources, as well as social and cultural changes influenced by various internal and external forces. The homestay in Thailand expressed itself as a village-based phenomenon - that is, the whole village is in fact a tourist site. It is based on the concept of bringing multiple rural resources together to present a rural village as a tourism package in which destination, attraction and accommodation are combined together. The appeal of homestays to policy makers was that they utilized the available rural resources and required little in the way of upfront costs, making them convenient

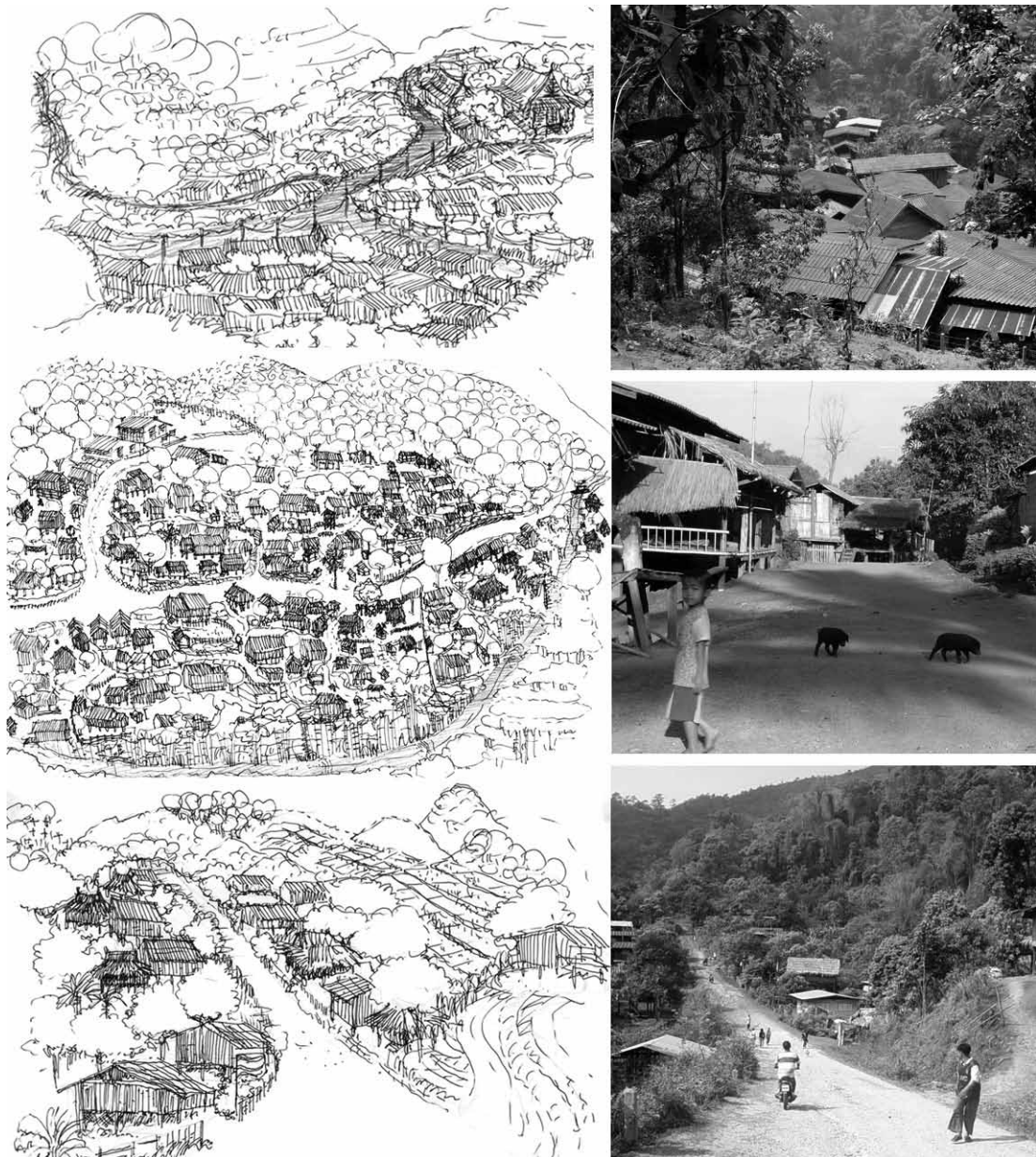


Figure 2. Three homestay case study villages: (top to bottom) Northern Thai, Palaung and Karen villages.

and economical, especially for villagers with scarce amounts of income to invest.

3. Empirical Findings

3.1 *Spatial Dimension: Space, Activities and Objects*

Several researchers of spatial systems emphasize that space, activities and objects have explicit physical and spatial relations; they take place and interact with one another; together they form part of

the environment (Tilley, Keane et al., 2006). Though they may appear primarily physical, the spatial relationship between them underlines deeply meaningful spatio-social relations and the way they constitute one another in particular places and cultures (Kent, 1990). The spatial system is directly related to the use of home; it indicates the home in various ways, divides the space into sections and defines spatial settings, users, purposes and associations (Lawrence, 1982).

The houses in the case studies support the previous statements: space, activities and objects constitute particular traditional characteristics of rural houses in highland settlements, with spatial characteristics that are open, mixed-use, flexible, adaptive and responsive to different activities, users and times. In particular, there are spatial norms which signify overnight guest areas and rules for receiving guests. The spaces are usually placed in the transitional areas such as the entrance or intermediate halls and porches. The villagers explained that hospitality to guests was regarded as essential, because they believed that relying on each other is key to living together as a social group bound by kinship, and that generosity is a reflection of kindness and good heart. When homestays were established, the existing guest space and norms of hospitality were transferred to the reception of homestay guests.

There are two major types of spatial arrangement for homestays. In the first, guests sleep inside the house in the areas specified by custom as overnight guest areas (Figure 3). These areas are easily prepared when a guest arrives, requiring only minor changes to accommodate spatial sharing, including arranging mats and futons and screening-off the sleeping area. This form demonstrates the readiness of spatial adaptation.

The second form of spatial arrangement is placed outside the house, being an improved option due to the greater privacy it provides for both host and guest. Customarily this form appears in a newly-built structure, which differs across villages, though the most common forms are bungalows and guest compounds, as shown in Figure 4.

The two homestay arrangements have different spatial impacts. As is evident, transitional areas inside the house are used up, thus affecting the privacy due to the penetration of the guest into the private living areas of the host family. Another impact is the lack of family common space because the family socializing areas, such as the kitchen and balcony, are used extensively for homestay activities including



Figure 3. Homestay inside home (Type 1) located in the hall.



Figure 4. Homestay outside (Type 2): Bungalow (top) and guest compound (bottom).

socialization, ceremonies and associated tourism services. As observed, these impacts affect both host and guest because they have little control over privacy and have no defined spaces to fulfill different social needs.

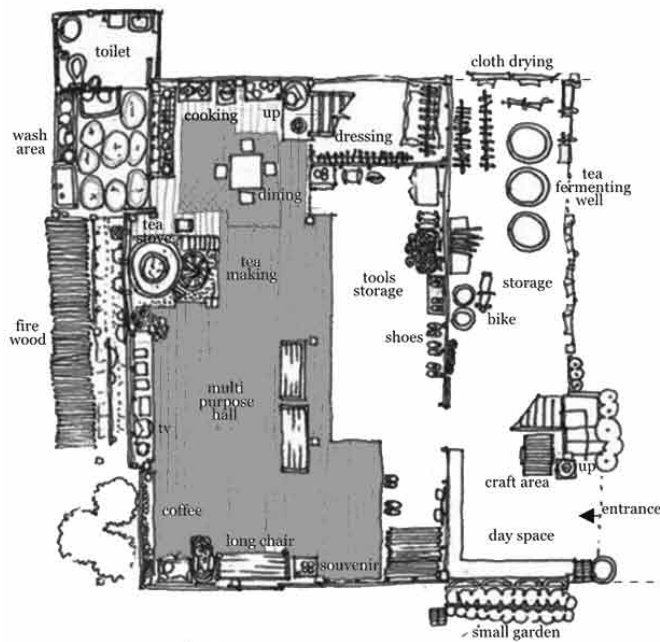
Bringing the homestay space outside alleviates these impacts, but there are different problems. No matter what forms they use, homestay structures affect traditional village layouts and increase land consumption and density. The add-on structures depend very much on how they are designed to fit in with the traditional context. With no control over style, some new homestays had distinctive and unusual characteristics to increase their competitiveness, which disrupted the natural harmony of the traditional environment. On the other hand, some tourists expressed the opinion that homestays outside provided few opportunities for host and guest to interact. Homestays outside only offered them the experience of lodging inside the village, which contradicted the homestay image promoted by tourism operators.

Similarly, however, both forms of homestay exhibit the extensive use of the home by multiplying the use of space. This can be perceived either positively (it maximizes spatial efficiency) or negatively (this goes far beyond the optimal spatial limits). To investigate this, the visual analysis in Figure 5-7 was used to explore space use. In Figure 5 the grey areas in the plan signify the spaces shared by homestay guests. It shows that when the homestay is inside (the first and third plans) the use of space for homestay is much more widespread; conversely, when the homestay is outside (the second plan) this homestay space use becomes much less. Figure 6 exhibits the arrangement of space, activities and objects in floor plans; it clearly illustrates intensive homestay activities and the spatial repetition and overlap of home and homestay uses. The same Figure, when analyzed in a relationship diagram, shows that the spaces are used repetitively for different activities during the day so that most spaces become

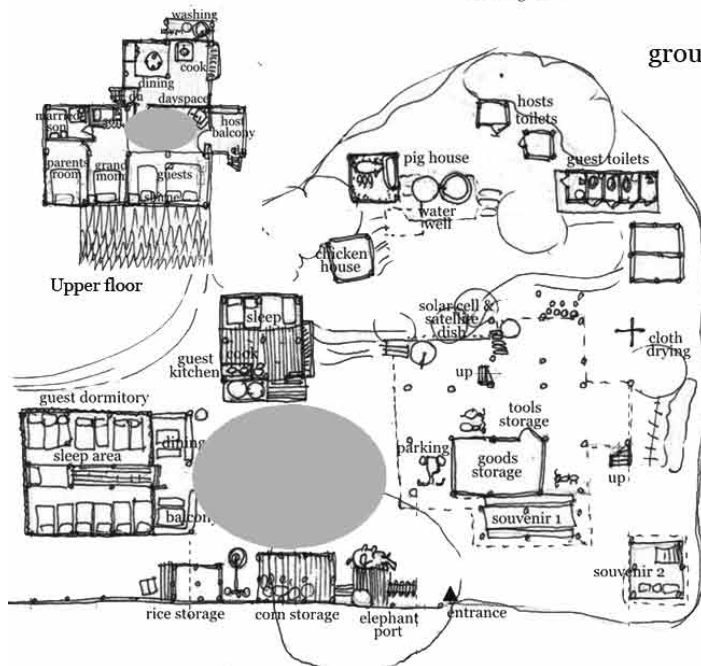
common areas, leaving relatively little private space for the family. On the upper floor, there is clear evidence of the privacy impact from the overlapping boundaries between host and guest, public and private. Figure 7 also shows how, in the same house, the downstairs' common space was appropriated for different activities to create a 'cultural' atmosphere for visiting tourists. It shows how 'home' is used for purposes that would never exist in a traditional home, including foot massage and welcoming dances. From the photographs we can see the sparse atmospheric quality of the family area of the home compared to the enchanting spaces for the tourists. This situation reflects the sense of homelessness noted by Dovey (1985).

The study of domestic activities, on the other hand, provides in-depth data on spatial sharing between household members. This nature of sharing is understood between household members who live together, thereby learning that some spaces belong to a particular person, gender or activity at different times. In homestay houses, however, these rules are relaxed or abandoned due to the entry of outsiders who have less awareness of these norms and rules but have priority as paying-guests. As a result, the rules of occupying space according to gender, role and age in the homestay have changed; the concepts of space have become less meaningful and the sense of belonging to space, place and a familial unit has been lost. There was some evidence from field observation that some family members chose to stay away from home when the guest was present.

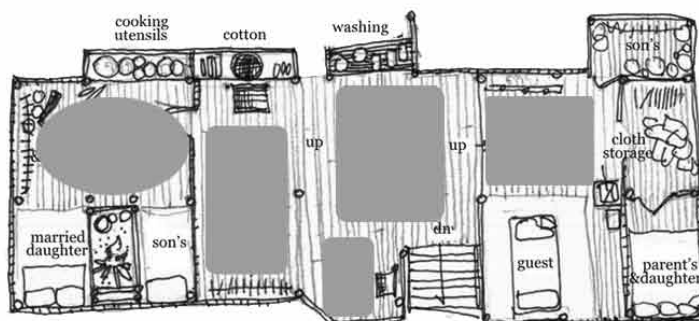
The spatial arrangement of objects produces another layer of meaning. Objects signify the cultures and ways of life of the case study villages by representing their traditions to outside observers, especially tourists who seek traditional images of the cultures they are visiting. In homestays, some objects have largely lost their original functions but have nevertheless been revived as carriers of rural lives and cultures for tourists. In most houses, the sorts of traditional objects commonly found in museums



Mae kampong
ground floor house plan



Pangdang Nai
ground and upper floor house plan



Huai Hee
ground floor house plan



Figure 5. Extensive space use for homestay (in grey) and diversified homestay activities.

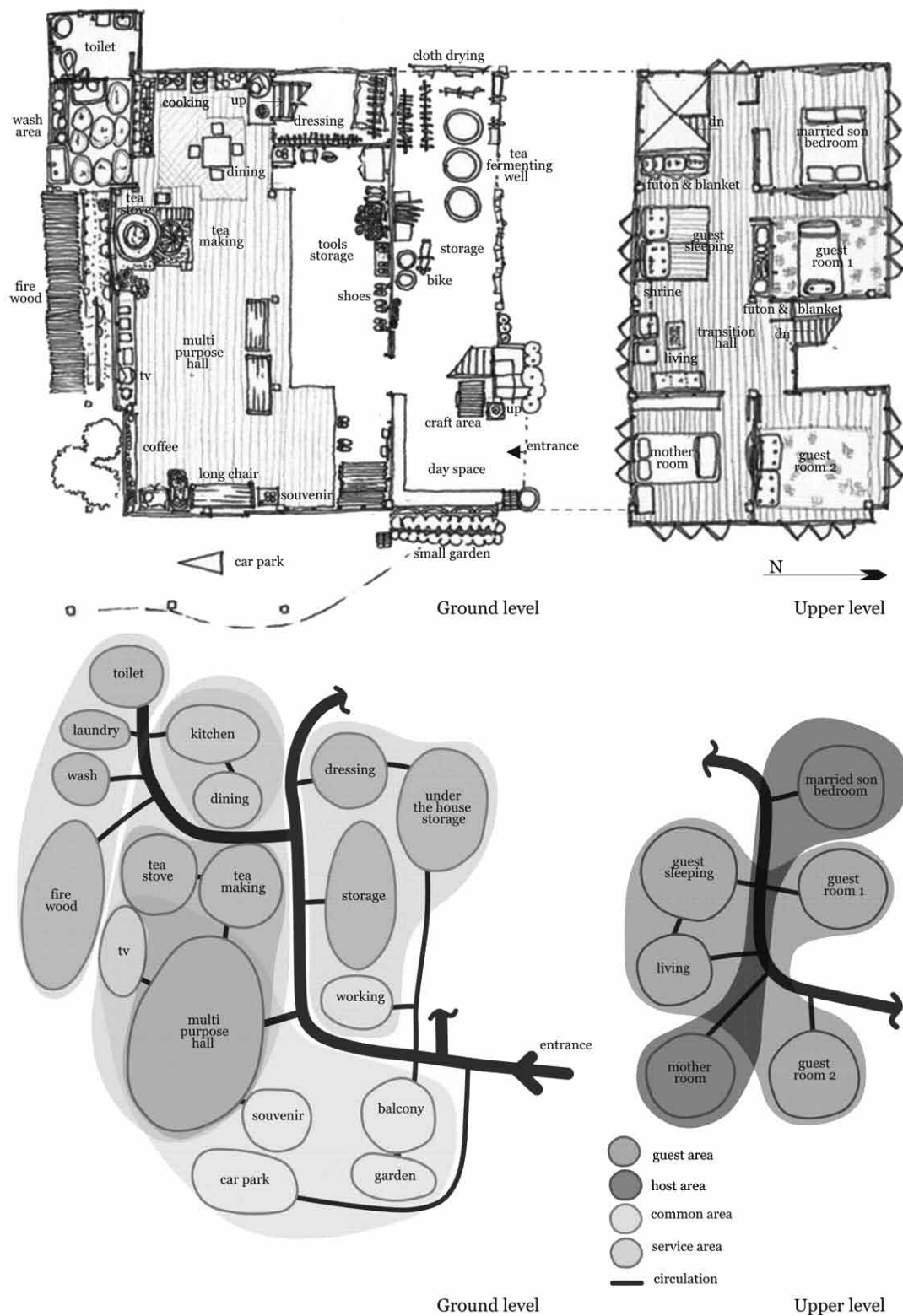
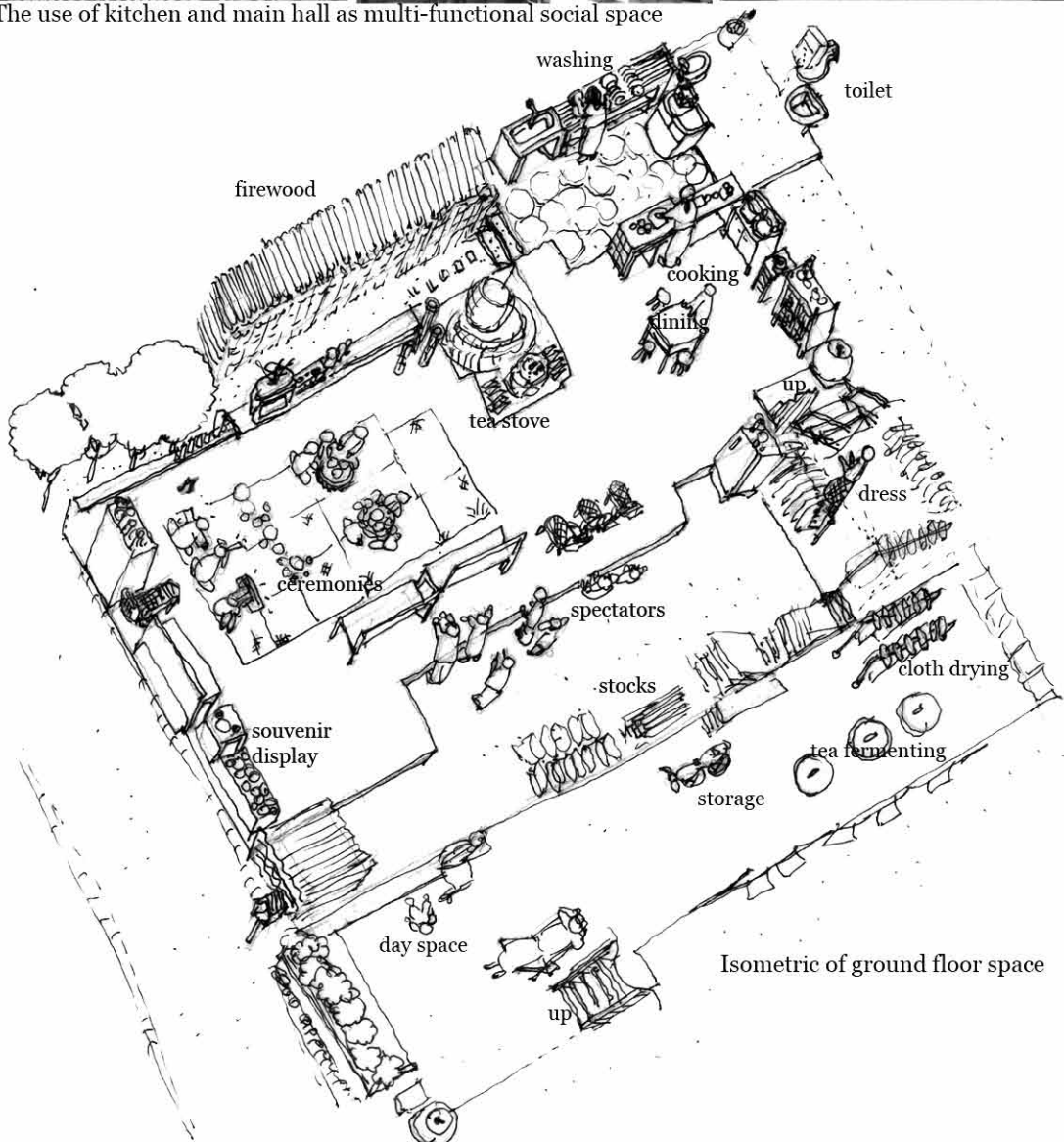


Figure 6. Floor plan and diagram showing spatial planning and relationship in a homestay house.



The use of kitchen and main hall as multi-functional social space



Isometric of ground floor space



Figure 7. Atmosphere of homestay in isometric view and photographs of downstairs kitchen hall (See explanation on the preceding pages).

are on display. This exhibits how the cultural biography of objects has diverted in favor of tourism, raising the question about their changing meanings.

In conclusion, this confirms that the homestay produces spatial impacts to the home environment due to the opposing ideas of home and homestay, the unclear boundary between public and private life, extensive space use, the lack of social spaces for different users and the changing spatial behaviors and norms. By studying them we found clear evidence

to support the view that changes of space affect not only the physical space itself, but the interaction between space and other socio-cultural constituents.

3.2 Social Dimensions: Host and Guest

The study in this section examines the host-guest mix, social interaction, and temporal patterns. In so doing, the behaviors of host and guest are observed to learn how they interact in the diversified settings of the homestay. Figure 8 shows that host

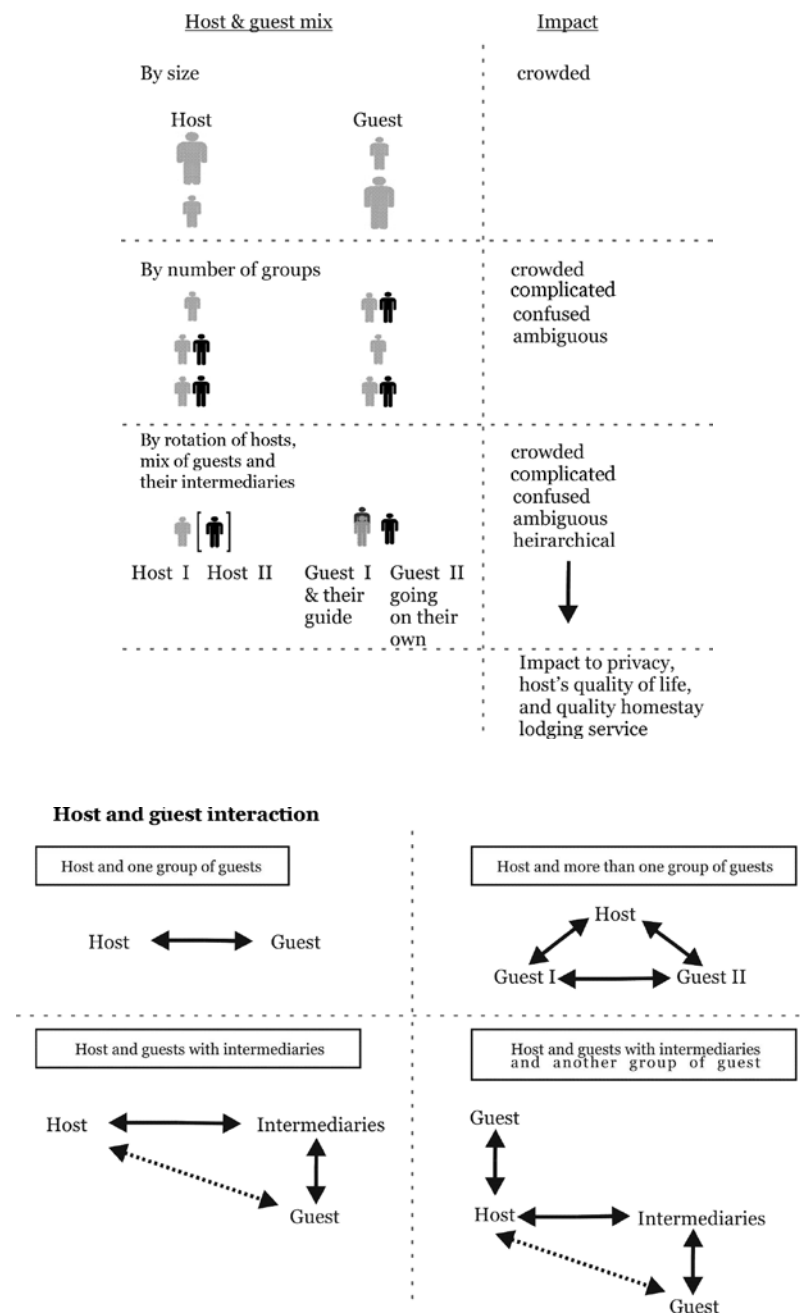


Figure 8. Host and guest mix and their interaction.

and guest interaction in rural homestays is particularly complex. Hosts are typically large in number due to an extended family structure or a large-sized nuclear one. Guests, on the other hand, range considerably, comprising one or more groups with mixed characteristics, at times coming with their own intermediaries who as service providers are lower in the hierarchy. This complex setting requires both host and guest to be flexible to the unexpected conditions of living together; often it creates spatio-social-psychological impacts including crowdedness, confusion, anxiety, ambiguity, privacy loss and degradation of quality of family life. Similar to Stringer (1981)'s findings on host and guest interaction in bed-and-breakfasts in Britain, the social and cultural characteristics of host and guest play a considerable part in facilitating or complicating the situation in homestay houses. The study affirms that the various characteristics of the hosts and guests, including their number, size, gender, age, nationality, ethnicity and cultural background, significantly influence and affect others simultaneously sharing space in the homestay. Of the different spatial arrangements, when homestays are based inside the home, there is more necessity for host and guest to negotiate and agree upon spatial and temporal boundaries than in

homestays based outside. However, the outside homestay has drawbacks in that it gives host and guest little chance for social interaction, which is in fact the key characteristic of homestay lodging.

Another part of the social study was temporal analysis, focusing on the dimension of time. Time diaries at different timescales were recorded and analyzed, including 1) an annual calendar of life in the homestay villages, 2) a typical tour program, and 3) the daily timetable in a homestay house. The village calendar in Figure 9 provides an overview of the monthly cycles of village life over a year and suggests that receiving guests at homestays is one of the 'in-between' activities in rural villages. This is because the tourism season spans winter, the least busy agricultural season. The homestay therefore appears to perfectly match the rhythms of the agricultural cycle, allowing younger people and retirees to earn money from home, thereby giving income and livelihood back to the villages.

The typical tour program presented in Table 1, on the other hand, shows that the length of stay in homestay villages set forth by tour companies is relatively short. A tour group generally allocates only two to three days to homestay villages, with packed activities outside the home. The homestay program,

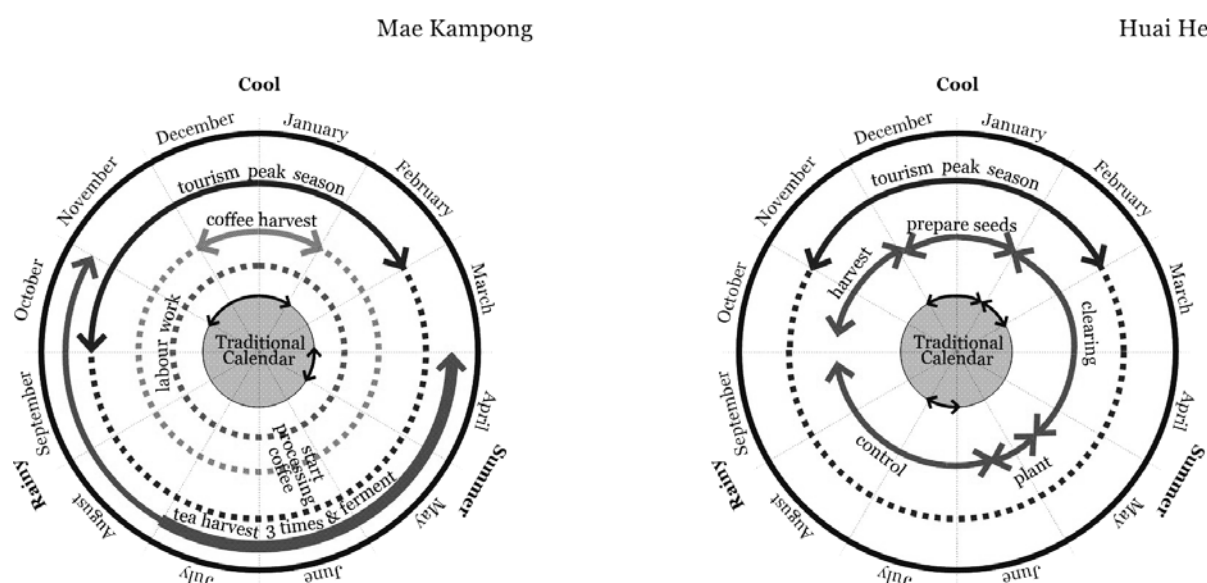


Figure 9. Village calendars of Northern Thai (left) and Karen (right) villages.

Table 1. normative tour program of three villages.

Mae Kampong	Pangdang Nai	Huai Hee
11 00 Arrival 1230 Lunch 1330 Excursion 1800 Dinner 1900 Ceremony 2100 Massaging 2230 Sleep	1600 Arrival 1800 Dinner 2000 Ceremony 2100 Sleep	1700 Arrival 1900 Dinner 2100 Sleep
800 Breakfast 1000 Depart	800 Breakfast 900 Depart	800 Breakfast 1000 Hiking 1800 Dinner 2000 Sleep
		800 Breakfast 900 Depart

despite its emphasis on ‘living with the natives’, actually involves a relatively limited amount of time inside the house, with minimal social interaction between hosts and guests, which again contradicts

However, it cannot be assumed that just because the homestay families are quite distant from their guests, they are less impacted by the homestay arrangement. The daily timetable of homestay families in Figure 11 shows that, despite limited interaction with guests, homestay family members devote most of their time to arranging activities for tourists, and consequently family routines are highly affected. Apparently hosts have little free time of their own when guests enter the home. Though these activities vary considerably in each village, it appears that they directly determine the workload and the quality of the family’s private life.

Taken together, the spatio-social study confirms the strong linkages between the way space is arranged and utilized, and how social interaction takes place. Space in rural houses may appear to be easily adjustable for homestay use, which is also supported by the hospitable nature of the people and the norms of guest reception. However, spatial permeability responds to space use within the spatial

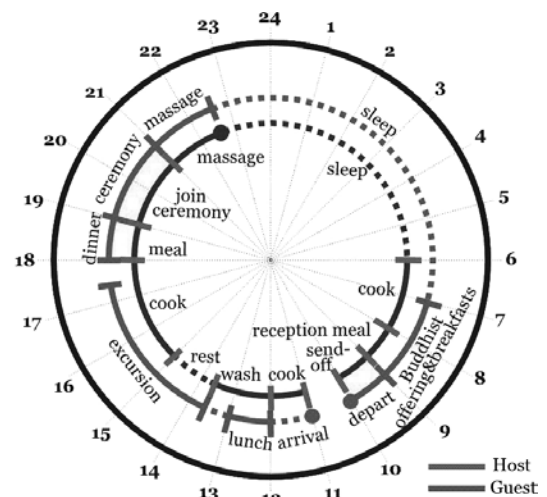


Figure 10. Daily timetable in Northern Thai village.

limits and the acceptance of those who use it. Homestays overrule these limits by allowing visitors to share home space regularly, as the equal or even the superior of the principle user, the household member. In this sense meaningful relationships in the home become disrupted, and so the essence of home is affected. The next part discusses the perception of home and homestay by the hosts, helping us to understand better the underlying ideas behind commercialization, despite its spatio-social impacts.

3.3 Perception of Meaning

From the interviews, it was learned that the homestay was adopted by local residents to supplement their income. But whether there are other underlying ideas that imply or allow the economic use of the home is not clear from such direct enquiry. By asking what home means to homestay hosts, the meanings of home emerged. In the three case studies, home was commonly perceived as a physical structure with loose boundaries and strong bonds to the environment, embracing home, village, homeland, ethnicity and the natural landscape, which are common concepts of rural homes in the area. The coded meaning of home has revealed further that home is conceptualized as a dwelling place for the family, a reference point of man's life, an object of reliance, a refuge, a source of uniqueness, pride and utility, a shared place, an economic unit and a place of family lifetime process.

From the above concepts, there are some perceptions of home that imply economic use, including home as reliance, utility, shared place, economic unit and a reflection of wealth and status. The idea of reliance implies that the home is a place to rely on; explicitly, it is a place to 'make use of' and 'gain income from', the concept of utility. The concept of shared place also signifies that the idea of the homestay has some similarities with spatial sharing between family members for both living and working, being the common idea of home in agricultural-based societies. Some examples were given about shared use in the past, such as occasional home lodging for paid-laborers during harvesting time; and by missionaries, NGOs and summer student camps during summer periods. Home signifies the self and status of people; the homestay and its conditions signify economic well-being and the compatibility of the households in homestay villages, a reflection of self and pride.

Apart from the meaning of home, the norms of guest reception relate to the inhabitants' ideas

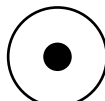

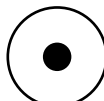

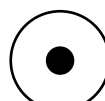
about how to treat their guest. Some of the hosts remarked that welcome guests was a social requirement that showed the good heart and manners of the home owner. These underlying implications support the idea of the homestay, especially the belief that hospitality brings blessings and prosperity to the host family, and conversely that inhospitality brings bad luck and conflict. These norms have brought about a particular approach to homestay service provision that offers guests well beyond what they actually pay for, and exceeds the standard services found in other types of lodging.

This study of the meanings surrounding the idea of home highlights how home and commercialization are conceptually related in the minds of those who incorporate homestays into their homes. There is a strong notion in rural settlements that the home is not solely a family residence, but a place to both live in and use for those who share the home space, who may or may not be family members – a combined concept of home, work and shared place. Homestays have changed these concepts in terms of their purpose and meaning, from serving agricultural activities and strengthening social cohesion, to supporting the needs and demands of tourism (through paid service). These perceptions give the rural villagers a sound reason to accept homestays as a sensible use of homes in the present day context, in which rural tourism plays a key role in the economic survival of rural families. Without homestays, rural villages are simply visited on a daily basis by tourists who seek to view their lives; it therefore makes sense for them to have benefits from tourism.

4. Summary of Findings: Interrelationship between Space, Social Interaction and Meaning

The previous parts discussed the findings in each category, summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of findings.

Categories	Mae Kampong		Pangdang Nai		Huai Hee
Physical					
Size	45 houses 240 people		50 houses 260 people		28 houses 260 people
Family	Nuclear / Matriarchal		Extended / Patriarchal		Nuclear / Matriarchal
% of homestay	30% of total		10% of total		95% of total
Ethnic	Northern Thai		Palaung		Karen
Religion	Buddhism/spiritual		Buddhism/Animism		Christianity
Income/year	50,000 Baht		15,000-150,000 Baht		5,000-15,000 Baht
Activities and Space					
Homestay arrangement	Inside home	Bungalow	Inside home	Compound	Inside home
					
House Size	Small	Small	Small	Ample	Small
Openness	Open	Close	Open	Close	Open
Flexibility	Flexible	Defined	Flexible	Defined	Flexible
Integration	Integrated	Segregated	Integrated	Segregated	Integrated
Boundary	Unclear	Clearly marked	Unclear	Clearly mark	Unclear
Privacy	Collective	Private	Collective	Private	Collective
Objects					
	Way of life		Way of life		Way of life
	Attachment to nature		Attachment to nature		Attachment to nature
	Rituals		Rituals		Rituals
	Decorative		Decorative		Decorative
	Self & status		Self & status		Self & status
	Materialised values		Fewer objects		Fewer objects
	Modern & luxury		Modern & luxury		Traditional
Social interaction					
Intensity	Intensive	Low	Intensive	Low	Intensive
Integration	Integrated	Segregated	Integrated	Segregated	Segregated
Intimacy	Intimate	Distant	Intimate	Distant	Intimate
Relationship	Relatives	Guests	Relatives	Multi-guests	Relatives
Formality	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal
Ambiguity	Ambiguous	Clear	Ambiguous	Clear	Ambiguous
Meaning					
Affection	Affective		Affective		Affective
Dwelling & family	Dwelling place for the family		Dwelling place for the family		Dwelling place for family
Reference	Reference and reliance		Reference and reliance		Reference and reliance
Security	Refuge		-		Refuge
Uniqueness	Unique		Unique		Unique
Self & status	Explicit		Explicit		Implicit
Economic	Economic resource		Economic resource		Shared place
Physicality	Physical		Phvsical		Phvsical

The spatial study demonstrates that the spatial characteristics of rural houses in northern Thailand have intrinsic qualities that allow for adaptation and adjustment for intermediate uses. The study highlights the loose spatial boundaries required to facilitate spatial adaptation. Likewise, the lack of personal objects and belongings means that personal territory is less defined, making space open to adaptation. The study of objects provides additional data about how they are used beyond their intended function as a way to portray rural lives and cultures to tourists.

On the other hand, the social study decodes the complex patterns of host and guest interaction and time use. The hierarchy between guest and host is a significant factor governing social interaction inside homestays, as well as impacting on space use. The temporal study reveals that the homestay season occupies a perfect period of the year, when the agriculture cycle is at a low and income from it runs out. The tour program, conversely, shows that the homestay allows only limited opportunities for host and guest interaction, and that the marketed 'cultural experience' of the homestay merely amounts to an overnight stay in a traditional village. The daily timetables, on the other hand, provide yet another angle, showing that despite the minimal social interaction the whole daily routine of the family is disrupted by homestay demands, including food preparation and ceremonies. When space and social interaction are integrated, they illustrate the spatio-social relationships that govern living together and create the impacts of commercialization on daily life and space use of the family.

The study of these meanings unfolds the specific perceptions of home and norms of guest reception in agricultural and rural-based societies that allow homestay to take place in the home and determine the space use and behaviors of users. The reinterpretation of the generosity of rural people for commercialized hospitality in homestays is

similarly noted by Cohen (1988) as the dominant characteristic of rural homestays. This reconciles the uncertainty and anxiety arising from it. Furthermore, the economic concept of the homestay imposed by the policy makers, based on available resources, makes the homestay easily acceptable and feasible for those in a similar socio-cultural context but with limited capital of their own. These multi-dimensional factors are in fact the major influences on rural homestay practices.

Over the last decade, there is some evidence that the continuation of homestays in different villages has created some impact on rural resources and systems. Homestays may demand only minimal changes at first, but through time they lead to extensive improvements of facilities due to tourist expectations and the growing ability of home owners to invest. As is observable, the traditional characteristics and atmospheric quality of rural villages begin to vanish faster and more extensively than those in non-homestay villages. As the traditional environment in one place loses its appeal, the number of tourists declines, with many instead seeking homestays elsewhere, resulting in the spread of homestays across the region. The transmission from one place to another affects the identity of the rural system; throughout the process, there is evidence that the vernacular and traditional characteristics are diverted in such a way to favor tourism, despite the fact that these vanishing characteristics were the very thing that tourists came to see in the first place.

At a wider level, the socio-cultural constituents of rural villages are changed due to the conflicting time demands of homestay and agricultural activities. The daily routine of homestays allows the villagers less time for their fields and social life; agriculture and rural customs become less prioritized, even though they have sustained rural villages for generations. Homestays affect how rural people regard their home, agricultural life and traditions. As the homestay is recognized more and more as a major source of

income, the perception of home and environment may increasingly be seen as just a commodity, to be used and consumed by its owner.

5. Theoretical Discussion

So far, several contradictory ideas and values about home and homestays have been discussed. While home is perceived as a singular thing, unlike anything else, it is used in different ways by which the properties of home are disrupted. This part expands and generalizes the empirical findings to widen the theoretical context and link back to the literatures about home commercialization, rural tourism and vernacular tradition.

Home Commercialization

As noted by Douglas (1991), 'home' and 'hotel' are opposite ideas. This study exhibits how home and homestay are two distinctive concepts. This explains why, when the two concepts are combined in the realm of home, the home setting becomes complicated and is highly affected. Homestays bears the notion of 'house' as commodity, as argued by Douglas (1991), Smith (1977) and Dovey (1985), and home lodging tentatively uses the qualities of home in pursuit of commercialization. In homestays, the physicality of the traditional environment, the elusive quality of home and the social beliefs of the people are used to construct the tourist hospitality experience. In other words, it reconceptualises spatio-social-cultural resources as tourism goods in which a complex system is packaged for sale for the short duration of the tourist's visit. This point resembles the concern of combining home and work in the same place, as noted by home commercialization scholars (Hochschild, 2001).

Rural Tourism

Rural tourism has been noted frequently with reference to its impact on rural life and community

(Bouquet and Winter, 1987). Some of the literature on homestays has highlighted its socio-cultural consequences in many homestay villages (Finch, 2001; Wall and Long, 1996). Many countries including Thailand rely on tourism as a major export of goods and services, yet whether homestays truly contribute economically to rural households and regions is rarely addressed. Homestay charges are relatively low, due to local rates, equal to a couple dollars a night: therefore the income to villagers is relatively marginal compared to that gained by tourism operators who charge the tourists in international rates. As is evident, only tour companies and some villagers who have power and control in the villages and good external connections truly gain from homestays, while the majority of homestay villagers gain little in the form of cash flows. Considering that homestays are a small-scale development compared to the tourism industry in terms of its contribution to rural and national incomes, this raises the question whether it is worthwhile to sacrifice rural villages and their socio-cultural systems for it (Cohen, 1998).

Vernacular Tradition

The vernacular tradition reflects the spatial, social and cultural values of those who create it (Oliver, 2003). It also exhibits the ongoing process of transferring knowledge and values through generations (Tuan, 1989). The commoditization of rural villages worldwide has been noted for its socio-cultural impacts, especially the issue of consuming tradition and manufacturing heritage (Alsayyad, 1995). From the research, it was found that homestay development brought together the traditions of home and homestay. While both occur as a simultaneous process, their aims and characteristics are opposing. As families develop financially, they may desire an extension of home and homestay, and as a result, both tend to increase in size, number and architectural styles. In terms of style, a homestay family may wish to develop the home in a modern way, while also

needing to limit the choice for homestays to a traditional style which tourists prefer. In some villages, one homestay may put guests in a newer house for the sake of comfort and luxury, while another may put guests in a traditional hut in favor of its indigenous characteristics. Several facilities that would never normally exist in rural villages, for example a number of toilets and an elephant camp for riding, continue to appear - bizarre and incongruous structures that consume land and other natural resources. All these different choices create a chaotic environment in which the traditions of home and homestay are amalgamated and hybridized, thus affecting the identity of place and the continuity of vernacular tradition, as critically noted by many scholars of vernacular architecture in the 21st century (Vellinga, 2006).

6. Conclusion

This paper discusses home commercialization in the particular context of rural homestay villages located in diversified cultures of Northern Thailand. Although some findings are similar to other studies on tourism impacts, this paper provides a significant addition to the existing knowledge by documenting clearly the spatio-social relationships, factors, cycles, changes and impacts of homestays in rural settlements vulnerable to tourism. Most importantly, it provides a distinctive example of how the complex

subject of home commercialization can be investigated through spatio-social dimensions and the underlying meanings by which becomes valuable knowledge for different fields of studies including architecture, sociology, anthropology and tourism. Theoretically it responds to the gap in knowledge about the domestic environment, especially the dynamic relations between various determinants and the views of home inhabitants themselves. Its contribution directly relates to the study of interrelationships between people, places, things and ideas, especially the way they interact with one another in the diversified context by which changing the identity of environment.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Time constraints limited the fieldwork to some extent. Had time allowed, more in-depth data could have been generated. Language was also a communication burden; in some cases the researchers relied on young villagers as interpreters. Future research could be done with other homestay villages both in the North and other regions of Thailand and Southeast Asia. Similar approaches could be employed to see how different cultures in different places respond to homestay and rural tourism. The theoretical context could be extended to include anthropology of architecture and tourism.

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