Truth Claims: A Critical Analysis of Dominant Tourism Development and Labor Discourse at Inle Lake, Myanmar

Final Thesis

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International Tourism Management and Consultancy
Bachelor Degree Program

Meschede, Germany
May, 2015

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I hereby declare that this thesis is wholly the work of Kristina Tschunkert. Any other contributors or sources have either been referenced in the prescribed manner or are listed in the acknowledgements together with the nature and the scope of their contribution.
After decades of being practically isolated from the rest of the world under military rule, the transition to democracy in Myanmar has resulted in a significant influx of not only international tourists but also tourism experts, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and international journalists who all contribute to the production of tourism knowledge in Myanmar. This thesis analyzes the knowledge produced by these and other actors and examines its effects on the phenomenal world of tourism development and labor in Myanmar, precisely at Inle Lake as a case study. The emphasis in this thesis is not on seeking ‘truths’ but on better understanding how dominant discourses form expectations, knowledge and social realities and how they impose and circulate power and determine what the world accepts as ‘truth’.

Accordingly, the goal of this thesis and the research questions are the following:

“To analyze truth claims about tourism development and labor in Myanmar in order to unveil controversies that are untold in dominant discourses related to this. The objective is thus to identify and highlight controversies/discrepancies between tourism discourse and the lived reality.”

1. What dominant discourses about tourism in Myanmar are produced in the literature?
2. What implications does the produced knowledge in tourism discourse have on the lived reality (phenomenal world) at Inle Lake as a case study?
3. Are there discrepancies between the knowledge produced (truth claims) and the experienced lived reality? If so, in what way is this noticeable?

These questions were answered based on both desk and field research. First, academic articles as well as government and NGO reports and newspaper articles were thoroughly reviewed and dominant discourses outlined in these materials were identified. Critical discourse analysis including Fairclough’s (1992) three-dimensional framework of discourse was used to identify not only dominant discourses in the literature but also the discrepancies between this discourse and the lived reality. In order to do so, the 17 semi-structured interviews that were conducted at Inle Lake were transcribed and analyzed. Critical reflexivity was an important part as well, since acknowledging the knowledge force-field introduced by John Tribe (2006)
was a core characteristic of this report which calls for a reflexive approach. The researcher’s own positionality was paid attention to in the form of narratives that include personal experience and observations. These narratives were analyzed together with the above-mentioned interviews by grouping the data according to the discourses identified in the literature review which resulted in the following main conclusions.

Neoliberal discourse is dominating the literature produced on Myanmar today. This includes ‘tourism as a driver for economic growth’, ‘the marketization of the economy and the attraction of (foreign) direct investments’ as well as ‘responsible tourism practices’ and ‘creation of employment through tourism’. Thus, the prevailing hegemonic discourse in Myanmar today is that tourism is merely seen as an industry and discourses that entail social aspects of tourism are largely submerged. The government and other influential actors such as investors are empowered while individual fate is largely ignored.

On the local level, however, the alternative discourse of tourism as a social phenomenon has started to gain ground as local people refrain from marketization and wealth accumulation and instead encourage a sharing economy.

From these conclusions, the following recommendations were drawn.

More critical research at the grassroots level that aims to unveil ideology and power relations in dominant discourse in Myanmar should be done which gives more attention to tourism as social phenomenon so that its full capacity as a tool for development is emphasized.

Better regulation is necessary in terms of the strategies and objectives set out in the tourism master plan and responsible tourism policy. Focus should be shifted on local needs instead of empowering the government and other influential stakeholders. This could be achieved with regular assessment and monitoring activities implemented by independent actors such as local and international INGOs.

The overall positive atmosphere around tourism at present should be translated into policies and strategies that are tailor made for Inle Lake by the national government in consultation with regional ministries and local NGOs.
Civil society needs to raise awareness not only directly through for instance workshops at the local level but also through the media (TV and newspapers) for tourism businesses as well as individuals at Inle Lake to adopt responsible tourism practices.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Even though I was the one who eventually wrote this thesis, it would not have been possible without the help of others, who I would like to express my appreciation to. Thank you to the best translator and research assistant that I could have imagined. Without her planning and translation skills I would have never been able to conduct all of these interviews. With that said I would like to thank all of the people in Nyaung Shwe who welcomed me so warmly to their town – the local NGO I had the pleasure to work with and of course all of my interviewees who were willing to respond to all of my questions openly.

Next, I would like to say ‘thank you’ to my supervisor Eke Eijgelaar who always fully supported me, even when I changed my topic for the third time. Thank you for being so patient, for your much appreciated feedback and for getting me back on the straight and narrow whenever I was a little lost.

Finally, I would like to thank Harald Buijtendijk for introducing me to this topic, for ‘confusing’ me every now and then with a fresh input of ideas and for encouraging me to go on this journey. Thanks to these fresh ideas I have been able to expand my comfort zone which was truly necessary for this thesis.
As the final assessment of the bachelor degree study International Tourism Management and Consultancy, this thesis aims to be not only academic but also creative in character.

Back in 2011 I decided to study tourism because, like most people, I like to travel. Now, after four years this fascination of the faraway has turned into so much more. Thinking about my reasons to study tourism now makes me smile. In these past four years I have learned that studying tourism entails so much more than studying travel. I have developed a firm commitment to development which has become my true passion. Today, the interdisciplinary of tourism studies and its interrelatedness with economic, political and social structures of a country is intriguing me. This, in combination with my interest in developing countries, has given me the impulse to go to Myanmar for my thesis research and to select a topic that leads me on a journey to discover social, economic and political aspects of tourism development.

Five months ago, when I started research on Myanmar, I knew only little about this place that has just recently opened its borders to the rest of the world. I have been privileged enough to get a glimpse of the country’s history and culture and people’s lives here which makes me want to explore more. Conducting this research has also inspired me to continue in the Social Sciences and do more critical research. Overall, it has been a challenging but mainly enriching experience that I would like to share with you, the reader.

Source: (World Economic Forum, 2013)
LIST OF ACRONYMS
ADB  Asian Development Bank
CIT  Community Involvement in Tourism
EIA  Environmental Impact Assessment
FDI  Foreign Direct Investment
FIL  Foreign Investment Law
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
IEE  Initial Environmental Evaluation
ILO  International Labor Organization
IMF  International Monetary Fund
INGO  International Non-Governmental Organization
MMK  Myanmar Kyat
MOHT  Ministry of Hotels and Tourism
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
NLD  National League for Democracy
PATA  Pacific Asia Travel Organization
SIA  Social Impact Assessment
(UN)WTO World Tourism Organization
USD  U.S. Dollar

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 **SETTING THE SCENE**

I arrive in Nyaung Shwe on an early, cold and foggy morning. When the bus stops I haven’t even realized that we had arrived as it was pitch black. As I, together with other travelers, exit the bus into the bitter cold we are instantly asked to pay the $10 entrance fee which makes me suspicious and gives me a defensive attitude.

Reflecting back on that now, I am wondering why I behaved that way. Was it the tiredness, ignorance, past experience or just the situation? I realize now that it is mistrust that we are taught to have in such situations by our superiors, culture but also by the media, internet forums and travel books.

Thus, wandering around the dusty roads of the town, I realize that even though it is a small place, there is much left for me to explore and understand. During the first days in Nyaung Shwe and while ‘setting sail’ to explore the lake that is mysteriously covered in fog that morning, thoughts whirl in my mind like the water around us. Even though I had spent quite some time in other parts of South and South East Asia prior to my time in Myanmar and even though I came to Inle Lake as a tourism consultant in the first place, nothing seems to fit. My experience, my ‘expertise’ as a tourism student and researcher, my expectations all seem to be irrelevant. Despite all the preparations that I had done in form of reading about this place and culture, in this moment as I am looking around me, I begin to realize that it is arrogant and presumptuous to think that I knew about this place, its people as well as its social and political structures and that it was me who needed to learn, ask and understand. I am the outsider in this culture so it is not my task to teach and explain the people ‘how the world works’ but instead it is my privilege to learn from the people in Nyaung Shwe and to learn together with them during these two adventurous months that lay before me.
1.2 INTRODUCING HOW THE INQUIRY EMERGED

In the opening scene I aimed to make the reader aware of the precious mess that doing research in another country and culture can entail. At least that is what it was like for me. I came to Nyaung Shwe with the plan of doing research the only way that I was familiar with – I had a topic, a plan, I had done my research beforehand and was expecting it to go smoothly the way I had planned it. However, soon I came to realize that my expectations were basically standing in my own way. Not only my expectations of how the interviews should go and of what kind of answers I wanted to get from the respondents, but also my assumptions of the life that people had lived in the last decades. Soon enough I began to question these expectations, assumptions and together with that also my approach of doing research. I was frustrated with the way many of the interviews went and with the answers I received from the people I interviewed.

While discussing my struggles, I realized that I had formed certain expectations and assumptions before I even arrived in Myanmar. These expectations were formed by reading newspaper articles, books, reports and academic articles. This realization made me discard the literature review I had written for my initial research topic and it made me look at the topic of tourism development and labor in Myanmar from a different perspective. After reading John Tribe’s article about truth claims in tourism, it all started to make sense again. This is how the inquiry to analyze dominant discourses and to unveil truth claims and controversies in tourism development emerged.

Thus, the emphasis in this thesis is not on seeking truths’ but on better understanding how dominant discourses form expectations, knowledge and social realities and how they impose and circulate power and determine what the world accepts as ‘truth’. The thesis explores tourism as a social phenomenon and one which results in an experience of change for people in emerging destinations.
1.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE PURPOSE

Is it possible to tell the truth about tourism? Have tourism researchers who contribute to the elaborate and expansive knowledge production system (universities, journals, research departments, conferences) been able to detect the truth or have they in fact failed to uncover the truth? These are questions that John Tribe (2006) asks in his article ‘The Truth about Tourism’. He questions whether researchers who actually view themselves as ‘lions in the jungle’ – individual researchers/pioneers set out to uncover the truth – might instead be ‘lions in the circus’, caged by role and constrained by structure (Tribe, 2006).

Tribe (2006) and other scholars such as Hall (1997) as well as Platenkamp and Botterill (2013) tackle the notion that there is an ‘absolute truth’ in tourism research and instead acknowledge the fact that knowledge and truth is always to be seen in context. Such discussions of ‘absolute truth’ and knowledge have existed in the social sciences for a long time. In modern age several important milestones with regard to this include the interpretive turn in cultural studies (Geertz, 1973) and the crisis of representation which led to interpretive anthropology (Marcus & Fisher, 1986). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) found that “critical research traditions have arrived at the point where they recognize that claims to truth are always discursively situated and implicated in relations of power” (Denzin & Loncoln, 1998, p. 292). These issues have, however, rarely been discussed in tourism discourse. Only lately have researchers begun to consider important issues concerning the role of the researcher, the nature of research and knowledge and the ways in which data are interpreted (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004). Goodson and Phillimore (2004) further argue that the consideration of issues such as subjectivity, identity and reflexivity, which are commonly acknowledged and adopted in other disciplines, will help open doors for “future researchers to enter the largely unexplored territory of fourth- and fifth moment research (see appendix 1), thereby broadening their horizons while improving the quality of the research they produce” (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004, p. 42).

Critics of such critical research argue that interdisciplinary researchers who assemble multiple methods and perspectives and synthesize social theory, epistemology and methodology are left open to critiques of superficiality and lack of accuracy in their research approaches (Jamal & Everett, 2007). Kincheloe (2011) states that superficiality is the result of failing to devote
sufficient time to understanding the disciplinary fields and knowledge bases from which particular modes of research originate. He goes further and claims that such an effort does not only lead to superficiality but madness. He says “Attempting to know so much, the bricoleur not only knows nothing well but also goes crazy in the misguided process” (Kinzeloe, 2005, p. 325). Bianchi (2009) adds that critical inquiry involves more than the interrogation of discourses and representations and should not stop at challenging the process of knowledge production inside the academy. He states that a weak point of critical research is that it emphasizes only the discursive, symbolic and cultural realms of tourism and retreats from political economy and engagement with the economic and political relations of power that are shaping tourism (Bianchi, 2009).

In contrast to such qualitative, critical research, quantitative, positivist studies are appealing as their methodologies attempt to provide justification for generalization, prediction and control. Critical researchers and theorists are commonly criticized for willingly pointing out problems and reveal domination and exploitation and thus instead of offering suggestions to mend problems they are suspicious and disruptive and more inclined to merely criticize (Jamal & Everett, 2007).

In the context of generalization, Tribe (2006) highlights the questions ‘how does one speak the truth? What truth? For whom and where?’ and approaches them by analyzing power and product. With his aim to scrutinize congruence between the phenomenal world and its knowledge-constructed world he conceptualized a knowledge force-field, which considers the influence of its dimensions on the creation of truth, and considers the effects of those forces on the knowledge that is created (Tribe, 2006).

Myanmar opened its borders to the international community in 2011. After decades of being practically isolated from the rest of the world under military rule, the transition to democracy has resulted in a significant influx of not only international tourists but also tourism experts, International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international journalists among others who all contribute to the production of tourism knowledge and certain truths in Myanmar. Acknowledging the knowledge force-field mentioned above and explained below, this thesis analyzes the knowledge produced by these and other actors and examines their
effects on the phenomenal world of tourism development and labor in Myanmar, precisely at Inle\(^1\) Lake as a case study.

The knowledge force-field is used to describe factors that mediate in the process where the phenomenal world of tourism is translated into its known world:

Tourism Phenomenon <-> Knowledge Force-Field <-> Tourism Knowledge

The five factors that work in the knowledge force-field are person, rules, position, ends and ideology. The knowledge force-field creates tourism knowledge through these five forces which may lead to bias or oppression in tourism knowledge production.

**Figure 1: Knowledge Force-Field**

![Diagram of Knowledge Force-Field]

Source: (Tribe, 2006)

Acknowledging that the researcher as a person is a substantive power in the knowledge force-field confronts the notion that research should be disembodied while it should be emphasized that the researcher and his/her characteristics, history, experiences and worldviews influence the research at hand. He points out that self-knowledge is important in order to be able to construct knowledge about others (Tribe, 2006). Therefore, in this thesis, the researcher’s role in creating and generating knowledge is acknowledged, unveiling what is traditionally disguised by a supposed aura of objectivity (Ren, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2010).

\(^1\) Sometimes also spelled Inlay
Moreover, following a strict set of rules in form of disciplines, paradigms or scientific methods can lead to standardized procedures that produce a uniform, predictable product – research may thus be mass-produced without regard to different contexts (Tribe, 2006). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the fact that rules influence our research and to question the well-established understanding that “tourism has become fetishized as a thing, a product, and a behavior – but in particular an economic thing” (Franklin & Crang, 2001, p. 366). It is further vital to challenge positivist research approaches with interpretivism that acknowledges the fact that “the complex social world can only be understood from the point of view of those who operate in it” (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004, p. 369) in order to offer alternative forms of tourism research for predominant reductionist approaches. Following the suggestion above that tourism is predominantly seen as an ‘economic thing’ (Franklin & Crang, 2001, p. 366) the thesis discloses dominant discourses in Myanmar and examines their implications on the lived reality.

Tribe (2006) explains that discourses are also used as a tool to create knowledge and construct tourism. The notion that discourses have the ability to structure and produce knowledge and social practice, (Hannam & Knox, 2005) and therefore give power to certain institutions over others (Ayikoru & Tribe, 2007), is particularly important as it highlights the fact that this knowledge of the world created by dominant discourses is widely accepted as the ‘truth’. Therefore, this thesis is built upon Foucault’s view that ‘absolute truth’ is unattainable (Foucault, 1988, p. 288), which provides legitimate reason to study and explore truth claims in tourism discourse. All of these rules – discourse, paradigms, disciplines and methods – invite rule breakers to provide an alternative to existing positivist, managerially oriented material (Tribe, 2007).

Furthermore, Tribe (2006) states that understanding one’s own positionality, which not only means geographical situatedness but also one’s location in an academic as well as cultural community, is another important force in the knowledge force-field. Here, researchers understand the fact that their research produces knowledge about indigenous people from an ethnocentric (Western, colonial, developed) position (Tribe, 2006). This means that also I, as a researcher, am biased by certain worldviews as I am tackling the research from a certain position within my cultural community, which is acknowledged throughout this thesis.
Another influencing factor in research that needs to be recognized is the purpose of knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge is never interest-free. Instead, human inquiry always includes questions of demand and its exchange value; this is also called “the commodification of research” (Tribe, 2006, p. 372). This implies that the knowledge produced could be biased by the interest of dominating actors in the knowledge production network which is reason enough to scrutinize who is empowered by this knowledge and who is not.

Finally, ideology as a common set of beliefs is a core factor to be considered because it frames thinking in a particular way, alters understanding and thus acts as a barrier to truth telling. The second aspect, which can be described as a specific, coherent subset of beliefs (‘-isms’), is expressed as hegemony where some cultural beliefs, values and practices of a dominant group are empowered while the beliefs of others are suppressed or excluded. Examples of such belief systems are political systems such as communism, through idea systems such as liberalism to religious faiths such as Mohammedanism or Hinduism. Ideologies are powerful forces and it is thus important to expose their presence in research (Tribe, 2006).

In conclusion, we can say that under the influence of the knowledge force-field, the story that is told, is inevitably biased by the researcher and his/her positionality and situatedness. Therefore, one overarching, absolute reality does not exist and tourism research has the subtle power to construct and frame tourism. By acknowledging the knowledge force-field that we as researchers operate in, we support and do justice to the fact that we should not claim an ‘absolute truth’ and that the tourism phenomenon consists of multiple realities instead.
1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The paper aims to analyze truth claims about tourism development and labor in Myanmar in order to unveil controversies that are untold in dominant discourses related to this. The objective is thus to identify and highlight controversies/discrepancies between tourism discourse and the lived reality.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to reach the objective above, the following research questions were determined and need to be answered:

1. What dominant discourses about tourism in Myanmar are produced in the literature?
   - What alternative discourses/voices are silenced/submerged?

2. What implications does the produced knowledge in tourism discourse have on the lived reality (phenomenal world) at Inle Lake as a case study?
   - Who is empowered by dominant neoliberal discourse? And who is left out?

3. Are there discrepancies between the knowledge produced (truth claims) and the experienced lived reality? If so, in what way is this noticeable?
   - In what way does the perceived lived reality reflect or object dominant discourse?
4. **Methodology**

The methodology of truth claims in tourism and the knowledge force-field model outlined in John Tribe’s (2006) article ‘The Truth about Tourism’ characterize this research report. The discrepancies between the theorized world of tourism and its phenomenal world (lived reality) are explored with the help of discourse analysis and the use of critical reflexivity. The knowledge force-field is not to be seen as a method, it is a framework that entails five forces as explained above which create knowledge and lead to bias. Thus, I, as the author of this thesis, acknowledge that the knowledge force-field I operate in has shaped my research. While the relevance and the origins of truth claims and the force-field model were described in detail in the introduction of the purpose, the concept of critical reflexivity as a qualitative research method is presented on the following pages.

In this thesis, highly personal narratives were combined with in-depth interviews, personal observation as well as unstructured interviews in form of informal conversations conducted at Inle Lake in Myanmar. The narratives are randomly selected stories from my time as a researcher in Myanmar that seemed suitable and showed the implications of dominant discourse at the grassroots level. Observations were done on a small-scale daily basis while walking through the town, watching people going about their daily routine. The respondents for the in-depth interviews were mainly selected through stratified random sampling (Jackson, 2011). The research assistant was provided with a list of the type of people (job title, direct and indirect involvement in tourism) the researcher wanted to speak to. Then, together with the research assistant, respondents that fit the description were randomly chosen in the streets.

Furthermore, as research is conducted in a world where language plays a major role in forming knowledge and truths, the concept of discourse analysis will be explored in this chapter, too. Following Fairclough’s (1992) three-dimensional model, a textual analysis was not sufficient to identify the main manifestations in dominant discourse. Instead, the text was analyzed by relating it to socio-cultural and discursive practices. With regards to socio-cultural practices, questions such as ‘does the text support a particular kind of discursive hegemony or a particular social practice?’ or ‘does it stand in a counter-hegemonic relationship?’ were asked.
With regards to discursive practice, aspects of the text’s production, distribution and consumption (interpretation) were acknowledged and explored. (Fairclough, 1992)

**Figure 2: Fairclough’s dimensions of discourse**

As mentioned before, next to my own observations, expectations and experience while conducting field research in Myanmar play a major role in shaping this paper, perceptions of residents at Inle Lake are a core part as well. Seventeen semi-standardized in-depth interviews (Jackson, 2011) as well as numerous informal conversations at the grassroots level were conducted. A list of all respondents can be found in table 1 below. Respondents were asked several questions regarding their life, changes they have undergone throughout the last decade, their employment and satisfaction with it as well as their personal perceptions of tourism development at Inle Lake. These topics were used in order to understand local perceptions of tourism at Inle Lake and to find out what impacts tourism development and in particular employment in tourism has had on people’s lives. Later, when I decided to discard my original approach, the interviews were used to find discrepancies between the produced knowledge in dominant discourse and lived realities. I also made use of the help of a translator what made it possible for me to approach a more diverse group of respondents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Description/Occupation</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
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<tr>
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<td>20.3.2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>Local Restaurant Owner</td>
<td>4.3.2015</td>
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<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>Travel Agency</td>
<td>20.3.2015</td>
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<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>Snack Shop Owner</td>
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<td>Interviewee 6</td>
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<td>Interviewee 8</td>
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<td>Interviewee 9</td>
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<td>Interviewee 11</td>
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<td>Interviewee 14</td>
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<td>Interviewee 20</td>
<td>Construction Site Hotel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal Chat 5</td>
<td>Foreign Consultant</td>
<td>4.3.2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transcripts of all of the interviews can be found in appendix 4. While analyzing the interviews, comments were annotated next to the respective sentence or paragraph. Each comment can be allocated to one of the dominant manifestations that were identified in the literature review: ‘[Tourism as a Driver for] Economic Growth’, ‘[Marketization and]
Inductive reasoning and tacit knowledge were important parts of the analysis of the interviews. All interviewees stay anonymous in this thesis to protect their privacy, thus all clues that could lead to their identity have been deleted.

For the purpose of conducting this research and in order to personally visualize and experience life at Inle Lake, I spent eight weeks in Nyaung Shwe as part of a research project for an INGO which helped me gain a better understanding of the past and present situation of tourism development in the area. The time I spent there also nurtured my ability to critically analyze the situation at Inle Lake as a tourist destination which later proved useful for the analysis of the empirical data in context with dominant discourse and knowledge produced.

Besides collecting qualitative data, desk research was done in order to gain insight into the background of Myanmar and the topic as well as to determine the relevant issues concerning dominant knowledge creation and discourse in tourism development and employment in Myanmar. This supportive data was attained by thoroughly reviewing mainly academic articles but also government and NGO reports, newspapers and magazines as well as books.

Overall, this thesis research adds to the work of ‘new’ tourism research (Tribe, 2005) and the ‘critical turn’ of tourism research (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005) with a bottom-up method of analysis rather than the traditional top-down approach.

2.1 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Even though discourse is a well-known and often used concept by social scientists and linguists, the term as such is vague with many different meanings and understandings attributed to it (Hannam & Knox, 2005). Undisputedly, discourse is about the use of language within broader political and socio-cultural contexts. Thus, discourse analysts explore the social use of language (Ayikoru & Tribe, 2007). However, moving beyond its mere linguistic meaning, Michel Foucault, the social theorist frequently associated with discourse analysis, gave it a different meaning: “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (Foucault, 1997, p. 44). Thus, discourse is about the production of knowledge through language (Hall, 1997). Discourse analysis is hence concerned with criticizing the power of
discourses (Hannam & Knox, 2005). In this thesis, the power of discourse will be illustrated by exploring the implications of dominant discourse on the lived reality.

In this study the following definition of discourse was used as it highlights that discourse is ubiquitous and powerful.

“Discourse describes a sequence of shared assumptions and rules that circulate through various texts—e.g., media, policy, travel blogs, souvenirs, academic literature, bodies, and so forth—to govern knowledge claims and discipline social and spatial relationships. Through discourse, particular ways of communicating, understanding, and behaving become ‘normalized’ and ‘naturalized’; they privilege and accept only certain versions of truth, knowledge, or subjectivity” (Grimwood, Yudina, Muldoon, & Qiu, 2015, p. 24)

As mentioned before, discourses are ubiquitous and can be found in any part of everyday life. However, our social realities are manifested in relation to eminently dominant discourses through which power is imposed and circulated. Alternative discourses are thus silenced or subverted (Grimwood, Yudina, Muldoon, & Qiu, 2015). Some aspects of the social world, the dominant aspects, tend to become ‘truths’ simply because they are too obvious and superficial to provoke debates while other phenomena are questioned and analyzed (Ayikoru & Tribe, 2007). These ‘truths’ in dominant discourse in Myanmar as well as the alternative discourses that are submerged by dominant discourse are identified in the literature and empirical data of this research.

Discourse analysis rejects a purely positivist perspective of reality in favor of a social constructionist or interpretive view. Language is regarded not merely as a descriptive medium but rather a way of shaping social reality and social practices (Ayikoru & Tribe, 2007).

In tourism, researchers have used discourse analysis in order to critically study representations of tourism destinations, practices and experiences in form of written documents, interview transcripts and brochures for instance (Hannam & Knox, 2005). Tourism research, as argued by Hannam and Knox (2005), has been institutionalized through power/knowledge relationships which takes place at different levels, ranging from international tourism bodies such as the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and INGOS but also the World Bank and the media, national tourism planning bodies like the Ministry for
Hotels and Tourism (MOHT) in Myanmar as well as experts in tourism to local level tourism organizations and local NGOs. These institutions are the authorities that constitute the official apparatus of tourism development (Hannam & Knox, 2005). What researchers need to be cautious about is that we are influenced by the discourses that we operate in which determine what we enable ourselves to know and what we look for while performing research. This means that this has a preconditioning effect on the outcomes of our studies (Tribe, 2005).

This means that critical researchers ought to be self-reflexive, to acknowledge that individual subjectivity plays a major role in discourse analysis as it is an act of interpretation (Locke, 2004) and I am thus aware of the fact that it is subject to critique and contestation.

2.2 Reflexivity Approach

In the 1980s, the so-called ‘crisis of representation’ emerged within the fields of social science and humanities which led to the ‘cultural turn’ of postmodernity (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005). Dominant positivist approaches, where researchers are supposed to separate themselves from their studies (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005) and adhere rigidly to the rules of empiricism (Ellis, 2004) in order to guarantee objectivity have been challenged. Tribe (2006) calls this the "strange but deeply established notion that research is somehow disembodied" (Tribe, 2006, p. 362). This has resulted in a call for alternative, more critical and reflexive research approaches which can be placed under the umbrella term ‘new’ tourism research (Tribe, 2005).

As part of this shift in tourism research, qualitative researchers whose goal it is to understand the complexities of the social world we live in (Ellis, 2004) have been invited to transgress their disciplinary boundaries and be more reflexive in their approach as academic texts and discourses, as mentioned before, are socially constructed representations. A reflexive researcher becomes the bricoleur who understands and acknowledges that research is an interactive process that is shaped by their personal experiences and world views (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005). In reflexive dyadic interviews for instance, the focus lies on the interviewee’s story, however, the interviewer is always a vital part, too. The answers the interviewee gives are always socially constructed in a particular place and time, for a specific hearer and under particular conditions – for instance, the interviewer chooses the questions, which makes the words, thoughts and feelings of the researcher also important as they
enhance the understanding of the topic and adds context and layers to the story told by the interviewee (Ellis, 2004). Thus, in this thesis I do not deny my own entanglement in the research process and thus its results.

Ateljevic et al. (2005) reveal their entanglements in the research process around the following themes: ‘ideologies and legitimacies’ that guide and govern our tourism research results, ‘research accountability’ environment that determines what is acceptable as research, our ‘positionality’ as researchers whose lives, experiences and world views influence our studies and ‘intersectionality with the researched’ as we conduct our research. Eventually, research should be a dynamic, unpredictable and often messy process where ‘getting entangled’ is inevitable (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005).

Being reflexive means that we look outwards on social and cultural aspects of our experience and the ‘subjects’ we research as well as inwards upon ourselves as researchers. Besides ‘looking’, reflexive research also entails recognizing micro and macro forces that reinforce the production of tourism knowledge by influencing, shaping and constraining this production process. The call for more reflexivity upon own positionality in tourism research stems from researchers who critically asked ‘who can speak’ and ‘who can speak for whom’, who critiqued the researchers ‘right’ to speak of or represent the researched from an objective and value-free position. Thus, we need to recognize that all knowledge is produced within a social, political and geographical context that we cannot ignore (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005). This underpins the suggestions of Tribe (2006) and his knowledge force-field model.

Even though the aim of this critical turn in research to open up space for multiple partial knowledge is widely accepted, the reflexive approach has not received uncontested support. One point of criticism is that extreme forms of reflexivity are undesirable as they might “caricature other cultures and people as exotic backdrops for authorial self-discovery” (Lancaster, 1996, p. 12). Other authors claim that a ‘transparent reflexivity’ where the researcher’s view and position are entirely knowable and visible is both unobtainable and undesirable (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005). Thus, what reflexive researchers need to acknowledge is the importance of the partiality of any reflection. Shared experiences of the researcher and the researched as well as gaps and fissures in the relationship should be
addressed and aimed for, instead of just focusing on their separateness (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005).

According to Ateljevic et al. (2005), reflexivity seems to have two objectives: to raise political awareness of the ideology and power structures behind the production of academic knowledge and to raise general methodological concerns about the de-humanization of the research process (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005). It is widely agreed that the “normalization of a positivist epistemology has unduly limited the development of tourism research as social science” (Botterill, 2001, p. 13) which calls for a move towards a more critical discourse (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005).

In conclusion, reflexivity provides the potential for more open and collaborative tourism knowledge production (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005). If we, as researchers, are silenced in qualitative research, we are missing a substantial source of data and denying the researcher’s complicity in knowledge building (Tribe, 2006). Reflexivity aims to challenge predominant power structures in academic tourism research by presenting an alternative way of inquiry in tourism research for prevailing reductionist approaches that aims to tackle the de-humanization linked to such positivist approaches.

**2.3 Limitations**

Various limitations of research in Myanmar are pointed out below.

Access was only possible to primarily Western articles/journals/media which might have resulted in an incomplete picture of discourse in Myanmar. Thus, my own knowledge force-field, including my positionality and ideology, has resulted in asking questions and interpreting answers about interviewees’ opinions of tourism development in Nyaung Shwe from a Western perspective.

Finally, analyzing the total frame of neoliberal discourse in tourism was impossible within the context of this study, which is why examples in this thesis are illustrative of the main themes in tourism development in Myanmar rather than exhaustive.
Finally, while the use of a translator was a great asset, the fact that answers were summarized and not translated word by word may have also resulted in change of meaning and parts of an answer that may have been important might have been left out or got lost in translation.

2.4 Structure of the Thesis

After the introduction of the research topic and its purpose as well as the theoretical framework, chapter 3 takes the reader on the journey that is divided into three time-frames: Before, during and after the actual fieldwork in Myanmar.

The ‘Journey: Before’ in chapter 3 presents the research context within which this research can be placed. The literature is reviewed that depicts the knowledge produced concerning tourism development in Myanmar.

‘The Journey: During’, is a combination of personal narratives, which show my own personal experience and observations, and an analysis of both these narratives and interviews. This part of the journey explores four dominant discourses in Myanmar in the context of the case study of Inle Lake:

1. Tourism as a driver for economic growth
2. ‘Marketization’ and attraction of (foreign) direct investment
3. Responsible tourism practices
4. Creation of employment through tourism

Each part starts with the personal narrative which is then analyzed with the help of excerpts from interviews.

Finally, in ‘The Journey: After’, conclusions are drawn of the analysis in ‘The Journey: During’ where the research questions are answered and at last, recommendations are given.
3. The Journey

In this chapter I would like to invite the reader to join me on the journey I took in doing this research. I would like to begin at the very starting point of this journey, which is the exciting moment that I decided that I was going to Myanmar for my thesis research, the moment that I started to think about possible and intriguing research topics. These moments I believe were those critical and important points where my expectations and assumptions were formed which I unknowingly always carried with me during all this time that I spent in Myanmar. These expectations and assumptions were not only the reasons for me to pursue this very thesis topic but also the reasons for my frustration with my fieldwork and my initial approach that I will come back to at a later stage again. For now it is important for me that the reader is familiarized with the literature that I read and analyzed prior to commencing primary research.

3.1 The Journey – Before: Research Context

It is a cold but sunny winter day in Breda when I take the decision to undertake my final thesis research work in Myanmar. It was the newness and the fact that the country had rather been little researched that was particularly intriguing for me. Therefore, I started to follow the news, read books and academic articles about Myanmar right away. Even though I only realized this much later in the research process, it was during this initial time still in Breda that my first expectations and assumptions that should later lead to frustrations about the research, were fueled with knowledge about Myanmar produced in the literature and media that I so eagerly absorbed. Therefore, I am presenting the literature that produced my knowledge, my ‘truths’ about Myanmar tourism development and employment.

3.1.1 Background Information – Tourism Development in Myanmar

After 50 years of military rule, the government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar started the process of opening the country up in 2011 with the initiation of political, social and economic reforms (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, 2014). It is remarkable how much has changed since then as well as how many challenges remain. According to the World
Bank (2013), the country’s economy has experienced significant growth with an annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 6.8 % in 2013/14.

One of the first industries that reacted to this transition was the tourism sector that has since 2011 experienced unprecedented growth in visitor arrivals. The tourism sector in Myanmar as a whole has barely developed in the last decades due to restrictive visas and limited accessibility. Later the opposition groups (National League for Democracy, NLD) called for a tourism boycott due to human rights violations and because tourist spending would go directly to the regime (Häusler & Baumgartner, 2013) which resulted in the government declaring 1996 the ‘Visit Myanmar Year’ (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, 2014). At that time, most tourism businesses were owned directly by the government or were in the hands of foreigners, mainly Chinese (Häusler & Baumgartner, 2013). However, when the government of Myanmar set up political, social and economic reforms the tourism boycott was canceled by Aung San Suu Kyi’s party who announced that all visitors would be welcome who are keen to promote the welfare of the common people and the conservation of the environment and who want to acquire an insight into the cultural, political and social life of the country while enjoying a happy and fulfilling holiday in Burma. Due to these changes, Myanmar has seen an unprecedented growth in international tourist arrivals. In 2012, the numbers surpassed the 1 million mark and are predicted to reach 7 million by 2020 (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, 2014). See appendix 2.

These official figures of more than 3 million international visitors in 2014, however, have not seen uncontested support. According to an article in the Myanmar Times (2015), about 1.9 million were day-trippers from Thailand, China, India, Laos and Bangladesh. Furthermore, only 48.2 % of the people who entered Myanmar through Yangon Airport did so on a tourist visa. Entrance tickets sales at Shwedagon Pagoda, the main tourist attraction in Yangon, are said to be one of the best indicators for genuine tourist arrivals. Ticket sales have increased by 26 % from 400,852 in 2013 to 505,351 in 2014 which mirrors the 22 % increase in air arrivals and the 24 % growth in visitors at Inle Lake (Thu & Kean, 2015).

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2 Aung San Suu Kyi calls to the country by its former name ‘Burma’, as Myanmar was decided by the military regime and was not democratically chosen.

3 Definition by PATA (Pacific Asia Travel Association): at least one overnight stay.
Even though tourism is potentially seen as one of Myanmar’s most important sectors that provides great opportunities to contribute to greater business and to balance social and economic development (Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013), poverty rates are still comparatively high with 33% in Shan State (16% in Yangon, 26% in Mandalay, 44% in Rakhine State and 32% in Ayeyarwady Region) which reflects the findings that local communities at Inle Lake (Shan State) do not benefit from the tourism industry enough (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, 2014). Furthermore, community involvement in tourism is one of the key strategies and goals of the government with regards to tourism development in Myanmar in order to enable a significant number of local community members to gain substantial control over the development and management of tourism activities in their region (Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013). Research, however, shows that local communities are not able to participate sufficiently in decision-making processes (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, 2014).

The MOHT (2013) confirms that tourism development is a national priority and that it is contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction, accelerating national reconciliation and the democratization process. Foreign and domestic investments have rapidly increased as well as the number of visitors which creates employment opportunities for both men and women. It further promotes technology transfer and it fosters friendship and intercultural understanding between Myanmar and the rest of the world (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013).

Overall, Myanmar’s political situation has had major influence on (tourism) development. Political and economic stability and opening are necessary in the transition to democracy, internal peace and the improvement of standards of life (Häusler & Baumgartner, 2013).

### 3.1.2 Tourism in Myanmar – a Politically Charged Neoliberal Concept

Tourism in Myanmar began as a government enterprise (Tin, 2004). The slow progress of modernization in Myanmar before the political transformation, which was considered a selling point in travel literature, is mainly attributable to the political situation (Henderson, 2003). It was only in 1992 with the establishment of the MOHT and the publication of the Myanmar Tourism Law in 1993 that the private sector was encouraged to engage in tourism activities
and that public-private partnerships were sought to be enhanced (Tin, 2004). The aforementioned tourism boycott by the opposition party in 1990, that lasted for 10 years and that was supported by numerous national and international organizations such as Tourism Concern in the UK, was used as a political tool to put pressure on and withdraw support from the military whose members benefitted personally and politically from an increase in tourist arrivals (Hudson, 2007). Most tourism businesses were in the hands of members of the government or foreigners (Häusler & Baumgartner, 2013). The boycott was a reaction to the military’s effort to disseminate a favorable picture of Myanmar to the world by promising upgrades in the country’s infrastructure and employment opportunities (Hudson, 2007). Aforementioned Tourism Concern designed a postcard to support their boycott of the Lonely Planet who published a tourism guidebook on Myanmar. In the picture, tourists are welcomed by locals after exiting the plane while behind a fence, invisible to the tourists, human rights violations such as forced labor and displacement were shown. This postcard was used by Tourism Concern to advise tourists against visiting Myanmar (Häusler & Baumgartner, 2013). The publisher of the Lonely Planet guidebook states in his defense that tourism aids many ordinary Myanmar people who do not support the ban (Henderson, 2003). Other protagonists of tourism development, even within a military regime, however believe that politics of a destination is largely irrelevant (Henderson, 2003) and argue that it can have a positive impact on the local population through for instance job creation, direct and indirect financial benefits as well as access to both education and information (Häusler & Baumgartner, 2013).

Today the language used by antagonists such as Tourism Concern has changed dramatically. In a press release the organization states that they have changed their policy which included avoiding hotels that were owned by members of the regime. Today their policy entails the same criteria of quality and sustainability as in any other country. This change of direction is due to political reforms taking place that permit the opposition party to operate relatively normally and that allow a general climate of much less fear. Even though conflicts as well as the problem of poverty remain and (former) military members continue to participate in politics, the organization acknowledges that Myanmar is in a very different place to where it was in 2009 or even 2011 as the economy has opened up massively (Clark, 2015).

Still today the government plays a crucial role in tourism development. There are no economic reforms without political reforms (Perria, 2013). The language among NGOs, the media and
the government is quite consistent: “The government has set a target of almost 9 per cent
growth by next year” (Perria, 2013, p. 1), “The bank’s engagement, together with the ADB
Asian Development Bank, the Government of Japan and other partners, will help attract
accelerated in 2012...the economy is expected to post even higher growth in the year ahead”
(Asian Development Bank, 2013, p. 1), “The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP in
2013 was MMK [Myanmar Kyat] 849.6bn (1.6 % of GDP). This is forecast to rise by 9.5 % to
MMK 930.4bn in 2014.” (Turner, 2014, p. 3), “Myanmar has large potential for growth, with a
young labor force, abundant natural resources and proximity to a fast-growing dynamic
economic region” and “The authorities consider that FDI [Foreign Direct Investment] and
foreign-affiliated businesses will play an important role in Myanmar’s economic development,
and that the economy needs foreign capital and technology for continuous and sustainable
development” (WTO Secretariat, 2014, p. 7; 25) and finally “Foreign and domestic investments
have rapidly increased as well as the number of visitors which creates employment
opportunities for both men and women. It further promotes technology transfer and it fosters
friendship and intercultural understanding between Myanmar and the rest of the world”
(Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p. 20).

This shows that the dominant language used today in the context of Myanmar (tourism)
development is largely dominated by the Western neoliberal ideology and concept of
economic growth.

### 3.1.3 Myanmar – Economic Growth and Investment

As a result of the opening up of the market economy in Myanmar, foreign direct investments
(FDI) have increased sharply. Myanmar is considered as the ‘new Asian frontier’ due to the
country’s strategic position between India and China as well as its richness in resources,
particularly natural gas. MasterCard and Visa have entered the country as well as numerous
multinational companies such as CocaCola, Nestle, Total and Uniliver (Perria, 2013). The
government considers FDI to be necessary for Myanmar’s economic development and so the
government has taken measures to improve its business environment by reforming its foreign
exchange regime and adopting a new Foreign Investment Law (FIL) (WTO Secretariat, 2014).
The new FIL presents certain offers such as five-year tax incentives, the same rate of income
tax between foreigners and Myanmar citizens and no taxes on imported machinery or raw
material (Perria, 2013). It further allows 100% foreign ownership in most sectors while the
former law allowed FDI only in a very limited number of sectors (WTO Secretariat, 2014).
Myanmar continues to be a challenging business environment with uncertainty over future
political stability, an underdeveloped banking system, inadequate infrastructure and a poor
insurance system making the country not a ready-made nation for investors but a bet on the
future (Perria, 2013). Nevertheless, in 2014/15 FDI reached a record $8 billion, a more than
doubling compared to the previous year. While the oil and gas sector was the main driver for
growth, hotels and tourism came fifth with $357 million (Mon, 2015). Foreign Investment
comes mainly from other Asian nations such as Singapore, Thailand, Japan (Myint, 2013) and
China (Perria, 2013). However many Western investors are prepared to bet on Myanmar’s
future, too, and Britain is thus far the first Western country in the ranking with 7% of the total
amount of investments while France comes second (Perria, 2013).

While the growing amount of FDI has supported the growth of the country’s economy, civil
society organizations are worried that such business deals are rather one-sided and fail to
protect vulnerable communities. The new laws mentioned before make it easier for the
government to claim land and sell it or give it away as has happened in the community of
Thilawa. Here, electronics and garments factories are replacing community members’ houses
who were displaced within a 14-day eviction notice and were not offered conversation,
replacement or adequate compensation. These events have made civil society organizations
to plead with the government to slow inward investment which has however been largely
ignored (Maria & Bloomer, 2014). This implies that the aforementioned investment rush is
leaving the poor behind.

Tourism is considered a driver for economic growth and the government of Myanmar has thus
prioritized tourism as one of Myanmar’s most important sectors with significant potential to
contribute to greater business opportunities and balancing social and economic development
(Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013).
This focus on the economic benefits of tourism has received criticism, though, as long-term
benefits cannot be achieved if the government continues to try and ‘milk’ responsible tourism
as a ‘Cash Cow’ (Thett, 2013).
While these efforts to attract FDI and to nurture economic growth and while tourism is also still largely dominated by the focus to achieve financial sustainability, the emergence of the Tourism Master Plan, the Myanmar Responsible Tourism Strategy and the Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism shows a significant interest in environmental as well as social and cultural aspects.

3.1.4 **Myanmar – Responsible Tourism Practices**

According to the MOHT (2013), Myanmar has only begun to develop its tourism potential and the expected explosion of visitor numbers by 2015 and 2020 call for a responsible tourism policy (see appendix 2).

In 2012 this policy was adopted in order to ensure that this enormous tourism growth delivers broad and equitable social, economic and environmental benefits. The vision for tourism in Myanmar is the following (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p. 23):

“We intend to use tourism to make Myanmar a better place to live in—to provide more employment and greater business opportunities for all our people, to contribute to the conservation of our natural and cultural heritage and to share with us our rich cultural diversity. We warmly welcome those who appreciate and enjoy our heritage, our way of life, and who travel with respect.”

In the Master Plan six strategic programs are outlined that should help maximize the contribution of tourism to national employment and income generation, and should ensure an equitable distribution of the social and economic benefits. These strategic programs include (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013):

1. Strengthen the Institutional Environment
2. Build Human Resource Capacity and Promise Service Quality
3. Strengthen Safeguard and Procedures for Destination Planning and Management
4. Develop Quality Products and Services
5. Improve Connectivity and Tourism-related Infrastructure
6. Build the Image, Position, and Brand of Tourism Myanmar

The MOHT sees the interrelatedness of these programs and their importance in order to coordinate response to future challenges. Together with these programs the following cross-
cutting themes are emphasized (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013): Gender equity, environmental sustainability, innovative financing, regional cooperation, ensure access for disabled people and consultation and participation of all relevant stakeholders to promote gender and ethnic inclusiveness and to enable the incorporation of stakeholder views into decision-making processes.

The Community Involvement in Tourism Policy (CIT) aims to provide the framework for ensuring that local communities have access to opportunities in tourism through gainful employment or other income generating opportunities in the sector by for instance selling goods and services to tourists. The MOHT has recognized a shortfall in planning, regulation and consultation with the communities which has resulted in limited community awareness and reduced commitment to tourism. Thus, the core aim of the CIT is to “enable a significant number of local community members to gradually gain substantial control over the development and management of tourism activities in their region” (Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p. 11).

However, involvement of local communities was found to be rather poor. In none of the places where the government or companies initiated tourism development projects, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), Initial Environmental Evaluations (IEEs) or Social Impact Assessments (SIAs) with the participation of communities were done before and communities were not consulted in advance in the majority of the cases (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, 2014).

Tourism in Myanmar is mainly based around four flagship tourist destinations, namely Yangon, Mandalay, Bagan and Inle Lake (see appendix 3). In the Inle Lake region, which is set out as a case study in this thesis, 17% of all tourist arrivals in 2013 visited Inle Lake (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014). Inle Lake and its service town of Nyaung Shwe (see a map in appendix 3) serve as the tourist center for the wider region and has established contextually very good tourism infrastructure such as resorts, guesthouses, hotels, travel agencies, tour guides, restaurants, transport facilities, electric supply and internet connectivity. First trips to the Inle Lake region were organized for international tourists in the early 1970s. Back then, however, most tourists visited the lake area for one day only due to visa restrictions. Only after the 1996 ‘Visit Myanmar Year’, resorts were constructed on the lake itself and guesthouses were
opened in Nyaung Shwe. In 2012-13, an estimated 110,000 tourists visited Inle Lake (see appendix 3) and some sources predict a doubling of these figures by 2016. (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014)

The danger of tourism growth to the region’s natural resources, traditional culture and societal strengths creates a need to meet the triple bottom line by examining and raising awareness of both positive and negative impacts due to tourism. Because of this, the Inle Lake Destination Management Plan has been written and will be implemented from now on. The vision of the management plan is the following (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014, p. 10):

“Tourism in the Inlay Lake Region must celebrate the diverse, vibrant and beautiful cultural heritage landscape and peoples that make this such a unique place to visit. Where possible tourism should be low-impact, targeting a market that appreciates regional cultures and the natural environment, and who wish to play a part in its sustainable development. Tourism should serve to strengthen religious, ethnic and racial cooperation.” - The Inlay Lake Region will develop as a competitive and sustainable destination that is a great place to live, work and visit. [Emphasis in original]

The management plan recognizes the need to involve local communities who should benefit both directly and indirectly from tourism by employment and support for local entrepreneurship. This need is not only outlined in the Inle Lake management plan but also in the Myanmar Policy on Community Involvement which was drafted as a “means to create wealth for local communities” that “encompasses all ethnic groups in Myanmar” and is “sensitive to local cultures and beliefs of all people” (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014, p. 11). This means that the Ministry of Tourism encourages local communities to be involved in decision-making processes and tourism planning and management.

A newly developed Hotel Zone on the Eastern shore of the lake (see appendix 3 for a map and pictures) was suggested and established in order to construct hotels in a less environmentally harming way. However, the social aspect was left out as the hotel zone presents challenges to the communities around the lake. Compensation for farmers who lived within the 622 acres Inle Lake hotel zone were to be paid compensation depending on the cultivated area and the type of crops (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014), but this might not be enough money for the farmers to continue cultivating crops elsewhere as the hotel zone and tourism
development in general have driven land prices up (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, 2014). When those villagers who refused to accept the compensation protested, they were charged for obstruction (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, 2014), which clashes with the aims and objectives of the Responsible Tourism Policy as well as the Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism that states that the government should enhance the rights enjoyed by communities over resources such as land (Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013).

Overall, also the concept of community involvement in tourism is still associated mainly with income and employment generation and does not go beyond this probably because of the prevailing imbalance of power in Myanmar (Häusler & Baumgartner, 2013).

### 3.1.5 Myanmar – Tourism Labor

Tourism is a widely accepted and acknowledged generator of employment and considered to be the most direct economic development tool that brings direct benefits to the residents of a tourist destination (Ladkin, 2011). Increased trade has nurtured economic growth and job creation (Airey & Nightingale, 1981). As tourism is a labor intensive industry, it offers employment for people entering the labor market or to people who have difficulties in finding employment elsewhere (World Tourism Organization and International Labor Organization, 2014).

In particular, destinations that seek economic alternatives, often found in countries in transition like Myanmar, put their hopes on tourism benefits such as employment generation, improved infrastructure and a more desirable standard of living (Vaugeois & Rollins, 2007).

Even though tourism is generally seen as an industry that brings economic benefits to a host population, critics state that this standpoint does not consider quality of jobs (Ladkin, 2011). Airey and Nightingale (1981) agree and state that strong economic growth in the world has not resulted in respective improvement of working conditions and standards of living. A problem here is that an increase of employment in developing countries mainly takes place in the informal sector which is characterized by less job security, lower incomes, no access to social benefits and fewer opportunities to access formal training programs (Airey & Nightingale, 1981).
The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and International Labor Organization (ILO) (2014), however, argue that tourism does provide opportunities for low-skilled workers, ethnic minorities, migrants, the unemployed youth and long-term unemployed people as well as women with family responsibilities and retirees. Especially women often use their existing skills to open small businesses such as restaurants or guesthouses (World Tourism Organization and International Labor Organization, 2014). Turner and Sears (2013) agree that tourism is an attractive alternative for nurturing development in rural and low-income countries as it offers more stable employment and income than subsistence farming, natural resource extraction and informal self-employment while it also promotes cultural heritage (Turner & Sears, 2013).

The main problem in developing countries is not unemployment but poverty among those who work. In 2009, around 1.3 billion people earned less than 2 US Dollars (USD) per day which means that 85% of the world’s poor are actually working (Fields, 2010). A problem with labor linked to tourism and other developments in Myanmar before the transition was forced labor for infrastructure works exacted from as many as a million people including children, pregnant women and the elderly. Exact numbers for hotel and tourism projects are not available but it is suspected that authorities forced people to restore heritage sites such as Mandalay Palace as well as for railway and runway upgrading (Henderson, 2003).

The International Labor Organization (ILO) after 13 years of restrictions has allowed Myanmar to fully participate in ILO meetings and to receive technical cooperation on matters other than the elimination of forced labor. Myanmar has adopted an action plan to eliminate forced labor by 2015 and has updated laws that now make forced labor a crime. Other objectives of the ILO in Myanmar are to achieve and strengthen freedom of association as well as to tackle the decent work and employment challenges facing the country (ILO, 2012).

In the policy on Community Involvement in Tourism, the government also address ‘Decent Work’ which they consider as the availability of employment in conditions of freedom, equity, human security and dignity. Decent Work includes opportunities for work that is productive and provides a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families (Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013).
Foreign companies that invest and operate in Myanmar are required by law to employ local workforce; at least 25% of their labor force in the first two years have to be local which increases to 50% in the third and fourth year and to 75% in the fifth and sixth year (WTO Secretariat, 2014). In the tourism sector however, it is difficult to find skilled labor in the communities they operate in as there is currently a lack of skills and education that match job requirements. Furthermore, a high level of local competition for unskilled labor opportunities can lead to tensions and could increase the risk of corruption or bribery in hiring (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, 2014).

Official figures show that in Myanmar, tourism created 338,500 jobs directly in 2013 (1.2% of total employment) which was predicted to grow by 12% in 2014 to 379,000 (1.3% of total employment). By 2024 tourism employment is likely to increase by 5.9% to 671,000 direct jobs (Turner, 2014). See figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism to Employment in Myanmar**

Direct and induced employment effects included, the tourism industry made up for 823,500 jobs in 2013 (3% of total employment) which was estimated to increase by 6.5% in 2014 to 877,500 jobs (3.1% of total employment) and to 1,323,000 jobs (4% of total employment) in 2024 (Turner, 2014).
3.1.6 **Conclusions**

The aim of the literature review was to put tourism development in the Myanmar context, to show the dominant voices in tourism in Myanmar at the time of writing and therewith show what type of readings influenced my expectations and assumptions about the situation in Myanmar.

What can be concluded from the literature reviewed above is that the prevailing neoliberal concept of economic development and growth also plays a crucial role in Myanmar. This shows that (tourism) development there is tackled with and viewed through the lens of the West. Neoliberalism is a concept established in the West and in its first instance it is a theory of political economic practices that suggest that human well-being can best be improved by maximizing entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework defined by private property rights, individual liberty, free markets and free trade (Harvey D., 2006). The term entails a variety of economic, social and political concepts that operate at both individual and institutional levels (Ayikoru, 2014). Key features of neoliberalism are ‘competition’, ‘profitability’, ‘performativity’, ‘progress’, ‘entrepreneurship’, ‘individuality’, ‘economic rationality’ and ‘free’ market development (Ayikoru & Tribe, 2007) which are core parts to the successful operation of the neoliberal ideals in order to ensure that economic growth, wealth and prosperity can be gained by various actors for their own benefits (Ayikoru, 2014).

Even though this introduction to neoliberalism does not do justice to such a complex ideology (Ayikoru, 2014), it is still clear that neoliberalism presents a dominant idea for institutions and individuals likewise and that it is a hegemonic concept that defines the way in which the different actors in the market economy interact with each other.

Thus, after an introduction, I am presenting and focusing on the following manifestations in tourism discourse in Myanmar: ‘tourism as a driver for economic growth’, ‘marketization and attraction of (foreign) direct investments’, ‘responsible tourism practices’ and ‘creation of employment through tourism’ that I will analyze in the following chapter with the help of my interviews, my experience and observations made during fieldwork.
3.2 The Journey – During: An Analysis

It is winter and the first snowflakes of the season fall peacefully to the ground as I make my way to the airport, bound to leave Germany on a 3-month adventure to Myanmar – a country that until recently had mainly attracted attention of the international community for its human rights violations and for Aung San Suu Kyi’s, the opposition leader’s, long lasting fight for democracy. Honestly, before I went on this journey, I had never really thought about the country, its history and its sudden political, economic and social changes that have been taking place since the country embarked on the ‘Road to Democracy’. Now it seems as though I cannot think of anything else while I am sitting on the plane, sleepless for both excitement but also nervousness about the time and tasks ahead of me.

What has changed for the people in Myanmar since the elections in 2011? Will I see all of the things and issues that I read about in the literature also unfold in front me once I’m there? What are the people like? What kind of changes have they gone through in their lives? These are the kinds of questions I’m asking myself as I’m sitting on the plane from Bangkok to Yangon and those are the things I’m going to try and find out while I’m at Inle Lake.

As me and my three travel companions step out of the airport into the heat of the cloudless day and share a taxi to the center of Yangon, we pass by lush green areas, countless construction sites and modern high rise buildings with expansive glass fronts and I’m thinking “wow, what a modern, seemingly rich and tidy city”. I’m interrupted in my thoughts by my friend saying “have you heard about this New Zealand national who managed a bar here in Yangon and who was arrested for advertising an event on Facebook with a poster of Buddha wearing headphones?” (Informal Chat 1, 2015). I had not heard and I am shocked! “What a ridiculous reason to put someone under arrest” I’m thinking. Yes, Myanmar has changed and the government has opened up the country but what are the implications of this development on the people in the country? Does it have any impact at all?
The above excerpt of the personal narrative shows two things:

1. it shows that my thoughts and analyses are largely dominated by neoliberal Western views and values and
2. it shows that Western tourists might still be preoccupied with things happening in the country that go against the predominant European set of values and beliefs.

My thoughts and assumptions about Yangon when I looked out of the window of the taxi were fed by dominant discourse that is presented to us in the literature and the media in the West. In Europe, so in my value and belief system, we believe that superficial cleanliness and modern buildings are a good sign for economic health and wealth but in the Myanmar context it may mean something completely different, or nothing at all. One respondent answered my question about what they thought about high rise buildings and the increased pollution that came with tourism with “the first problem is to get money and pay for children, not to think about pollution or buildings. Pollution is maybe the price to pay, we have to accept it” (Interviewee 3, 2015). However, a snack shop owner on the other hand had given this topic some more thought and told me that “if the buildings are much higher, they cannot get the wind, but for the high buildings, it means it’s very developed and for economy it’s good, but for health it’s bad” (Interviewee 4, 2015). This shows that for me and my Western set of values, these modern houses mean that the society is developing and the economy is good while for the Myanmar people it might rather mean that for the health it is bad or that “only investor [of the new buildings] have the power” (Interviewee 3, 2015). Thus, the neoliberal discourse produced my knowledge and created my values but those with access to different sources of knowledge and who lived the experience will think differently.

The excerpt further shows, as outlined in the literature review, that before the country opened up, the dominant discourse heard in Europe was the voice of the antagonists of tourism who boycotted tourism and used it as a political tool to exert pressure on the military government. So still today people, like my travel companion above, travel to Myanmar with those voices in the back of their heads and thus pay attention to events and stories of today that still underline the discourse and voices of before. My shocked reaction to it as well as statements from several interviewees underpin my thought that before the transition, people
in the West mainly heard the dominant voice of the antagonists of tourism in Myanmar and therefore stayed clear of the country for their vacations:

“So, I started working in about 2003 and then I started working in a hotel. At that time not many tourists, now many but at that time you can’t really see a lot here [Nyaung Shwe]. 5 or 6 hotels at that time here so in about 2003.” (Interviewee 1, 2015)

The impact this had on the local people is that not many tourists visited Myanmar and thus tourism did not have a large impact on the economy and hence on people’s income. The silenced voices at that time were those who supported tourism to Myanmar and who wanted tourists to visit the country. Some of the respondents worked in tourism and so benefitted from tourism already before and thus underline Henderson’s (2003) stance that tourism can break down barriers and improve everyday life of local people economically (Henderson, 2003). One respondent for instance said that when she had her clothing shop before 2010 “many foreigner come and helped me, feed me” (Interviewee 2, 2015) and another one stated that “before 2010, only 5 travel agencies here, it was good business” (Interviewee 3, 2015).

This shows that the ordinary Myanmar person did also benefit from tourism before 2010, certainly in a smaller scale than now, but it also shows that the voices of protagonists of tourism in Myanmar were silenced – maybe illegitimately so. It might be wise to mix some realism in any idealism.

Today the situation has changed, though, which will be unveiled in the following parts.

As I set out to explore Yangon and make my way through the seemingly endless line of cars stuck in traffic I soon realize that this is not a city made for tourists. At the modern cafés, the market, the shopping malls and the restaurants I see a colorful mix of mainly Myanmar but also many expats who have settled into the city in large numbers and some tourists here and there. Yangon is not as I had pictured it. It is much more developed, many people walk around in Western clothes and couples holding hands in the streets is not a rare sight. While I’m sitting in a café drinking a delicious cup of coffee, I am absolutely clueless about this place where you can order a “stroopwafel”\(^4\) but where at the

\(^4\) A Dutch caramel waffle
same time it is difficult to find regular sunscreen or female hygiene products. It is my goal, though, to find out more about tourism and so after only a few days I decide to leave Yangon and I take the night bus to Inle Lake – a luxurious VIP bus like I had not even seen in Europe before. The inside is like a plane with a TV in the back of each seat and comfortable, large leather seats. Soon after we leave the city and start our trip on bumpy roads I fall asleep only to wake up in the middle of the night not being able to see anything in the pitch black which I take as a sign that we are now in a more rural area of Myanmar. Soon after we arrive in Nyaung Shwe, I take a stroll through the small town which is the gateway to Inle Lake, supposedly one of the main tourist attractions of Myanmar. That is when I realize that this is a much more tourist place with travel agencies, hotels and tourist restaurants lined up in the dusty streets of the town. So this is where I’ll be staying for two months and where I will hopefully gain more insight and receive more answers to my questions.

3.2.1 Tourism as a Driver for Economic Growth

While in the city of Yangon I saw many old colonial houses sticking out of the otherwise rather dull concrete multistory apartment buildings, I notice the absence of any sign of the colonial time of Myanmar in Nyaung Shwe. As I am wandering through the small town I realize that maybe this region was neglected in colonial times but it is certainly not neglected now. Inle Lake was declared one of the four main, flagship tourist attractions of Myanmar by the government (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014) and I see this confirmed with myriad tourist businesses such as hotels, restaurants and travel agencies lined up on the main streets of the town. Everyone seems to be involved in tourism one way or the other. Even though this town existed long before the country opened up and tourist numbers skyrocketed, it almost seems as though this place was made for tourists. I had read before that the Inle Lake region is an important center for agriculture in Shan State and Myanmar and that even though tourism is developing rapidly here, the majority of the area continues to be rather poor and rural while most of the people that inhabit the area live from agriculture, just above subsistence level (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014).
But where do these people live? And where do the people in Nyaung Shwe live if all of the center has been transformed into businesses for tourists? “Most of the people live in the Eastern part of town, close to where your hotel is” (Informal Chat 2, 2015) my friend tells me. Thus, quite far away from where the average tourist would spend their time. I head on towards the big, green central market building and as I enter the area I see local life unfold in front of me. It is market day, like every five days, and many local Myanmar people are hustling through the narrow corridors between the stands of the market to buy vegetables, rice and meat for the coming week. No matter where I go or stand, I feel like I’m always in the way as people are rushing by me. “This is not a place made for the average European tourist” I think as I stoop to avoid the low-hanging cloths that give shade. “There is a market day every day in a different part of the lake” (Informal Chat 2, 2015). Only now I sense the real extent and importance of the agricultural sector still in this region. After a while I leave the chaotic market and head back to the hotel to process all the impressions I have collected today. As I am sitting on the balcony, a lady sits down next to me in one of the teakwood chairs that face west towards the sunset. The British tourist is in Myanmar and Inle Lake for the second time now, the first time was in 2006. “Wow”, I say, “a lot of things must have changed during these last 10 years, no?” She answers me calmly as she is watching the sunset and says “well, in a way it has changed, yes but in another way it really hasn’t.” I look at her quizzically as she turns to me and explains “the place is more developed now, more tourists, more hotels, yes, but I was happy to find the same kind, friendly and welcoming people here that had left such a good impression on me 10 years ago.” (Informal Chat 3, 2015). In this moment I realize that the only way to find out about changes, development and the implications of this on the local people is by speaking to the very people that have lived their whole lives in Myanmar and that have experienced all of this rapid economic, political and social change. Even though by now I had spent quite a while in Nyaung Shwe, and definitely longer than the average tourist, I still do not make sense of the situation here and the role of tourism development. Thus, I decide to ask all of my questions to the only people who will be able to answer them - the local people of Nyaung Shwe.
After the first interviews I am frustrated. I realize that I was looking for ‘pain’ and dramatic stories that I expected to be ubiquitous all over Myanmar given the country’s history and the discourse and knowledge that was produced in articles, books and documentaries that I all read and watched before I came. I am irritated and looking for reasons why I have not found these stories. Am I asking the wrong questions? Do these people not want to share their experiences with me? Do things get lost in translation? Only later would I come to the realization that maybe these stories are just not here and that the discourses dominant in my mind that formed these expectations and assumptions evoke my frustration.

As I am pondering about the interviews one thing strikes me. In most interviews, sooner or later I hear the expression “now it’s better than before [2011]” (Informal Chat 2, 2015) (Interviewee 4, 2015) (Interviewee 6, 2015) (Interviewee 9, 2015) (Interviewee 10, 2015) (Interviewee 12, 2015) (Interviewee 13, 2015) (Interviewee 14, 2015) (Interviewee 15, 2015) (Interviewee 17, 2015). Now that I started thinking about it, more and more patterns become apparent to me. Most of the respondents, I realize, talk solely about the economic benefits of tourism growth and hardly ever about the social side of it: “When you work in tourism it means like lots of money”, “so when I compare, my life started changing 2010 so between this 5 years my life has changed totally. Now I mean if I want to visit to Thailand, I can afford now.” (Interviewee 1, 2015), “[income] is higher than before” (Interviewee 5, 2015), “they export to the hotel that’s why they have a higher than before income.” (Interviewee 6, 2015).

In this moment I realize that tourism is widely looked at merely as an industry and that the idea of tourism as a social phenomenon is undermined.

The comparison between Yangon and Inle Lake in the narrative above shows the much bigger role that tourism development plays in Inle Lake. It also shows that people are much more dependent on tourism and future stability in the sector. I can also derive from my experience as outlined above that expectations and assumptions depend a lot on what kind of produced knowledge is consumed and that this can be misleading and result in irritation.
Before speaking to the people at the destination, it was impossible to pinpoint the discourses that are dominating people’s lives or opinions there. Most power is in the hands of those who control most dimensions of a discourse (Rapp Nilsen & Ellingsen, 2015). Now, after the interviews it is quite clear which discourses are dominant, not only on a national level as outlined in the literature review, but also on the local level and it is clear how these discourses influence the lived reality.

Neoliberal discourse encourages and stimulates economic growth. It does not involve social advancement and even though neoliberalism is generally challenged by for instance environmental and social aspects, we can say that in Myanmar an alternative discourse for the economic discourse has not yet been established. The main aim of tourism in Myanmar is to be a driver for economic growth and even though the government has acknowledged responsible tourism, the financial contribution of tourism is in the foreground even in the Responsible Tourism Policy. Thus, while the environmental and socio-cultural aspects are acknowledged as important factors to be considered in tourism development, the overarching concept is still economic growth. This can also be derived from the different voices in the interviews. People keep a rather reactive or even inactive stance towards environmental and social aspects.

“First problem is to get money and pay for children, not to think about pollution or buildings.” (Interviewee 3, 2015).

Physical changes to this respondent are no problem and pollution is the price to pay. (Personal) economic growth is most important to secure livelihood. “But even if government say ‘oh too big house, not beautiful’, now it’s already standing so it’s too late. Must happen before all the change” (Interviewee 3, 2015) the respondent argues further and shows with this argument her reactive or inactive stance towards this and implies that the government is responsible for this. With her arguments she acknowledges that the government is the one who decides and who thus has the power. What might hence be missing at a local level are possibilities presented by the government to become more proactive. Other respondents realize that “if there is a good thing, there is also a bad thing” (Interviewee 4, 2015), (Interviewee 11, 2015). However, they also both added that they did not know what the bad thing really is which shows the reactive nature or attitude.
Some respondents did, however, acknowledge the social implications tourism has on the society such as “and then also we have, I know more general knowledge from the foreigner.” (Interviewee 3, 2015), “our home is always open for tourists. We will try to help them and we will share with them and then we will share everything” (Informal Chat 4, 2015), “you know, now he has many experience and also he has many things, how can I say. And also he believes in himself. You know, he has many confidence” (Interviewee 10, 2015) and “you know, economic and then the social. You know, when we pick up the garbage in the whole city, we can do that together with the foreigners [refers to the day we picked up trash in the town in a large group, locals and foreigners together]” (Interviewee 5, 2015). Even though this was the case, the economic aspect and therewith the neoliberal discourse overshadowed the notion of tourism as a social phenomenon which implies that this discourse is submerged, not only on the national level but also on the local level. Thus, tourism is limited to its economic and business domains.

The question is whether the neoliberal discourse of economic growth is a matter of economics only rather than livelihood. Who benefits from these neoliberal (Western) policies and interventions and who is empowered by them?

Thus, even though the neoliberal discourse seems to be also dominating on the local level and even though objectives of tourism development are set by dominating actors such as the government which makes them also the ones to decide whether tourism development is successful or not by taking their own (neoliberal) measures into account, there is reason to assume that neoliberal concept has not infiltrated all of the community’s way of thinking.

Many respondents stated that a beneficial part of tourism is that profit can be shared with the community: “when you get the money you sharing with your partner like the boat driver, the trekking guide or the taxi driver” (Interviewee 3, 2015) and “and also the XXXX restaurant is very special here. Sometimes they come and looking for the poor and they ask which job the men do and also they pay for the poor family and then they supply for the children’s education” (Interviewee 6, 2015). Another respondent stated that the owners of the restaurant/hotel that he works at share their wealth by paying better salaries over time “it’s one of the parts why they got the salary, tourists coming here, they stay here like a hotel and also they have
their own souvenir shop and that’s why they have many income and can pay to their staff high income” (Interviewee 10, 2015).

This thought of sharing, challenges the neoliberal discourse where benefits are often limited to an elite minority such as owners, investors or management. It challenges the concept of neoliberalism which is driven by profits and where sharing would be seen as counterproductive. In this context, a local tour guide says “if only get me, I would be rich on top and other people are poor and they look at you like this [angry, jealous] and then you feeling bad” (Interviewee 1, 2015) whereby he subtly attacks the rich people who might think differently than him and take all the money without sharing and with this he challenges the neoliberal discourse of economic growth at the same time.

Finally, the owner of a restaurant claimed that her rich friends in Taunggyi told her she was stupid for sharing her income and for giving poor children education for free when she was still a teacher (Interviewee 2, 2015) which underlines the thought above and further nurtures the idea that neoliberal concepts are mainly beneficial for the ‘elite’.

This discussion also raises the thought that the concept of economic growth empowers mainly wealthy people and the government. A tour guide for instance explained that when there was a shortage in tour guides (2011-12), the government decided to issue regional tour guide licenses next to the national licenses that were very difficult to obtain and that mainly rich people from Yangon could afford who worked for big tour companies as they apparently had to pay a substantial amount of money to pass (Interviewee 1, 2015). This implies that the government is the decision-making body and that people who have more money than others are favored or advantageous.

Other respondents underlined the point that economic growth has been spread highly unevenly: “Even if developing they have still problem, like poor, the poor families. Some of the families have not enough money to supply their children for education” (Interviewee 6, 2015) and a receptionist states that “I had to move to here. Very difficult to get a job there [in his village] so I come here and get a job here. Many foreigners come here because of tourism” (Interviewee 7, 2015) which implies that tourism as a driver for economic growth has not reached the rural areas even if these villages are very close to the tourist center Nyaung Shwe.
Some respondents even claimed that the economic development has not had a positive influence on the income of the average, ordinary Myanmar worker (Interviewee 8, 2015) and as one respondent explained “I mean you need money to make more money” (Interviewee 1, 2015) which implies that mainly the people who were rich also before 2011 have benefitted a lot from this transition.

Another point that challenges the notion of economic growth as the solution is that now people and businesses have become more dependent on tourism:

“Normally the vegetable, most of is used for hotel and restaurant, this is dependent on tourists. If there are no tourists, if there are no foreigner, who would be buying for this? For everybody is good. Most of the local people, we don’t hire a car, just motorbike or pick-up truck and the taxi is very expensive for us. It’s just for tourists, also when you go down to the boat jetty, the boat station, many many boat there, but only Myanmar people they won’t go to the lake, maybe only for the foreigner” (Interviewee 3, 2015)

Also the owner of a mobile store said that his business, even though it is not directly involved in tourism, includes 80% tourism as “now you come, you arrange guide or boat or bicycle so after you pay money, right, so boat driver come to buy cellphone” and “if no tourism, everybody cannot buy cellphone” (Interviewee 8, 2015).

Other respondents challenged the concept of growth by noting that they have observed that this growth and this neoliberal thinking or this pursuit of more and more changes the mentality of the people. As one woman explains her worries, “because of this is Buddhism country, people are very nice, very friendly here in Myanmar but we don’t want to, if the tourists are coming more and more and more changing maybe they are not friendly, just money money, we don’t want to be like this” (Interviewee 3, 2015). She is basically implying that this neoliberal way of thinking changes people’s character and mindset and therewith commoditizes or at least transforms the traditional friendliness of Myanmar people.

However, some respondents think that economic growth is the way to improvement. The owner of a clothing shop for instance states that her own income has increased but prices have not (Interviewee 8, 2015) which reflects dominant discourse that economic growth is the
solution for any economy and is the equivalent to economic health. When a Tuk Tuk\(^5\) driver was asked about his thoughts about how tourism has changed everything in Nyaung Shwe and whether he can also see anything negative that came with this rapid development and growth his answer only includes the economy and how his and other people’s income has improved and that “he hasn’t any negative” (Interviewee 13, 2015). This very much reflects neoliberal discourse. The same counts for a waitress who only ever saw the positive side of economic growth and tourism growth through less unemployment and better living standard and “she thought that, she haven’t any negative from tourism” (Interviewee 16, 2015). The owner of a clothing shop agrees “so if the more guest come here, for the people who live in Nyaung Shwe will be better than before. Standard will be higher than before” (Interviewee 15, 2015).

This mentioned ‘living standard’ was often described with ‘possessions’ as a sign for improvement. This is also a sign for the aforementioned finding that tourism is mainly seen as an ‘industry’ and that social aspects of tourism are marginalized by the neoliberal discourse. Respondents stated that now they have a “bigger house” (Interviewee 6, 2015), “a motorbike” (Interviewee 1, 2015), “a motorboat” (Interviewee 6, 2015), “branded things like TV” (Interviewee 8, 2015) or as one respondent put it “I can buy many things now” (Interviewee 2, 2015). Thus, the main motivation for people to join in the market economy is the accumulation of wealth. This and the belief that human development and advancement is reached and increased by growing the economy gives power to the government as they have the privilege to adopt laws and policies that work towards economic growth.

However, a very religious respondent challenged this materialism by saying that even though he can buy more things now, when he is dead he cannot take these things with him and that he just wants to “stay in life for his religion” (Interviewee 4, 2015). This could imply that in a country like Myanmar where many religious Buddhists live, a concept like neoliberalism will always be challenged by the more traditional people.

Finally, while neoliberal discourse claims that ‘competition is good for business’ this notion could have adverse effects on some local small scale businesses. Even though in 2014 a growth in visitor arrivals of 24% was recorded (Thu & Kean, 2015), “[there are] many more hotels now, but not full. In 2012 they were full, not now” (Interviewee 3, 2015) which implies that even

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\(^5\) A motorized three-wheeled cabin cycle, a common form of public transportation in Asia.
though this growth in tourist numbers applies to the region, the occupancy rate of the hotels is lower and the hotels might have less income also because “the prices [for a hotel room] are much lower now than in 2012” (Interviewee 3, 2015).

“you know we are a town and the city is like for the tourists you know, everywhere you see after election we have many new hotel, many new travel agency, and in this time is not easy to get the customer” (Interviewee 3, 2015)

This statement is supported by the story of a local snack shop owner who used to be a tomato farmer. He explained that the technological advancements that came in the last few years allow it now for people in Yangon and Mandalay to grow tomatoes there while in former times a large amount of tomatoes were exported from Shan State (Inle Lake) to those parts of Myanmar where tomato growing was impossible because of environmental factors. Due to this development, he lost his existence as a tomato farmer completely and had to start from scratch (Interviewee 4, 2015). Something similar also happened to a furniture maker who had to move from Yangon to Inle Lake as the market there was saturated and due to the growing competition his business broke down (Interviewee 17, 2015).

However, in the transportation sector, growing competition has resulted in better quality service for the customer and more frequent service which was a problem before (Interviewee 3, 2015). Thus, competition as a core part of the neoliberal concept might result in improvements for the wider society and consumers but it is not mindful of individual fate.

On a national and even international level, neoliberal discourse is ubiquitous in the context of Myanmar today. Organizations like Tourism Concern, as described in the literature, used to boycott tourism to Myanmar and used to only talk about human rights violations in the country which has very much changed now. This change as explained in a press release by the organization was motivated by the fact that “the economy has opened up massively” (Clark, 2015) which underlines the statement that neoliberal discourse is dominating. Even though the neoliberal discourse seems to be prevailing also on the local level and even though social advancement might be marginalized by neoliberalism, social advancement took place also without neoliberalism, so before 2011:
“This is not only for 2011 the changing is the, how do you say, some before also changing in Nyaung Shwe, every house not like the wood, bamboo, but concrete but eh, 2011 thereafter is good for business, travel tourists come” (Interviewee 11, 2015)

Thus, even though neoliberal concept is still hegemonic, the social aspect of tourism development could in the near future become an alternative to the now dominating neoliberal discourse. Another question that should be raised here is whether the statements of the respondents that I classified as neoliberal could just be thoughts of survival instead. The possibility exists that I interpreted the statements as neoliberal way of thinking because my own ideology and my own values and beliefs are highly contested by neoliberalism as I have always lived in a society where this ideology prevails.

Neoliberalism as such is about growth and opening up the market, shifting power from the government to private businesses. Thus:

“If growth is the path to greater national and personal wellbeing, should not those responsible for growth be encouraged at every opportunity? Growth fetishism therefore cedes enormous political power to business, and corporations are never reluctant to argue that, since they are creators of wealth, it is their interests that should be paramount to government” (Hamilton, 2006, p. 1194).

This leads us to the following neoliberal discourse connected with this power of business and corporations: ‘Marketization’ and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

3.2.2 ‘Marketization’ and Attraction of (Foreign) Direct Investment

The days in Nyaung Shwe are becoming hotter every day, winter is clearing the way for hot summer days now. It is a dry heat and walking in the midday sun is almost unbearable now. Thus, I take a break in a café that looked quite welcoming with a colorful interior and photographs on the wall. I step inside and instantly notice the French music in the background and items such as “Cheese Croissant” or “French Anise Bread” on the menu. From all of these quite obvious clues I can conclude that it is a French owned café and restaurant which should later be confirmed by a friend telling me “yes, he has lived here many years. He used to be co-owner of a hotel and now he is running this
restaurant here” (Informal Chat 5, 2015). Now I suddenly start to see how many foreign owned or managed businesses really are in town – mainly, to my surprise, these foreign owners or managers are French.

After the break I keep walking, only to stop at one of the construction sites near the boat jetty to meet with my INGO research project partner and translator. At the grey and dusty construction site, numerous carpenters, electricians and other workers bustle about – of course only in slippers and without a helmet - cutting wood or steel and carrying cement. As I look up the tall building I ask myself whether this could be a symbol for the situation in Myanmar today: Myanmar is also ‘under construction’ so to speak and many ‘workers’ or actors in this context bustle about, making policies, giving speeches and writing reports, thus consulting and defining what has to be done and changed in order for Myanmar to develop and grow. We ask the supervisor of each construction site about the purpose of the building and the ownership. Two of the construction sites are hotel projects which reflects the statement that many hotels have been built since 2011 and the other one is a bank. With the exception of the bank, where we learned that the bank itself is investor and pays the workers, the interviewees did not want to disclose any details about the investors or owners (Interviewee 18, 2015) (Interviewee 19, 2015) (Interviewee 20, 2015). I am really wondering why they do not want to disclose this information to us. We are not even able to find out whether they are Myanmar or foreign investors/owners. All I know is that the investment must be quite large as both hotels are going to be high-rise buildings in superior locations.

The following morning I am sitting on the ground of the large boat made of teakwood, thoroughly shaken by the noisy two-cycle motor of the boat called “Chinese Buffalo” among the locals (Informal Chat 2, 2015). I realize now that all the buildings in Nyaung Shwe protect or maybe obstruct the wind from blowing away the heat that has settled in the town as I am enjoying the actually still chilly air with a jacket on. Again I am on a research mission with two of my INGO research project partners and translators. Today we are visiting the hotels on the lake and I am very excited as I know that this is quite a unique place for
hotels to be built. I am astonished at the beauty of many of these lakeside hotels that consist mainly of luxurious bungalows with lake view, some of which are even built on stilts on the lake itself. Each hotel that we visit tries to convey the same kind of atmosphere: luxury amidst magnificent views and spectacular scenery. Most of the hotels are entirely made of wood nestled in lush green gardens which makes them fit nicely into the greater surrounding area.

On the way back I suddenly have to smile as I recall one of the statements made in an interview before:

“*You need money to make more money*” (Interviewee 1, 2015)

This makes me think that maybe all these new laws, policies and efforts to grow the economy are just beneficial for the ‘not-quite-so-poor’.

The narrative above indicates that numerous large (foreign) investments have been made also at Inle Lake which is also supported by statements of several interviewees who explained that many hotels have been built since 2011 (Interviewee 3, 2015), now almost 10 times as many hotels as 10 years ago are located at Inle Lake (Interviewee 1, 2015). This shows that the government’s neoliberal efforts to reach its aim to attract private investments and to ‘marketize’ the industry have been quite successful. These large investments in new hotels also carved the way for commoditization of traditions. As the number of hotels has increased significantly since 2011, the traditional hospitality of offering people shelter in monasteries for instance was replaced and production and consumption of hotel rooms was increased as investors capitalize on the opportunities provided. This can be implied from one interviewee’s statement: “[in 2012] *maybe tourists had to sleep in monastery because everywhere was full, full, full. But now it’s opposite*” (Interviewee 3, 2015).

The situation at Inle Lake also suggests that mainly the ‘not-quite-so-poor’ as I indicated above are the beneficiaries of these policies and efforts. One interviewee explained that he thinks that the opening of the economy and the efforts to attract private investors have both positive and negative impacts. For one, the mentality or attitude of the people towards entrepreneurship has changed for the better, as he argues “[when I opened this office, people would ask ‘what do you do? You will lose a lot of money’ but now when they look, they are like
‘oh you have the office, you will make a lot of money’ so totally different” (Interviewee 1, 2015), which basically shows support for the ‘marketization’ of the economy. On the other hand, though, he agrees with many other interviewees that mainly those people benefit from this turn who were already rich before:

“So, many rich people they never do any business, they don’t save money in the bank because they don’t believe, no hope. Before they have the reason and they lost a lot of money so they don’t put money in the bank and they have a goal. They plan a goal and they save. Then when the country changed, they had the goal and started a hotel. I mean investment. So it’s good for them” (Interviewee 1, 2015).

What he acknowledges here and in other parts of the interview is that you need money in order to make more money. He says that “before was okay you can get money but now you need money to get money” (Interviewee 1, 2015). A receptionist whose goal it is to have his own travel agency in the future agrees that only rich people can set up their own business and that he cannot save money because he does not earn enough (Interviewee 7, 2015). This implies again that benefits are spread unevenly and that the poor cannot benefit from the neoliberal turn that the government has taken.

As can be implied from the above, investors are often referred to as ‘the rich people’ with which the interviewees automatically acknowledge that the power lies with these rich people as having access to resources such as money is often an indication or sign of power. This creation of class dominance by circulating wealth and distributing it among the wealthy could be what Harvey (2007) names ‘creative destruction’.

In the narrative above, I am asking myself why they would not disclose the investor or at least the type of investor for the hotels under construction. When I analyzed the interviews I came across the suggestion that locals might bear grudges against ‘the rich people’ like such investors because they, as described above, are the ones who apparently benefit the most from this transition:

“If only get me [money], I would be rich on top and other people are poor and they look at you like this [angry, jealous] and then you feeling bad. Like they are jealous for you or they will attack you or whatever” (Interviewee 1, 2015)
In some interviews this ‘grudge’ against the rich people and investors became quite clear:

“Only investor have the power, more about money. They don’t live here, don’t live here and take away money, they don’t care about the pollution. Government has to regulate. They don’t care about problems.” (Interviewee 3, 2015)

“There are a lot of rich people with money, they don’t mind about the price, they come to town to make money from tourists without thinking.” (Interviewee 1, 2015)

Another thing that becomes clear here is that the average local person at Inle Lake believes that power lies within the ‘rich people’ who can accumulate more money with the capital they already have. One interviewee even suggested that because of the fact that “you need money to make more money”, people have sold their lands (Interviewee 1, 2015). A boat driver argued that “because of the tourists come more we have to build many hotels and so we have to lose the land” (Interviewee 9, 2015). Here it is rather unclear whether ‘HAVE TO lose land’ really means that this happened forcefully or if this was due to translation and language problems. But it is however certain that he expresses that there was not much choice which implies that there is not a lot of power within the community. A local restaurant owner also explained that she sold her house in order to cover running charges and in order to be able to start a new business and she adds “so, I feeling rich people pressed me [to sell the house]. Because this year [prices for land] all up” (Interviewee 2, 2015). An owner of a travel agency explains this very well:

“Big change, like many investor came, too. They come with lot of money they buy the land and for local people is very very bad so that’s bad change, for local people is very difficult to find rent and house, because price is so high. This is very important. Only after the election here, the land price much higher. Crazy. After 2010 because of the price when the Chinese people came here they pay a lot of money to buy land. Normal salary in Myanmar is between 30 and 70,000 MMK per month but land price is much higher, so how do they buy land for home. If no family, no rich then you can’t own the land. Very bad thing.” (Interviewee 3, 2015)

This shows that the adoption of neoliberal practices in Myanmar have also had adverse implications on the lives of people at the local level.
These thoughts of local people in Nyaung Shwe show that the neoliberal discourse of ‘marketization’ and FDI has not found much appreciation and the actions of a local fisherman for instance show the objection of this neoliberal discourse:

“Before he was trying to be a restaurant owner but that’s why he was going to the floating island to build a restaurant but he hasn’t any enough money and here have many restaurants so he didn’t build and then he donate his land for library. Library for the villagers.” (Interviewee 6, 2015)

Even though he could have made quite some profit by selling his land to an investor, as prices had increased dramatically (Interviewee 2, 2015), he decided to share it with the community instead. With this, he challenges neoliberalism which is driven by profits.

The downside of such ‘marketization’, such as the above mentioned land loss or land grabs and the accumulation of more wealth by the already rich, is not acknowledged by neoliberal discourse. As can be derived from the literature in chapter 3.1, institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), WTO or The Economist support the ‘marketization’ of the economy and with this FDI. In neoliberal discourse, foreign exchange earnings that is earned by allowing FDI nurtured economic growth and independent voices that challenge this view with alternative discourses are silenced by the overwhelming or overpowering support for FDI and ‘marketization’ by these dominating actors. The government with the new investment laws mentioned in the literature review aims to uphold the story of growth as the solution to keep attracting investments and to ultimately benefit from these. Brohman (1996) even claims that agencies such as the World Bank pressure developing countries like Myanmar to adopt neoliberal policies as part of structural adjustment programs that are a pre-requisite to obtain loans.

All of the above once again shows that tourism in Myanmar is seen as an industry and that tourism as a social phenomenon which aims for even spread of tourism benefits across an entire population is submerged as this ‘marketization’ evidently benefits only a small proportion of the population.

The above mentioned lack of power of the individual people is also part of the next debate where community involvement in tourism is one of the parts to be discussed.
3.2.3 RESPONSIBLE TOURISM PRACTICES

All this while that I am privileged enough to spend in this small and friendly town in Myanmar, I hear one word over and over again, no matter where I go: ‘change’. Thus far I have heard a lot about political and economic change which was generally agreed upon by the people that I talked to as mainly positive. I am wondering, though, if people have experienced change in any other way. I mean, sure, I have read many articles and reports that talk about social and environmental change but I am wondering if these reports have taken a rather etic look at the local situation. I, too, see that the water in the lake is quite dirty and low and I can see that there are many new houses around that must, by the look of them, not be older than just a couple of years. In February and March there are also a lot of tourists, both European and Asian, walking the streets of Nyaung Shwe. At the same time, though, I often wake up to the friendly voice that must belong to a monk as he is chanting prayers through a megaphone or a similar device for many hours starting from 4am in the morning. In the background, at around 5 or 6am, I then also notice a large crowd repeating after the monk who must have gathered at a local monastery to pray and listen to the monk. Thus, I am thinking, tradition is well and alive in Nyaung Shwe which is also noticeable by the traditional dresses (Longyi⁶) worn by most of the residents of the town.

As I am walking through town trying to analyze the situation, I remember that one of the first things I heard about Myanmar and which I back then always dutifully repeated was that Myanmar has the chance to make it right from the beginning, to plan and manage tourism better and to learn from mistakes that neighboring countries such as Thailand have made. Now that I am here and I am looking at the situation unfold in front of me, all I really see is a focus on growth and financial stability. How can the aims and objectives outlined in the responsible tourism policies be achieved when the government presents and the visitor arrival growth scenarios (appendix 2)? I am asking myself a similar question when I am again out on the

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⁶ A sheet of cloth worn around the waist, running to the feet. In India also known as “Lungi”.
lake; this impressive and unique place in Myanmar that is decorated with countless floating vegetable gardens, a place where fishermen are still rowing with their leg while catching fish with their self-made nets and baskets. The boats that not only carry us tourists but also locals and large amounts of rice bags are so polluting and unbearably noisy that I am asking myself why an alternative to these fuel-driven motors has not been presented to this day. I am shocked but at the same time not very surprised when I hear somewhere that only these types of motors are exclusively allowed on the lake because of bribery and corruption. Even though I cannot confirm that claim, I am smiling at that comment and am thinking ‘typical’. So, how can sustainable tourism be implemented in a developing country like Myanmar that is still in the process of getting used to all the changes when it does not even work in most Western countries where this term was coined and where the concept of responsible tourism was born?

It is Saturday morning as I am leaving Nyaung Shwe on a two-day hiking trip to the mountains of the East part of the lake with a few friends and two local trekking guides. As we are walking uphill on dusty small trails through the dry landscape, we do not pass by many people. Whenever we walk through a small village, however, we are greeted by small children smiling and waving at us, screaming “Mingalabar!” ever so often. Our tour guide told us that not many people go trekking around the lake which results in curious looks and children giggling at the sight of us. In none of the villages that we pass by I see restaurants or guesthouses and there and then I realize that neither tourism itself nor many of its effects have reached these villages that are only about a 30 minute drive from Nyaung Shwe, the tourist center of the region. No one who lives in these villages is involved in tourism. There are no tourist facilities whatsoever which might partly also be due to the laws that forbid homestays for instance. We even had to bring food from town and as I am sitting on the ground of the living or praying room in the house of our guide’s family, eating delicious, home-cooked Myanmar food, I am wondering whether it is a good or bad thing that tourism

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7 „Hello“ in Burmese
has not reached these rural places. From experience I know that those VDC’s (Village Development Committees) in Nepal that involve themselves in tourism by offering food or guesthouses are usually ‘better off’ – at least financially – than those who don’t. I am wondering, though, if maybe these people don’t even want to be involved.

During most of the interviews for the INGO research project, people seem to be happy about the project but on the day of the workshop that we set up for all the actors involved, not many of the people we interviewed participate. Could this also be a sign that they don’t want to be involved, just want to live their lives and let others take responsibility? Or is this rather a result of many years of top-down governance by the regime when people were not expected or invited to get involved? I am not sure.

One might assume that the concept of sustainable or responsible tourism is an alternative discourse that challenges the neoliberal one which is, however, not the case. Sustainable tourism emerged from neoliberal discourse on meeting pressing global problems. Sustainable tourism development is largely predicted upon economic growth and is thus confronted with challenges such as credibility and in creating truly sustainable outcomes (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013). As can be derived from the literature above, the Responsible Tourism Policy of Myanmar is in its first stance also preoccupied with economic performance. The vision of the policy starts with “to provide more employment and private business opportunities...” (Häusler, et al., 2012, p. 6). Thus, the economic performance is prioritized before the social and environmental aspects that form the three pillars of sustainable development (Profit, People, Planet) which shows the ‘neoliberal friendly’ nature of the policy itself. On the local level, the importance of financial sustainability over anything else is also highlighted by some of the interviewees:

“Yes, because of they use more chemical, they have more rice and then they have more income and they can hire more machine and also the employees.” (Interviewee 14, 2015)

“First problem is to get money and pay for children, not to think about pollution or buildings. The price to pay.” (Interviewee 3, 2015)
Thus, responsible tourism as a discourse that is operated outside the neoliberal forces is submerged.

In reports, the government mainly talks about tourist numbers and the growth of these which makes the volume-based over value-based nature of tourism management in Myanmar apparent. A concerned interviewee argues that “they [the government] say they donate 2.6m dollars. They say they do some project but they don’t show you, I don’t feel it. Better not to give money straight to government” (Interviewee 1, 2015). This indicates a slow implementation of responsible strategies which makes way for irresponsible, merely volume-based, short-term practices. As one interviewee argues:

“But even if government say ‘oh too big house, not beautiful’, now it’s already standing so it’s too late. Must happen before all the change.” (Interviewee 3, 2015)

This quote above does not only show the slow, reactive nature of responsible tourism practices in Myanmar but it also implies that people are not used to being asked for their opinion and they are not used to being involved and maybe also do not want to be involved. She implies that the government should be the one to act, not the private sector.

Responsible tourism has to start from within the community but in Myanmar things have been different and it takes time to change:

“So even INGO, not good, just some. In the beginning is big but when you come to the bottom is like 1 drop. Just go to the bottom and do it. Don’t start at top. Go from bottom to top. Like politics, you have to start from the bottom, like in Myanmar is top to ground. Your people choose government, here the top chooses.” (Interviewee 1, 2015)

Additionally, responsible tourism in theory, at the national level works well. They are setting the agenda for this. But there are discrepancies between these agendas or strategies and the lived reality, so what is done at local level. While the institutions have introduced a policy for responsible tourism, at the local level they have not even reached widespread awareness for these issues which is a precondition for responsible tourism to be successful. The low number of respondents, who brought up social or environmental problems that have increased with rapid change and growth, namely 5 out of 17, is an indication for this lack of awareness. Thus,
even though responsible tourism practices aims to acknowledge tourism as a social phenomenon, its implementation is difficult.

Coming back to the narrative above where I mention my belief that Myanmar could make things right from the beginning, this might have been quite naïve as tourism has a cyclical nature and often has potentially limited positive impacts on the local level. Myanmar opened up and promoted tourism, aiming for large numbers of tourist arrivals, even before a strategy was laid out as this evidently came only in 2012, after Myanmar had experienced unprecedented growth. Especially in places like Inle Lake where tourism had flourished for quite a while already and which was announced one of the major tourist attractions, the increase and unpreparedness has already shown adverse effects such as “water pollution” (Interviewee 10, 2015), “loss of traditional culture” (Interviewee 11, 2015) and “an increased noise level” (Interviewee 3, 2015).

The policy on Community Involvement in Tourism aims “to enable a significant number of local community members to gradually gain substantial control over the development and management of tourism activities in their region” (Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013, p. 11). However, the power is still with the government that decides what is responsible and what is not. For instance, a tour guide would like to open a guesthouse on the lake that involves the local community members, but he thinks that it will not be allowed as the water level decreases and sewage from such a guesthouse would worsen the effect (Interviewee 1, 2015). However, the main problem might not be tourism but agriculture on and close to the lake as well as locals who also use boats and who live on the lake (Interviewee 6, 2015). Thus, even though such a project would benefit a rural community that otherwise does not usually enjoy financial benefits of tourism because “[it is] very difficult to get a job there [in the village] so I come here and get a job here” (Interviewee 7, 2015), the dominant actors in the discourse of responsible tourism are the ones who keep decisional power. This is another sign for the suggestion that tourism is not seen as a social phenomenon.

3.2.4 Creation of Employment through Tourism

Every day I walk through the streets of Nyaung Shwe and I see the same people sitting in or in front of their travel agencies, restaurants, cafés, Tuk Tuks or small
shops. No matter what time it is, 8am or 7pm, the same people are there seven days a week working what must be 12 hours a day. I am standing at the one and only ‘big’ junction of the town with its one and only traffic light as I look at what is happening around me. I see a bank, a clothing shop and a souvenir shop as well as several travel agencies and restaurants. Besides a hairdresser and a small snack shop, all businesses around are involved in tourism somehow. This makes me think; what did all these people do before they started to work in tourism and why do they work in tourism? Later I learn that most of the younger people started to work in tourism right after high school and while some residents had worked in tourism before as well, most people used to have a different occupation: farmers, fishermen, traders and construction workers for example. I am wondering what made all of these people change their path and start a career in tourism.

As I am yet again passing a large construction site at the boat jetty, I realize that also all of these individuals, who are so tirelessly carrying cement and sand bags in the heat, are indirectly paid by the tourism sector as the owners of these hotel projects pay their salaries. The same, I am realizing, must count for farmers and local producers of other consumer goods. Thinking back at all the people working in their tourist shops from dawn till dusk, I do get the feeling that tourism has created a lot of employment in this town. I decide to ask the very people who I see working so hard every day and many people confirm “yes, there is less unemployment now” (Interviewee 16, 2015), “lots of people catch a job, especially young people” (Interviewee 1, 2015). While I am talking to all of these people who live in Nyaung Shwe, I can’t escape the feeling that they put a lot if not all their hope in tourism. Everybody seems to want to work in tourism as a tour guide job for instance is seen as ‘prestigious’ and as the reputation of employment in tourism among the people is that “you are working with tourists so you think that you are making so much money” (Interviewee 1, 2015). I hear more similar stories like this where people started to work in tourism because the salary was supposed to be higher or because the working conditions are better. Thus, as I am reflecting on all of these answers, I can’t help but think of a term I once read: tourism as a ‘refuge employer’.
I am walking towards a hotel to meet with the receptionist and on the way I see workers, mainly women, carrying heavy baskets full of stones along the road that is being constructed here. As I pass by, the women wave and smile warmheartedly at me, a gesture that I happily return. While I certainly don’t want to deny the existence of forced labor in Myanmar, I don’t see obvious traces of it here in Nyaung Shwe. I get the feeling that a much more apparent problem here is that of poverty among the employed. While tour guides tend to have the chance to make a monthly salary that is considerably higher than the average (Interviewee 1, 2015), workers at the large hotel that this tour guide used to work at before 2010 and where he earned 30 USD per month, today receive 60 USD excluding tips (Informal Chat 2, 2015). Of course this is double the amount which I feel is a great development but daily, this is not more than 2 USD excluding service money. I am also shocked to learn about the daily wages of construction workers which is averagely 5 USD for men and 3 USD for women (Interviewee 18, 2015). The same counts for workers on a rice farm (Interviewee 14, 2015). I am wondering if, even though the common poverty line is set at 2 USD per day, these people can be classified as the ‘working poor’ with the increase in land prices for instance.

The government is presenting figures regarding employment and growth scenarios and the aim of the professional value chain research I am doing is ultimately to create jobs. But somehow I get the feeling that only numbers count and not the type and quality of the jobs.

The narrative above in comparison with the figures shown in the literature review show that growth is the prevailing aim and focus also with regards to employment in tourism. Neoliberal jargon is thus dominating here as well, silencing the discourse around quality of jobs and traditional work.

In the government’s neoliberal approach, direct, indirect and induced employment in tourism is counted but quality of these jobs, working conditions and other characteristics are hardly taken into account. We can see this unfold also at the local level:
“He haven’t any training” (Interviewee 10, 2015), “before he was a student, his family is very poor so he didn’t want to go to school so he dropped out” (Interviewee 9, 2015) “they ask ‘are you graduated or not’. If you say no there’s no way for you” (Interviewee 1, 2015), “the guide license is very difficult. So many people do by corruption, you need to pay money to pass the exam. Even you’re good or not you need to pay money” (Interviewee 1, 2015) and “but now we don’t have the money and my family is very poor. So I went until grade 11 and then I wanted to continue learning and then go to university [but had to find work instead]” (Interviewee 7, 2015).

Thus, while tourism and job creation in tourism is promoted, there are not many opportunities presented for people to gain skills or it is made very difficult for them. Moreover, making money is more important than education as many families are rather poor and need the financial support of their children. For the larger hotels, certain skills are preconditioned but as discussed just now, it is difficult to obtain skills through official training and thus there are only limited opportunities for unskilled workers.

During the analysis of the interviews, it became clear that for many people, their whole life revolves around their job. They want to build a future for themselves and their families and therefore they work relentlessly. A waitress explained that she is working very long hours and that her family and boyfriend were very concerned about her but that now they understand that this is the job for her and that cooking and serving for the customer is her happiness (Interviewee 16, 2015). A chef stated that “his happiness is to work with this job and the improving his life. Is his happiness” (Interviewee 10, 2015).

This shows that at the local level, not only job creation is important but also working conditions and other characteristics of the job as their entire lives, happy and sad days in their lives, seem to be determined by their job. Many people instead seek self-employment as entrepreneurship has a better reputation now and people think that they can make more money when they have their own business. Furthermore, they do not want to share their income with their employer and make them rich(er).

“He wants to own his business, like trading” (Interviewee 9, 2015), “now [self-employed] is better than before because of she can stand on her own” (Interviewee 12, 2015), “he has to pay 30% to owner so you know, is very bad for him so he want to be an owner” (Interviewee
“before when you opened a shop they thought you will lose a lot of money. Now when you open the shop, they will say ‘oh you will earn a lot of money’.” (Interviewee 1, 2015)

The fact that the reputation of tourism among many residents of Nyaung Shwe is better than of other sectors and the fact that many people are seeking employment in tourism could be a sign for tourism as a ‘refuge employer’. Tourism is a refuge employer for people who escape from an unpleasant job, unemployment or a declining industry such as traditional resource industries. The context of this consequent economic transition is shaped by neoliberal tourism development.

In the lived reality, signs for this phenomenon were found in the statements of many of the interviews. A boat driver said he quit the tomato shop because as a tourist boat driver he would earn more money (Interviewee 9, 2015). A chef thought that if he starts a job in a tourist restaurant, he can improve his life (Interviewee 10, 2015). A Tuk Tuk driver who escaped from his job in construction states that “for the construction, very tired for that. So their income is very low and now is higher than before” (Interviewee 13, 2015). A fisherman indicates that now that they export to the hotels and restaurants, they have a higher income than before. Before they had to work many different jobs, now only fishing, sometimes driving for tourists and inviting tourists into their home (Interviewee 6, 2015) which shows that also they are looking for a better or easier way to earn money through tourism as a refuge employer. This also indicates that while these people pursued a career in tourism mainly because of better income, also the working conditions play a crucial role as tourism was often described as easier or at least not so physically tiring for instance.

However, a few respondents were worried about this trend of migration into tourism labor. The lady in a clothing shop said that even though she was happy about the fact that her nieces were now able to study in the city or even abroad, the economic and political transition also means that traditional businesses will decrease such as weaving (Interviewee 15, 2015). A farmer also argued that he has problems with the workers who look for work in tourism as the farmer cannot pay the same salary as the tourist businesses and because the working conditions are difficult in the field where the employees have to work even if it rains for instance (Interviewee 14, 2015).
3.3 The Journey—After: Conclusions

3.3.1 Reflection on Tribe’s Theory

I started this research after reading John Tribe’s (2006) article “The Truth about Tourism”. I think my journey has confirmed his concept because it has shown that acknowledging my own knowledge force-field has allowed me to be more critical towards the knowledge production network. As Ateljevic et al (2007) argue, the ‘critical turn’, the ‘quiet revolution’ in tourism studies seeks to ‘challenge the field’s dominant discourses’ and inspire a set of critical ‘dialogues, conversations and entanglements’ into the nature of power, discourses and representations in tourism (Ateljevic, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2007, pp. 1-2). Challenging positivist bias, I was able to critically engage in the social research in tourism. I would agree with Bianchi (2009) that this paradigmatic shift in tourism thinking embraces multiple worldviews and cultural differences. “Our understanding of critical tourism scholarship is that it is more than simply a way of knowing, an ontology, it is a way of being, a commitment to tourism enquiry which is pro-social justice and equality and anti-oppression: it is an academy of hope” (Ateljevic, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2007, p. 3).

While I do not agree with the critique of superficiality (Kincheloe, 2005), as my journey has provided deep insights into tourism development and its implications on the lived reality, I do understand the point that Bianchi (2009) makes. He argues that critical inquiry involves more than the interrogation of discourses and representations and should not stop at challenging the process of knowledge production inside the academy (Bianchi, 2009). He goes on and states that in order for the critical turn to move from being merely an academy of hope, it must not only be sensitive to subjectivities and cultural diversities, but also to structures of the material forces of power and inequality within globalizing capitalism and liberalized modes of tourism development (Bianchi, 2009). While I do think that my research has taken these things into account, I do see the risk of falling into this trap where critical research emphasizes only the discursive, symbolic and cultural realms of tourism and retreats from political economy and engagement with the economic and political relations of power that are shaping tourism (Bianchi, 2009).
Therefore, I agree that researchers who engage in the critical turn, including me, have to avoid paying too much attention on identifying problem without suggesting solutions (Bianchi, 2009).

3.3.2 CONCLUSIONS

The concluding chapter reflects on the research objective and the research questions. The objective of this thesis was to analyze truth claims about tourism development and labor in Myanmar in order to unveil controversies that are untold in dominant discourses related to this. The objective is thus to identify and highlight controversies/discrepancies between tourism discourse and lived reality.

The aim has been reached by outlining the contextual social practices and by reviewing the implications of dominant discourses within this context.

In the following, the research questions will be answered:

1. What dominant discourses about tourism in Myanmar are produced in the literature?
   - What alternative discourses/voices are silenced/submerged?

2. What implications does the produced knowledge in tourism discourse have on the lived reality (phenomenal world) at Inle Lake as a case study?
   - Who is empowered by dominant neoliberal discourse? And who is left out?

3. Are there discrepancies between the knowledge produced (truth claims) and the experienced lived reality? If so, in what way is this noticeable?
   - In what way does the perceived lived reality reflect or object dominant discourse?

Tourism in Myanmar today is largely dominated by neoliberal discourse which can be traced in the ideas of tourism as a driver for economic growth, the ‘marketization’ of the economy and the attraction of (foreign) direct investments as well as in responsible tourism practices and the aim of creating employment through tourism. Thus, economic growth is equated with economic health.

Keeping this in mind it is rather ironic that before the country opened up in 2011, the human rights and social discourse was prevailing. Voices that boycotted tourism submerged the neoliberal discourse that supported tourism for the economic benefit of local people. Today,
this social discourse is largely silenced by the overarching notion that growth is the panacea for all problems and the only way forward.

On a national level, the neoliberal discourse of ‘marketization’ and FDI is dominant which undermines the local voices who challenge this concept at the grassroots level.

The discourse that dominates the topic of employment in tourism is defined by numbers and the creation of jobs but it is not concerned with type and quality of jobs or migration from traditional jobs into tourism.

Overall, tourism is seen merely as an industry which is the prevailing hegemonic discourse in Myanmar today as alternative discourses or voices are not loud enough (yet). On a macro level, the social aspects of tourism are acknowledged in the Responsible Tourism Policy but the financial contribution of tourism is the overarching concept. On a micro level, the economic neoliberal discourse that makes tourism nothing but an industry is also prevailing. However, as Foucault (1978) notices “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95), and signs for ‘resistance’ that can be found on the local level imply that the alternative discourse of tourism as a social phenomenon might catch up sooner or later.

People who have taken on the neoliberal ideology reproduce and create the context as situated knowledge on the local level. While before 2011, the tourism boycott resulted in missed economic opportunities for the local people in Myanmar, the neoliberal turn has disembodied social relations from their existing conditions, which were previously regarded as social goods, into commodities. Thus, tourism is limited to its economic and business domains which means that the concept of growth is also prevailing in the lived reality which facilitates the ‘elite’ who have money to make more money and on the other hand marginalizes the ‘poor’ in rural areas where tourism benefits have not been felt.

Dominant discourse has further implications on the economic structure of the lived reality where people have become more and more dependent on tourism income on the one hand and where neoliberalism has resulted in loss of land to the investors and unaffordable land prices on the other hand. The economic and political transition has created more employment and a more positive business environment where the perception of entrepreneurship has shifted in a positive direction. The prevailing importance of economic gain among the people,
which reflects neoliberal discourse, has resulted in many young people quitting school as earning money was often perceived as more important than education. This could then not only lead to a lack of skilled workers but it could also make it difficult for young people to access good jobs in tourism that are often reserved for skilled workers. Furthermore, tourism tends to be a refuge employer as people migrate from traditional jobs such as farming or weaving into tourism jobs that generally have a better reputation among the people. The dominant discourse of ‘marketization’ and attracting investment has further resulted in fierce competition of local businesses also with more powerful investors which has resulted in lower profit and income, also because the prices for their products and services have decreased due to competition. Thus, the wider society and consumers of tourist facilities are privileged by neoliberal discourse which, however, is not mindful of individual fate.

Through dominant neoliberal discourse power is thus partly shifted from the government to private businesses. However, the power lies mainly with international or influential domestic investors which limits the influence of small local businesses. People’s hope in tourism as a driver for economic growth and their belief that economic growth also leads to human development and social advancement gives a certain power to the government as they have the privilege to adopt new laws and policies that nurture economic growth, which the government in return also benefits from. Thus, dominating actors such as the World Bank, IMF, ADB and influential investors as well as the government uphold the story of growth to benefit from foreign exchange earnings and voices that challenge this, mainly heard on the local level, who feel the adverse impacts of this, are silenced and disempowered.

Even though neoliberal discourse is prevailing, we can observe discrepancies between the produced knowledge and lived reality. Even though livelihood and earning money seem to be more important than social and environmental aspects of tourism, which reflects neoliberal discourse, the local mentality of evenly sharing wealth is counterproductive in neoliberal discourse where making profit is of utmost importance. In the lived reality, people often refrain from ‘marketization’ and wealth accumulation by only a few privileged people. Economic growth, ‘marketization’ and commoditization are promoted as the way forward, however, local people often hold on to their religious beliefs that challenge many ideas of neoliberalism.
Growth is often seen as a panacea and this was also expressed by many local people who only see the positive sides of tourism which are mainly of economic and material nature. On the local level we can also see that the Responsible Tourism Policy is very ‘neoliberal friendly’ as government strategies are volume-based rather than value-based. Tourist numbers at Inle Lake have dramatically risen even before such a policy was introduced and while the government has set sustainable objectives and strategies, in the lived reality this might have come too late.

The main conclusions here are that while dominant neoliberal discourses also prevail on the local level, people see more and more the implications, both positive and negative, this has had on the community and we can thus observe more and more discrepancies between what is told in dominant tourism discourse and the lived reality. This means that while tourism is predominantly treated as an industry and management phenomenon, on both the macro and micro levels, the social aspects of tourism are more and more acknowledged on the micro level (the lived reality).

3.3.3 Recommendations

The alternative form of inquiry presented in this thesis that treats tourism not solely as an industry but also as a social phenomenon shows that the situation is not black and white and that any judgements or assumptions we make from distance are often burdened with hypocrisy and claimed truths that were planted in our heads. As this alternative way of inquiry for prevailing reductionist approaches in tourism managements studies results in more holistic understanding of the complexity of tourism development, I would like to encourage other tourism researchers to engage in critical tourism research, too. By giving more attention to tourism as social phenomenon, its full capacity as a tool for development is emphasized. More critical research at the grassroots level that aims to unveil ideology and power relations in dominant discourse in Myanmar should be done in order to find and support alternative (social) discourses that challenge the dominant discourses that prevail in the management and governance of tourism. Furthermore, I call for researchers from other parts of this world to engage in critical discursive research in Myanmar using reflexivity in order to gain insight into these issues from different ‘non-Western’ perspectives.

This underlines the idea that tourism should not be assessed just in terms of growth or revenues, but instead according to how well tourism strategies are integrated into and reflect
the holistic – including social, cultural and environmental aspects – development objectives at the grassroots level.

The overall positive atmosphere around tourism at present should be translated into policies and strategies that are tailor made for Inle Lake by the national government in consultation with regional ministries and local NGOs. Emphasis should be on small-scale, locally owned developments instead of focusing on attracting outside investors as these developments will spread the positive effects more widely. Local small and medium-sized businesses should be encouraged with financing agreements by for instance a micro-finance scheme. This includes the local idea of a ‘sharing economy’. Researchers could also support these efforts by examining the benefits such a policy could provide to the community.

Better regulation is necessary in terms of the strategies and objectives set out in the tourism master plan and responsible tourism policy. Regulations should shift the focus on local needs instead of empowering the government and other influential stakeholders to ‘milk’ the industry for ‘tourist dollars’. This could be achieved by following up on the responsible tourism policy with regular assessment and monitoring activities implemented by independent actors such as local and international INGOs. Capacity assessments should be done by these actors and the government should refrain from volume-based tourism strategies and limit tourist arrival numbers according to the outcome of such assessments.

Civil society needs to raise awareness not only directly through for instance workshops at the local level but also through the media (TV and newspapers) for tourism businesses as well as individuals at Inle Lake to adopt responsible tourism practices. These should include not only environmental issues but also social issues such as workers’ rights and land issues. By including the media, the message can be delivered to a much wider group including individuals who would not normally participate in workshops.
3.3.4 Personal Conclusions on the Journey

I’m at the end of my trip and I’m back in Yangon, where the journey also started. As I am speaking to a friend, I learn that now they have a banana boat at a beach in Myanmar that I also visited in the beginning. A banana boat, you know, the ones we see everywhere in the waters around Spain, pulling tourists behind a motorboat, so fast they will fall into the water. For us Europeans this is a sign for the ‘beginning of the end’, for mass tourism as it happened in Spain for instance. But then again, I realize that for the people here in Myanmar this is exciting and new and fun, so who am I, who are we to judge? I smile at this revelation. Maybe this means that towards the end of my trip, I am now able to acknowledge my own positionality, so that now I am able to laugh about my own expectations and better understand the local perspective.

The journey has been very much worthwhile. I have not only had the privilege once again to spend time in such an intriguing country and be part in its rapid (social) developments but I have also learned more about myself as a researcher. This journey has brought me to places way beyond my comfort zone and has allowed me to broaden my horizon as a tourism researcher, boldly facing the challenge of doing something different and completely new to me. For this I am very grateful.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot - Little Gidding, 1942
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### Appendix 1 Five Moments of Qualitative Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moment</th>
<th>Traits</th>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>• Positivist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Objective colonising accounts of field experience</td>
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<td>• Depersonalised accounts</td>
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<td>• Researcher seen as ‘expert’ – their judgement determines the validity of the findings</td>
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<td>• Research findings represented as fact</td>
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<td>Modernist</td>
<td>• Move away from natural science notion that ‘reality is out there’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Attempts to formalise qualitative research and maintain positivistic rigour</td>
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<td>• Interested in ways that people categorise the world and the meaning people place on events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Phenomenology, ethnomethodology, grounded theory</td>
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<td>Blurred genres</td>
<td>• Indistinct boundaries between disciplines</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Recognition of multiple approaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Theories, techniques and approaches mixed and matched, e.g. more creative methods such as photography and advertising used with more conventional qualitative methods, such as participant observation, in-depth interviews and ethnography</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of different theoretical models – feminist, ethics, semiotics</td>
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<td>Crisis in representation</td>
<td>• Researchers knowledge challenged</td>
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<td>• Rigour and generalisability of social research questioned</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reflexivity, embodiment and personal biography of researchers critical</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Recognition of multiple interpretations</td>
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<td>• Questions raised around issues of gender, class, race</td>
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<td>• e.g. what kind of impact embodied characteristics have on the kinds of questions researchers ask and the ways they interpret data</td>
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<td>Fifth moment</td>
<td>• End of grand narrative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Focus on specific delimited local research – seen as a snapshot of a particular time</td>
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<td>• Theories are context specific</td>
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<td>• Authority of the researcher as ‘objective expert’ rejected</td>
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<td>• Researchers voice is one among many</td>
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*Source: (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004)*
Figure 4: International Visitor Arrivals to Myanmar, 2003–2012

Source: (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013)

Figure 5: Visitor Forecasts, 2013–2020

Source: (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013)
Figure 6: Tourism Distribution in Myanmar

In 2012, 17% of all arrivals to Myanmar visited Inlay Lake

Source: (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014)
Figure 7: Tourism Distribution at Inle Lake

Source: (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014)

Figure 8: Growth in International Arrivals to the Inle Lake Region

Source: (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014)
Figure 9: Inle Lake Hotel Zone Map

Source: (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2014)

Figure 10: Inle Lake Hotel Zone Photo

Source: (Uelkes, 2015)
Appendix 4 Interview Transcripts

Tour Guide, Interviewee 1

Age: 30
Residency: 15 years, but before on the lake
Ethnicity: Intha

Tell be about how after school, like how your life went on.

Okay yeah, no problem. So, I started working in about 2003 and then I started working in a hotel. At that time not many tourists, now many but at that time you can’t really see a lot here. 5 or 6 hotels at that time here so in about 2003, I working there for about 3 years and then I went to university.

Which hotel was it?

It’s called XXXX. I worked there for 3 years. I finished university and thought I passed so I resigned from there and went back to the village.

What did you study?

I studied economics.

Okay. In Taunggyi?

In Taunggyi, yeah. And then I tried to make my own living, trying to save the money for 1 year working and then I went to university like 1 month so that 1 month you work 1 year it’s okay.

Okay and in 1 month you graduated?

And then, I studied distance, so then I tried to apply for job at the XXXX Resort in the lake so but there I get in 2006 I started working as receptionist. There I worked until about 2010 and then later I resigned again. So when I was here before is totally different because let’s say for example as the business people, you know the country changed about 2010 so before there is not much hotel or restaurant, just a few so very little. When you calculate you can use your finger, but now you can’t because it’s a lot and also even this time is about 58 hotel only in this town.
From only 4 or 5 hotels 10 years ago.

Yeah. Now you can say almost 10 times, more than 10 times. So of course the tourism also increased, the tourists. So last year we got almost like 3 million tourists announced by the government, this year we expect about 4.5 million. Could be, you can see compared like 1 year you can see like 1.5 millions increasing in number because of the government wanted to change. During that time all my feeling, the tourism has also very bad impact to the land, the price. So let’s say our young people age, now is impossible to get land in town. Because in the former time you would pay 5,000$ for 40 or 60 sqft and then you could still say too expensive, if cheaper we will buy and then now if you say 500,000$ for that, are you kidding. 100 times more. There are a lot of rich people with money, they don’t mind about the price, they come to town to make money from tourists without thinking. And then also a lot of people come here for the tourism, so lots of people catch a job, especially young people. So but you won’t get rich because it’s like serving clients or whatever. Of course it’s good for the economic way for the young people who can then support the family, but when you look at land price it’s not really good.

Yeah okay. So, after school you decided to work in tourism straight away. Why?

There is no choice for you. Let’s say I’m studying economics, but there’s not job for my graduation. Even if you get a job with this economics you have to attend day school, mean like, I study distance but day school is like 6 months a year they attend. So much more than for distance and my parents are not rich like this, only rich people can go to day school like this. Even then they’re not really interested to work in a bank or so only few people who don’t have the, not much money, they go to work in a bank or in a government job. But before the government job was not very attractive but now is like giving power and everybody love the money and power so they go to government job.

Yeah. But for you tourism was the obvious choice?

Yeah I mean at that time normally I don’t have any choice. I’ve got my mother send me to the school so when you live in a village what do you do, farmer or fisherman so when I have the time I go back and spend time with my friends over there and you can see the difference. When you work in tourism it means like lots of money so I wanted to support my family as well and also pay for my education that’s why tried to join in a hotel. Especially, I wasn’t very
interested in tourism in the beginning. Somebody called, sent a message to me that there’s a job. So I said “oh, it’s good” and then I went to work here. I don’t have any related people, I don’t know anybody.

You just got a call, there’s a job and

Yeah and then I came here in 2003. At that time I got like 15 dollars for 1 month.

And free accommodation?

Free accommodation and food you have to by yourself. But I mean at that time 15$ was quite a lot. Yeah if you had 200 MMK you can buy food. And that was only in tourism, so I had a good job. But I mean also saved the money from the tipping from the clients and then we also sold the bottles from beer or water. So we saved. It’s not bad I got income almost like 45 or 50$ with the tips and everything. I could support my family, I could save money for university. After I resigned I tried to get job with XXX [Resort] and that was a bit difficult. They don’t really care about the locality, or local education, they care more about if you’re relative. So let’s say you have somebody related there, you get a job easily. So you need somebody who’s there. At that time, even the education counts. They ask are you graduated or not. If you say no there’s no way for you.

So if you don’t have relatives?

And also if you are not graduated.

Okay.

Because of they don’t want to give you free time when you go to university.

Ah okay.

Because in high season, November and December you have to give service to the client.

So when you started at XXXX [Resort] you already graduated, right?

Eh not yet. I failed the final exam. So at the beginning I wasn’t sure if I should go back or not. So that time I didn’t go but later after 1 year I told them I wanted to go back to university to graduate so they allowed me to go.

Cause you already worked there.
Yeah. I mean in the beginning if you say that, there's no way but you have to be there. When I went there, I said I want a job and they looked at me and said “what do you want to do?” and I said receptionist and they told me that I can get a job at the housekeeping. I said “no, thank you. I want only at the reception”. And they said “okay, you can check with the reception monitor” and then so I went to talk with her and then she said “okay, you speak little bit good English, can you use a computer?” and what is computer, like I mean I always wanted to use it but I hadn’t even touched it then. So I said no and she said “ok, if you can use computer I can give you job”. So “no problem I can learn” and so I came here to learn like 1 month how to use computer.

*Where did you learn that then?*

In town. I came here and I stayed at a monastery because my father sent me to the monastery and I want to continue for the computer study for 1 month and the monk said “oh why not, come”. And the monastery is very helpful for me at that time. I didn’t have any relatives here, either and there you don’t have to pay for the food either, you go to the monk and then you can have for lunch dinner, whatever. No problem.

*How long did you do that?*

I stayed for about 22 days. When I finished the computer I tried to attend a training again, English speaking and so I could go back and say “okay, I can use now”. And then they checked me and at the beginning when you start working there it’s like you have to look at their face like all time. Is their face like smiling or like angry, so you have to be in the front or in the back and you have to be like all the time serving, cleaning, something.

*Always doing something.*

Yeah always doing something, you cannot stand or sit. That’s what it was like in the beginning.

*But there, how much more did you earn?*

At the beginning they pay me only 8,000 MMK for 3 months in the beginning, so also very little but I don’t mind because you know that later when you get the position, they give me like 30,000 MMK. So I worked there almost for about 4 years for 30,000 MMK.

*And did you also sleep there?*
I stayed there, free food and accommodation and at that time I also saved money and most of my friends they have friends and family they have to spend so most of their salary before they finish the end the month, already half month it is all gone because they spend it all. They give some from the money, they spend on drinking, going out, everything. But me I don’t do like this. I have different percent. 25% I give to my parents, 25% I save, 25% I spend and 25% for donation.

*Wow, that’s the economist in you.*

Yeah. So I tried to do like that and most of the time like my friends they come to me and they asked me “can you borrow me some money?” and I always wrote in a book and the problem is when they give me back in time I like it, next time you come back, no problem but when you borrow and you don’t give back I say “no you should not do like this”. We also work in the same hotel you should not be like this. Then I give only one time and then not anymore.

*And at the XXX [Resort] in the beginning, did you get training?*

I got 3 months training, learn more English.

*That’s when you got the 8,000 MMK?*

Yeah at the time and later I get 30,000 and they also give you like service money some tips because you work at the reception you have more chance to work with the client. I mean I’m always willing to learn. I stay never behind, always in front. I don’t want to be all the time, back looking. I mean, in the beginning okay but later when we are 30 or so, you have your own confidence. I mean I believe that I can do much better than them, so I will try to be in front. So I’ve got some respect for like supervisor what they do for you, I always try my best, always in front. So that’s why I’ve got at the hotel only the manager and then they never offered me to be, give, increase salary or different position.

*In those 4 years never?*

No. And then also until the last year they don’t give me. Only in the last year when I decided to leave the owner she offered me, willing to offer me the supervisor position. But I resigned.

*When did you resign there?*

In 2010.
And then she offered you supervisor position?

Yeah. So I say “thank you but I want to go”.

Why didn’t you accept it?

Because I want to be a tour guide and I had to go for the exam. I knew that and I wanted to be fair and so I told them. I mean during the time I worked there, they never sent me to the training to another hotel or another town. A lot of people they get training to Yangon or Mandalay, even to overseas but never me. So but I don’t feel bad because I love to stay here I like it here and I can always stay close with my family so I don’t mind and I don’t even think that I want to go. Because I believe that I can, they promise more than I get. You only get more experience, I worked at reception so I had a lot of contacts so a lot of clients come back. So it doesn’t matter for me. At the time I tried to do the exam but I failed. The guide license is very difficult. So many people do by corruption, you need to pay money to pass the exam. Even you’re good or not you need to pay money. So I cannot get the license, I don’t have the money. I pay just a little.

So you don’t have the license yet?

At the time. So a little later when the country opened, was the right time for me. The country start open and they went for the election and the government started to open the country so a lot of tourists are coming and then at that time there are not many guides who speak English and I wasn’t licensed at that time but I spoke English so they called me, “we need you to be guide” and I said “but I don’t have license” and you know what they said? “We cannot care about a license now. We need to make sure that the client have a guide but you also need to make sure that you know everything.” And most of the information of the lake I already know, I just need to learn the distance and history, a little bit like that and then I tried to become tour guide and the first year I think I earned about almost like 1,500$ for about 3 or 4 months, only a tour guide, but I mean I didn’t work full time. I worked like about like maybe 5 to 10 days a month. One month, I get totally one month full. 30 days all together. One company they keep assigning me all the time and I mean they need a guide so I don’t mind. I like it to be busy so in the time I was always busy and then later when I have chance to go to Yangon I go again and I failed again and I thought to get license is very difficult. You need somebody with a big fish and big pocket, you understand? And I don’t want to do like this. I don’t want...
to do corruption. I only want to do with my qualifying. So later luckily the government were trying to do like regional license so that's good for the young people in the region because we never get a license of you going to I only want to do with my qualifying. So later luckily the government were trying to do like regional license so that's good for the young people in the region because we never get a license of you going to Yangon. There are the Yangon people, they have better English, they know things better, they are with tour company. So for us it's like no chance. Maybe if we ask about 200 people from here maybe 1 or 2 persons can pass the exam. Very little.

*And then they still have to pay?*

Most of them they do. But for me I don't have money to do that so and I don't want. I mean I paid 100$ and of course when I fail they don't give me back my money. So I say okay I make donation, like this. Because I don't want to go and ask the money back. Not good, cause they also thought you would pass. So I don't know, later when I get, we had like 600 people in the exam.

*For regional tour guide?*

For regional tour guide. And I get like number 4. At that time I went for 3 days and I sleep, eat and also study that's it. I tried to answer in writing, for 3 days. Some of my friends thought I had corruption system with them but then I said “look I can swear that, I don't have any corruption”, I tried for 3 days, when you were talking with friends I was sleeping, practicing, I don't do like you, I do like this so I tried to answer and then I get license. And then when you get license, after 2 year you can try to extend license but for now we pay tax to government which is much better for you, I mean also for the government. When you don't have license you don't pay but when you have license you pay tax. So the government gets nothing if everybody fails.

*So with your license you have to pay tax.*

Of course. But it's okay, not too much. I mean the government still get some cash so they can use somewhere so if you don't have license, you don't pay, they all put in their own pocket.

*So they want to have people licensed?*
Yes and it’s good. And now the tour guide you must have license, if you have not, cannot work. That changed. When you see like I have license or don’t have license, I look at your face and I’m feeling safe. If the client doesn’t like you, you’re still safe.

So if he reports you, you mean?

Yeah. So me, even I have license, even if company is not good for me I can go other company. But now I work for one company, already 2 years, feeling good.

For one of the travel companies?

Yeah one of the travel companies.

And you have your own here?

This is my own small office. I already mentioned I don’t wanna be bored. I like to be busy, so when I don’t have job, I’m here. So clients come, we can talk, even some service no problem. I enjoy talking.

Then you do things like, my friends said, like XXXX class but only few people do that?

Yeah I mean when you look at the sign maybe you say “oh it’s difficult” and you don’t wanna do that. You just laugh and that’s it. I mean so I only did with a few people who think it’s possible. And you can make it.

So this office is just to keep you busy to have some?

Normally I don’t earn much money from here, rent is small like 40$ a month. So I also sell XXXX class so if I have 5 clients a month, I can pay for one month so it’s okay. I make money from tourists and I give to this small thing. I’m happy to be here. This is kind of hobby, you know. So and also when I sell XXXX class, I want to make sure that my parents, my family get income.

So you take your clients to your parents’ house?

Yeah. To XXXX class and then they get the money. I’m helping them and then they don’t need to pay money. All the money we make from clients goes straight to the people. So also like boat driver the money, canoe people, all your money support people. If only get me, I would be rich on top and other people are poor and they look at you like this [angry, jealous] and then you feeling bad. Like they are jealous for you or they will attack you or whatever.
So you want to share?

Yeah kind of sharing, is responsible.

Yeah and can you say something about when you compare your jobs from before the country opening up to now, how is your quality of life and standard of living changed?

I think it’s good change. Let’s say before 2010, let’s say, when I get the income, compared to if I come to town I will go to tea shop. I wouldn’t go to a nice restaurant like now, we don’t go there because we know it’s expensive. So now I have a little bit better income so now there is possibility to go there. When I go there, they know me, I’m tour guide so they won’t overcharge me. As you know if they know you are tour guide they will also give some discount so it’s good. Local restaurant is okay, no discount. So the living standard let’s say before, I don’t have, no dream that I have my own land or home. I had my girlfriend but I never think that what time I will get married. Because I had nothing. No motorbike, only slipper like this. So no place to sleep at that time so when you have nothing at your hand, now I have motorbike, bicycle, small land and my own family now. So when I compare, my life started changing 2010 so between this 5 years my life has changed totally. Now I mean if I want to visit to Thailand, I can afford now.

So now you can travel, you have a motorbike.

Yeah exactly so now I don’t need to be worried like “oh I don’t have money” or something. I mean you need money to make more money. Like you make money to money. You cannot talk only, you need to work. Before was okay you can get money but now you need money to get money. So kinda like, a lot of people here they have land and they sell it. Differently they do. So for me it’s totally, I cannot afford and now it’s impossible to buy the land anymore. Because it’s too expensive.

So you are just renting now as well, your house?

No, at the beginning when I come here and I became a tour guide, so I rented small room, 30$ a month, and I lived there like 2 years and then I bought my own land.

So before it increased so much you bought your own land?

Yeah.
Okay.

So even if I selling the land now, I could get profit. But I don’t intend to sell. So you can compare before, I didn’t have any dream and even bicycle and motorbike I can’t afford and now I have, I can buy, it’s possible.

And you can support your family.

Exactly. My parents or my brother, I can create something for them. Like a business. So for me before 2010 I have nothing at all and after 2010 when our country changed, I get motorbike, my own land, bamboo house.

But you had to work for it a lot.

Of course. You don’t get free, but I really thank to the government or military. They are willing to share the power and change the country. That’s why my life can be changed. If they don’t change and keep power, maybe I don’t see you or you can’t come here.

Yeah, probably not.

So it’s a difference.

So that was the starting point? They decided to stop the regime and open up.

Open up and everybody, not only me, also other tour guide, they all get more money. Say a hotel owner, before 1 year they make maybe 50,000$ but now maybe 5 times as much. Fully booked. And people also say now it’s time for investment. So many rich people they never do any business, they don’t save money in the bank because they don’t believe, no hope. Before they have the reason and they lost a lot of money so they don’t put money in the bank and they have a goal. They plan a goal and they save. Then when the country changed, they had the goal and started a hotel. I mean investment. So it’s good for them and the people get a job. But of course the land price and the food price a little bit goes up.

So besides this increased price for land in food, do you see anything else that’s a bit negative about all of this really rapid change with tourism?

I think the tourism changes like, I don’t feel many difference, only the difference is like the let’s say for example. There’s a restaurant at the corner of the market called XXXX, so before is only local people go and now only tourist people go. Because they coming to us, they want
to eat where the Burmese, the local people eat. So we all told people this place very good but
now no local people. Maybe you see 5 %, the rest tourist.

And you think that’s a negative thing?

Yeah, we don’t have space for us.

Prices also increased?

Prices not too much, stayed a little bit the same. But I’m feeling like when you get there they
don’t really appreciate that you come. They look only to the tourists. That’s I don’t like. Of
course it’s good for them, for the business. But I mean for us it’s different.

Anything else?

Let me say, when you buy in the market before I can ask to buy 200 or 500 MMK. But now
they say to me 1000 MMK, some fruit like what we can get before, now, they know that you
are working with tourists so you think that you are making so much money, so that’s why they
ask you more. Of course it’s good for them, you’re making a life with tourists but you still buy
for yourself. Anyway tourist business, they think you have more money and charge more. So
that’s not good. So but I also have my own secret way, when I buy something, I don’t speak
like I come from another region, I speak local dialect and then they know I’m from here.

So when they hear you are from another place, they know you work here in tourism and then
they charge more?

Yeah, I mean if I speak the local dialect, doesn’t matter. Then it’s fine. When you speak like
you are from another place, maybe they ask you 300 MMK before, but then 500 MMK.

How many years have you lived here?

In 2000 I came to town for my education at that time, parents would give you 200 MMK, that’s
what you can spend for one week. For now, 200 MMK, you can buy only one tea or something.

Value of the money is also different now. Feeling that it decreased. And of course now I mean,
the people think that now we can do better, it’s also different now. When I opened this office,
people would ask “what do you do? You will lose a lot of money” but now when they look,
they are like “oh you have the office, you will make a lot of money” so totally different. Before

Kommentiert [KT30]: ECONOMIC GROWTH
Tourism takes up all the space, social space also for local people because businesses want to cater to tourists as they pay more money

Kommentiert [KT31]: DECENT WORK
Tourism reputation = a lot of money
when you opened a shop they thought you will lose a lot of money. Now when you open the shop, they will say “oh you will earn a lot of money”.

So, like...

Mentality also...

The mentality towards business is different.

Very different yes.

Thank you so much for your time. It was really interesting.

I mean in the village is totally different. If I stayed in the village I would be farmer or fisherman. Now I live in town, I don’t drink alcohol or anything, even beer, just little. I cannot stay friends. In the village I can stay friends sometimes when I don’t have job but here I can visit to my friends.

So you like it here better?

Yeah. Honestly I like to be in town.

Also here like the perspective for you for employment is better than on the lake, no?

Yeah. I don’t want to be a farmer or fisherman, it’s too hard. Not an easy life.

So you think as tour guide is also easier job?

Honestly, I don’t think tour guide is easy because you don’t want clients to be mad. Sometimes clients are difficult and I don’t want to feel like it’s too easy but we have responsible for that everything goes well and then because they give you the money so you have to make sure that they enjoy it. And but I don’t want to be tour guide my whole life.

What do you want to do?

I think I want to be guiding for 10 years and later I want to have my own guesthouse. That’s my dream because with guesthouse I want to do with my friend on the lake in my village. About 5 rooms, and then clients will have chance to go with their own canoe with someone who speaks English to go and visit a local family home. They can go and see exactly how they’re living and how they cook and even if you want to join dinner for them, just go. Even if it’s
better for me if they eat at my place but I want to share the money to the village but I will tell them that it has to be safe and clean for them, that’s it. I mean a lot of people will get different idea.

That’s the thing, cause now if you wanna stay on the lake it’s 300$ a night and so you have to stay in Nyaung Shwe if you don’t have that money. If you have a nice little guesthouse that would be great.

But problem is government don’t allow to build a hotel.

Maybe in a few years.

I don’t think so because they say lake gets smaller and sewage gets in the water. I mean it’s the same, now you see less water level. I just worry now that it will happen like 2010 because then not even 1m is in the middle of the lake.

And why do you think that is?

Because of hydropower. So this year I worry that we have that problem. I don’t know what the government will do for this. We need somebody who make sure that water come whole year round to the lake and that’s why we need good impact for the lake. I don’t know if someone can supply water for the lake all year round. I mean not in rainy season, in summer we need help to get the water. Especially now. March till June then it’s okay. I don’t ask money for me now, I can live well, I ask money for the lake. I just want to be in middle class, better living. Now I want to do something about the lake but with the money that I have it’s not possible.

You also want to keep your standard of living of course.

Yeah yeah. I hope that one day, I mean the government should think. One year, we have problem with water in the lake in the summers, so we should think of something to do. They say they donate 2.6m dollars. They say they do some project but they don’t show you, I don’t feel it. Better not to give money straight to government. Maybe let’s say you came to invite people who can do good thing for the lake but you need to know how much time you can give. I could work quite focused for 2 months for the lake. And I would pay you little money and the rest we all spend for the lake. Now I give to you, you give back to me, I give to you, why can’t we share for the lake? So even INGO, not good, just some. In the beginning is big but when
you come to the bottom is like 1 drop. Just got the bottom and do it. Don’t start at top. Go from bottom to top. Like politics, you have to start from the bottom, like in Myanmar is top to ground. Your people choose government, here the top chooses.

You think this year is different?

I mean I don’t expect to get just 1 person only. I’m sure like 40 I mean 50 or 30 percent. Maybe if NLD win, 40 or 45%, the rest like 30, 35% current government will win. They also have their own people. Somebody like you, like me, is different. There’s no people who like both.
Local Restaurant Owner, Interviewee 2

Age: 61

Profession: Math teacher – tailor/designer – restaurant owner

Ethnic group: Shan

Length of residency: 61 years

2001 until 2010 I ran the tailor shop. Ehh, 2010 I lost it, the government owner closed the construction and stopped our shop, so 31st March is eeehh...

That’s the day that you lost the shop?

Yes. So 2010, 31st March is eh we take off our building and then all bring, all clothes, all articles and including the construction we bring to my home because my home is near here. So all we take to our home and then I cry and then I cannot find, I cannot open my shop. So 2010 eh, 3 months later, March, April, May, June, July. July is eh the XXXX Road now I think it’s a massage shop is, first I borrowed that, my friend in front of the eehh the near the road, so my building is a big building is I built a small building and then we opened.

The shop again?

Small shop.

Ah, okay.

And then I opened, at that time many foreigners come, I was sewing, I draw designs and I sewing the new design and many foreigner come but some foreigner 3rd time, 4th time, 5th time is you know, they are very sad for me. Because big shop to small shop now.

Of course.

So, 2 foreigner is 5 years, 5 times. They come from Australia, so the old woman searched me, so they see me, my body is very slim and I cry so much. She is eh, she when, she hugged me. She want to buy more little dolls, eh 2,000, eh 200,000 MMK.

She bought?

She bought. She give me 200 Dollar. First time she come and she asked me “your business okay?, no, I need money. So, eh, “okay I will give her 200 dollar, you will return many dolls”, so I’m doing my work one week and then okay. So, many foreigner has helped me.
foreigner is, you know, feed me, so I opened the, eh, I think the 1.5 years later in my home the youngest, my youngest brother dead. My brother is suffocating cancer, here [points to her chest]. Smoking, drinking, so he cannot swallow the drinking is okay, eating is not, so I go to Taunggyi and then when he get check-up, so the x-ray show here [points to chest again], a suffocating, you know, big....

*Tumor?*

Yes, so the swallowing the eating cannot, so the daughter go to Yangon and Mandalay and surgical. We have not enough money. Money is too much. Because here [points to chest] is surgery, so we have not enough money. So, but I tell my brother, it’s okay, it’s okay, you will, eh, if I will sell my home, you will be good. But eh, my home is not eh, can’t sell. So, my brother is eh, 9 months later, after 9 months, dead. In times, many rich people come and wanted to buy but [my house] my brother is, fell down the bed, so someone did not buy. I want to sell my building and save my brother.

*But in the end you didn’t sell?*

Yes, because nobody bought. And then my brother dead. After my brother is October 2010, he is dead. So my family, only my husband, my son, only 3 people. So we decided we, because many foreigners come, October my brother dead after the festival, the Tagu festival, 3 Buddha image in pagoda, so during that time many foreigner come. Some foreigners looked for me. But I cannot sell in my shop because my brother funeral. And then after I cannot open the shop because of the shop is, you know, I cannot enough money because I use for my brother for medicine and then for the funeral and then Myanmar culture is, you know, when people dead, all people celebrate, all people and the eh 5 months or 9 months is invitation in my home, Buddha speech together. My brother life is eh one eh good for donation. So I use, I have nothing, so I decide my home to sell. So we discuss. My home is inside, outside is my neighbor home. My neighbor is, you know, very greedy. He sell and run away. So left only me, I cry, because together sell is better you know, price is better, you know. But eh, only one selling and gone, left me but I decide I will sell next time the rich people want to pay. He need my ground. So I think the December 2013 is my neighbor ground is sold. Many foreigner come. Some foreigner my friends, look for me, they cannot find me.

*Because you didn’t have the shop anymore.*
Yeah, yeah. So, my shop stopped. Take off. Second time take up.

Because of government?

No, not government. Nyaung Shwe people. Nyaung Shwe people, my friend is greedy. Yeah. He want to take more money. I have no money, so I cannot increase, you know. So I, prices are up and I can’t pay. You know, last year, many July is saved for my life. July is the rich people, the people who bought my neighbor ground. They come in and discuss me and my husband is "no, no", because my husband, because I born here, went to middle school, highschool, teacher life, traditional dress shop and then I born my son. Now life is eh, 59 years here. So I sell but my husband is "no, no".

Don’t sell.

In times, some friends is coming and advice. Your building is very big. Preparation and then foreigner is you know, 10,000 MMK is they come because water is very good water and then building is big building but not enough. No I can’t borrow nothing. So we decide if I open here, my son is bakery here. Because of the ground, here, beside this house can build bakery. At time my son is not tell, he want to bake and not tell nothing. He went to ADG bank, so one year, 200,000 MMK is okay. So I think he will do long time, so okay. So I sold in July but the rich people is very greedy. First period, July is give 400, I sold for 120,000,000 MMK. But first, July 400,000 paid me. So I sold my home and then October 350,000 and then November 300,000. So 1050 and then 100,000 take, you know, long time. I cry, I call telephone and I request more time. I have big home, I use motorcar because I have bad knee and then I will go to Taunggyi for doctor and then I had more debt because I give, give, then donation and then eh, the end is we have 250,000 so now I use all for this restaurant. But I’m fine and then many foreigner come in and I’m selling this time, many foreigner come, so I decide I will do good for foreigner, because many foreigner did kindness to me. I’m not fine, my heart is a problem, I fell down, they come in and they see, you know, many dresses hanging here, so they want to buy, only bag, but you know, my face is changed, so then I’m patient, so he want to buy one, but he is 1,2,3 all foreigner helped me.

So you’re happy about the fact that more tourists come?

Yeah yeah, happy. I can buy many things now. My life is long time, now still. Now is better. Today I’m not fine. The weather is hot, helped my son cooking, fire is hot.
So you’re exhausted.

Yeah, but I’m happy.

With the bakery and how life has changed

Yeah, now my son is baking, you know. We borrowed construction. 1 year ago. And then the bakery teacher course, studying. I studied with teacher. Well, my son but then all people studied. Teacher come to teach my son, my son studying, but I learned, too. I can do many things. I borrowed money for training and then oven, kitchen instrument, is you know, also borrowed. 3 freezer very expensive, too much. We used too much. I used the money from the house. I take off all money from account for restaurant. But good. September, October, November, December, January, February, good. But not collected. Now studying and baking, sometimes, all we use is very expensive from Yangon. This year, my husband and me decide, this year is studying year. Many foreigner is okay. I ask “coffee okay?, burger okay? Sandwich okay?” So we are learning. Many foreigner advise me. So studying time I use and I satisfied. Next year I will collect money and put into account. Soon I’ll be old. I will be patient, I will die. Important is my son is next 2 or 3 years is marry time. Every night I think, last year I sell, you know, his pay is you know. Give is, I have all enough, but he is first, second, third, one year, 2 months ago and sold registry to government. Registry is last. So I feeling rich people pressed me. Because this year all up.

The house prices?

You know, last year 1200, this year 2300. So other people is well done. I have eh you know, my mind is enough, my lucky is enough but good for my son. Now my son is first year, you know....

Opening the restaurant

Yes, opening the restaurant. Is okay. First open restaurant, next year too late. Good I decide. Sometimes I’m here and I look and here is my life. Primary school I go, middle school, high school. Everything here. 59 years. So sometimes I feeling. My mind is I decide, is good, some people tell me, selling is okay, my lucky is good. This restaurant is my lucky. Now is summer, but I will do my son is slowly and steady, we eat little, we cannot waste, my son is not used more money, only little. So, summer season is, you know, winter season is okay.
Is better?

Yes, is better. Because this home owner is you know, we have this home, this building including all, they live in Yangon. They discuss other company and then they will build the hotel so I will prepare another shop. I will borrow. They want to take, in August I finish paying money. August is finished. Now March, April, May, June, July, August. 5 months. During these 5 months, I look for ground not outside, because many foreigner pass through here, now March and April I look for the ground. I borrow 1 year or 3 years more and then small, I will build and I will use again next money. This money now is not enough.

And then you want to open your clothing shop again or another restaurant?

Restaurant. But restaurant I will open together with dress shop.

That's a nice idea.

Yeah, cause you know, many foreigner are interested in going to a tailor shop. Some find me, some don't find me. So I decide this. I will now look for ground. Many ground is you know...

Is expensive, no?

Yes, very expensive.

So that is one of the bad things about this change of many tourists coming so that prices are going up?

Yeah. Food is not expensive. Many foreigner they come in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia. Many foreigner tell me that Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand is very cheap, only Myanmar is very expensive. Hotel and everything. Some have very interesting design. They come here and drink coffee, I see the bag and how much is, where did you buy? 2 dollar or so in Thailand, very cheap. Here prices higher, one people come and hanging the shopping bag. I can do design, but 7,000 MMK, oh my god. The price is 7,000 MMK is more expensive. I can make 3000 MMK. And then your group use white color and design.

Ah yes that was me.

Yeah that design is easy. I can do many bag, And then handmade, sell 7000 MMK very expensive.
So, prices are higher than in Thailand. But do you actually benefit from this, from all the tourists spending their money here?

We always sew dress, scarf, hat, bag. I want to sew. New shop together with my dress shop. Foreigner like my design.

**Why don't you have clothes in here?**

No, all simple is better. Outside is too dusty for clothes. I will use white color but with dust not nice. Everything dirty. So here is many dust. I want to have shop inside. With room decoration that looks like clothes, all traditional, many foreigners say very good, take photo. If I have 1 shop, I can do more bags, hats, dress. I draw design and I cut and my husband is helping cutting. I have many hat designs, for men and women with flower and is very nice. I have 10 designs. I can copy and make many. But many souvenir shops now sell hats, first design was me!

*Then they copied?*

Your foreigner and student and you know, important the visitor, I can tell that my mind is feeling. I draw design and sew and hang in my shop. Many people come in and buy many and sometimes when people wear the hat at Inle Lake, Inle business people is see and copy and then my design not unique. I cry, I cannot. So I make more design. Also I can make purse, handbag, small purse, and I can do everything.

*Did you learn that from your mother? Or where did you learn?*

Yeah, my auntie is you know, special tailor. Shan chief lady tailor. When I was very young, my auntie is long time the Shan chief lady and the daughter dress is from England. You know, design from catalog. At times I very young, I cannot see. But the leader, give my auntie and then see the catalog. Because we are university student after design. And see the dress and design and sewing. So my teacher is my auntie. Long time. And then we are middle and high school our school has one course is sewing. Myanmar girl will use for business, how to make sewing. Now no, nothing. So I can do everything.

*But before you opened the shop you were a teacher, right?*

Yes, high school teacher. I finished university in 1979. 1980 is I'm mathematics high school teacher in Inle Lake. And then I will go to Yangon or Mandalay and I will study the 1 year, I will
do the high school government teacher, but in my home, my father is not fine, my auntie is not fine. My mother dead. So my auntie is you know, tailor, long time. High pressure, so I cannot go away. So in my home opened my private student class. Special class. School teaching is not enough, mathematics is difficult, only in English, not translate Myanmar. So, me happy because I’m university student finish, mathematics special, so the government change education is high school, final is mathematics is English, so I’m happy. I want to open in my home, a big home, downstairs have class. 10 years or 20 years ago, I start. Because many people love me. And I’m patient so they come, special class is morning 2 sessions, evening 2 sessions. External is not good, don’t go to school. So they came to me, together with English teacher. So together we had school. English and biology, me mathematics, chemistry and physics. My special. Not difficult for me. So here in Nyaung Shwe many graduated people, are my students. Hotel owner daughter. I also did home teaching.

And why did you then change from teaching to clothing shop?

Teaching is you know, you need blackboard with chalk and then many class, and I was writing the English mathematics, translate first, then formula, then calculations. Dust and writing, I think respiration is dangerous. Then my heart is problem. Long time. 1981 to 1998 I taught. Married my husband in 90, many student come to celebrate and then I born one year stop. I born my son. So very tired. So I born my son 22 years ago and in my home I taught him every year. But then heart and respiration is problem. Sometimes I fell down, in class, students carried me to taxi and called to Taunggyi. Specialist doctor told me to stop teaching. Change business.

And so you did

Yes. My husband is economist team management, but salary is low, I’m teacher long time, one student 100 MMK. Benefit price. July, June is started school. They come and many mother come and 2 sister, then 1 sister free. And poor people is free. 80 people in class, I take money is half of that. But enough for my family. I’m happy. In Taunggyi, many friends are rich, they tell me “you are very stupid”

For not taking more money?

Yeah, you can’t give money, more money and then also give for free. You Nyaung Shwe people is very stupid. But no, no. My hobby! I want to teach is hobby. My son grow up, I will teach my students...
son, because I patient but then cannot teaching. The heart is medicine is expensive but I tell many foreigner who come and order, so I tell if you want to buy nothing, you will order me, I have not enough, if you want to buy, I will use money good. Nyaung Shwe people don’t understand me, foreigner people understand me. So I say thank you to the world people. The world people is food and take medicine. I can take more medicine so I can survive. So teacher life is my hobby but tailor is my life. Now restaurant is for my son.

That is really, the true my life.

Thank you so much for sharing it with me.

Yeah, I sell my building because many Nyaung Shwe people is you know, I need money, some is rich people is my friend, some is my students. They think I borrowed money, no! My husband family, rich, family and sister think I would be begging, but no, I will sell my building. Now my son is good every day. We are happy, we have enough.
Travel Agency, Interviewee 3

Age: 36
Residency: 12 years, before village
Ethnic Group: Intha

So you know, just start maybe after school, just tell what you did and how did you come to today. You know, what has brought you here?

Maybe you can ask me, I need a question, that’s why.

So have you lived here in Nyaung Shwe all your life?

No, I’m not from here. I’m from the mountains in Shan State in the east side of the lake but when we was a little child, 7 or 8 years, we moved to a village about 5 km from here.

When you were 8 years you moved to here?

When I was married I moved to here. Around when I was 18. When I was married I moved to here. Before I moved to here, I worked here in a restaurant and during I working because I’m trying also studying. And then also but before I was teaching in the school, when I was finished my highschool. In my village they don’t have teacher for teaching to the children so I go there for 3 years and then also my husband he do for guiding and also he go with the foreigner, sometime he come for donations so we met each other. When we met then we moved when we married, then I moved to here. Actually we stayed about 5 km from the village but during my teaching in the mountain when I married, I moved to here, I studied, I worked in the restaurant, making the juice or salad.

Okay but before you were a teacher.

Finished when I was married. And then I studied the languages from my husband cause he was languages teacher and tour guiding he teaches English, French and Japan. I studied English from him for tourist guiding. Then when I was doing tour guide I wasn’t in the restaurant, I stopped, but sometimes I still worked there, sometimes I just go for the guiding. 5 years, this town is about 2004, 2005.

You came here?

Kommentiert [KT47]: DECENT WORK
Already involved in tourism before. No official training or license, just learning by doing from husband.
Yeah, the end of 2004 in August I came here and then I studying for guiding I studied 5 years, but 5 years does not mean all year, I also studied and I had the baby. So sometimes I go to university with the small children.

*What did you study?*

I studied in Taunggyi law. But I’m not finished, I just studied first year, second year and then I’m not studying anymore. I mean I have plan because my second child my son is, he was born in 2010, I mean I stopped then for some years and then I planned on studying again. Finish my study but life is change, because my husband passed away so everything changed, I’m not studying anymore, I’m not guiding anymore. Just living my here, to take care of my children and then I give information, arrangement, tour for the first time I just go for guiding so not so experienced for organization. Sometimes a little bit complain with the foreigner. Not foreigner, between guide and the driver.

*What do you mean there, for example?*

For example, like, when they book the tour some people, is not their fault is not our fault, is misunderstanding each other, this is a big problem in my life because the one lady, from England but she is old so she came here but she very nice, she came here, she booking the tour, everything with me, at the beginning when she was here, but she came in rainy season, around in October, no August. Then she booked the tour everything and then I made the receipt but then she didn’t read the receipt because this is big problem, best experience for my work you know. So, and I’m writing the receipt. Actually she need to go to Yangon to take her flight back home because in this time we don’t have international flight in Mandalay, you must go to Yangon and then she says sharing taxi. But normally we don’t have sharing taxi to Yangon so only to Mandalay and Bagan. I told her that it’s possible to Mandalay, that time before the election in Myanmar so the road is very bad, the car is not comfortable, so she prefer to go with the taxi.

To Yangon?

Actually she has to go to Yangon but she asking me Mandalay that’s why I made the reservation to Mandalay because she decided at 10, and then around 10:30 she came here and then she said “why I go to Mandalay, I have to go to Yangon, tomorrow I have my flight tomorrow, I have to take my flight so what did you arrange for me?” Because it’s not my fault,
she asked me and then in the receipt it says Mandalay, for Wednesday what time and then amount, how much. And “look this is the receipt, I’m not cheating you, it’s not my fault” and she signed and we had an agreement about this everything. And I didn’t know how to do it, because she has to leave tomorrow that’s why she must leaving today, like tonight because...

“I don’t want to miss my flight so you have to buy my flight ticket”. Because the flight ticket at that time is about 85$. But 85$ at this time the rate for 85$, 1$ is like 1,200 MMK, that’s a lot money. But the flight ticket is 85$, “you must buy the flight ticket for me”. Oh, my head is like this, I don’t know how to do this, I said “no, no I can’t buy flight ticket for you because if I buy the flight ticket, 85$ and then she needs to take the flight by car, it’s about 15$, so it would be 100$, it’s a lot of money! And then because I already arranged the car and lose the money for the car and then if I also buy the flight ticket, lose, not my fault. I said “I give you...we cancel the trip to Mandalay, but actually have to pay for this to Mandalay and then I’m not charging for you this, but I cannot buy flight ticket for you. Option is you can buy the flight by yourself then I can give you free taxi. So she agreed. If not, I don’t know how to do it. This is the only way I can do it.

This is the big experience, the big problem in my life. I mean not in my life but during this business. Because I worked many business, because in life you don’t know the future, sometimes you want to do but you can’t or sometimes you don’t want but you have to. When I was a kid I wanted to be a teacher but after I married, I tourist guide but now I stay in the office, I go, I arrange for tour for travelers, but it’s a good job for me because before and now is almost the same. The difference before the election in Myanmar, not many tourists but in this time, in this town, only about 32 hotels, and only 5 travel agencies. It’s good business because you can just sit, arrange the tour and when you get the money you sharing with your partner like the boat driver, the trekking guide or the taxi driver and then I can take care of my children. But after the election big changes. Change means, stable for us, also good for everybody after election. Most of the people, you know we are a town and the city is like for the tourists you know, everywhere you see after election we have many new hotel, many new travel agency, and in this time is not easy to get the customer.

So many, like saturation.

Yeah but the difference is we got the customer from recommended, when people leave from Myanmar, they tell people “you should go to this place, this place, this place”, like
recommended my place so I still have many customer. Is good, you know. And after election, it means good is means, ehm, many tourists, every people, is good for every people. Even the horse cart or the car or the taxi or the market who is selling the vegetable and so on. Normally the vegetable, most of is used for hotel and restaurant, this is dependent on tourists. If there are no tourists, if there are no foreigner, who would be buying for this? For everybody is good. Most of the local people, we don’t hire a car, just motorbike or pick-up truck and the taxi is very expensive for us. It’s just for tourists, also when you go down to the boat jetty, the boat station, many many boat there, but only Myanmar people they won’t go to the lake, maybe only for the foreigner. When the tourist came here is good for everybody but we so scared for about the future if more and more tourists maybe change. Change is means, we like change and more improving and more opening than before but we might lose our traditional, our culture, you know.

Do you already see changing now, the traditional culture?

Yeah, hmm, not already change because this is very small town. Because of this is Buddhism country, people are very nice, very friendly here in Myanmar but we don’t want to, if the tourists are coming more and more and more changing maybe they are not friendly, just money money, we don’t want to be like this. We want the tourists came here but we don’t want to lose out traditional culture. And then most of the people, they always, like cocky you know, maybe like Myanmar people they are not wearing the traditional clothes anymore, they are wearing European style, but it is for every day, for every people is okay, but when we have like special day and we go to monastery or to the Buddha, we go with traditional skirt and shirt.

And for you, like when you think of back before the elections and now compared. How, what do you think about quality of life and standard of living, through all the foreigners coming here. Has that changed for you as well, like now with more tourists here, has the quality of life because of more income or something improved?

For me is not so big change. Same but here is more pollution, more busy, more noisy. It’s a problem. 3 years ago here, nobody come, no motorcycle, everybody used horse cart or trishaw and was very quiet. Now is around 5 or 6 very busy. Very traffic and maybe in 2 or 3 years maybe like Yangon I don’t know.
Traffic jam all over.

[laughing] yeah yeah. In early February 2013, there were not enough room.

Oh yeah that was when the tourist boom was.

Yeah yeah, maybe tourists had to sleep in monastery because everywhere was full, full, full. But now it's opposite. Because many people think, good business to build a hotel but now we see many new hotel, it's too much. Now, more than 60. Many hotel with few customer, the share. Many building in high season all is full. Almost. But not all. It's not finished, some hotel still building. In 2012, because election is 2011, so 2012, 2013 is many many tourists that's why now we have many new hotel and guesthouse. And the price if we compare 2013 and now is cheaper or accommodation. Used to be 30 or 50$ for a normal room but now is maybe 10 or 15$.

And in 2012 and 13 is was much higher?

Yes. Much higher. Even, only accommodation but is good for the bus travelling. Before the bus to Yangon, one in the midday with the old highway it take about 19 hours, you arrived Yangon around 6 in the morning and the bus didn't come here, no pickup. When you buy the bus ticket, you must go to the junction by yourself and then find the bus.

In Taunggyi?

No, in Shwe Nyaung. But now many new bus coming and they try more good quality because they need customer. So now they have to be good quality and they bring you to hotel. So now bus is very nice. Even Bagan to here is better now. Before the tourists always say “the most horrible bus us Bagan to here”. The road was very bumpy and the mini bus can only take 18 people but fit about 25 or 30 people. All sweaty, smoking on the bus, sometimes you have to carry your backpack in your leg. Very dusty, very bumpy. But now it all changed because the new government, the new president he fixed everything. So today the new road from here to Yangon now is only 11 or 12 hours, even to Mandalay. Not bumpy also we have VIP bus now. Also flights, we have many new flight company, so the price is not very big change but for accommodation is still higher. This means that when European people they travel to Asia, if they came to Myanmar first, they will say very cheap, nice and beautiful for sure but very cheap they think but when if they already travel to Asia like Thai, Cambodia, Lao, Vietnam, then when they came to Myanmar they say is very expensive.
Especially value for money, no?

Yeah. Because the city is not ready to welcome too many tourists. But it’s very quickly between 2013 and now, it’s you know, in 2011 only 800,000 tourists in Myanmar, but this year they expect 5,000,000. Too many, too quickly. Now is 2015. Between 2015 and 20 we guess the tourists will come 7,000,000 maybe more. Last year more than 3,000,000.

But I think that’s an issue. The officials they count also the visa runs, the business visa, the day travelers so in the end what they did is they counted entrance tickets to Shwedagon Pagoda and because everybody who is going to Yangon is going to see Shwedagon Pagoda, and then those figures for 2014 were only 600,000 so then it’s not included the day visitors and business travelers. So I think the figures are not as high as they claim.

I think next year more and more tourists. New houses that’s why. But we love opening and we like more improving. The difference is we don’t want to lose our culture. Like I saw many foreigner they talking about who came here 5 years ago, 10 years ago and they changing. He was here about 20 years ago and he went to the opening of the bridge in Mandalay and he says “how, what happened?” “The lake, what happened? I came here 10 years ago, this is for sure the same lake?” he said. Because now there was nowhere. Many pollution went to the lake and now small and many people walking, bus so change. Then he said “I don’t want to come back Myanmar. Maybe next 3 or 4 years, no more lake” he said. Also I met a lady, she from Germany or England. She came for 3 times already. 10 years ago and the other time before the election, 5 years ago. And then when she came 5 years ago. When she came Myanmar, she always bought the Longgyi, she always walk with Longgyi and I asked why. She said that because Myanmar people they are changing, she said she went to Pagoda and monastery and the ladies they are wearing with short pants and scarf, they go to pagoda and when she was in Inle Lake inside of the cat monastery, we have very old stupa and then the foreigner they not respect but it’s not their fault because they don’t know about the Buddhism. Someone in Myanmar should respect culture. But even the Myanmar, wearing short and taking photo in front of Buddha and then tourist think it’s okay like that but actually it’s not. Only from far away. But not short and I mean anywhere else you can wear like that but not when you go to monastery or pagoda. About this situation everybody is talking right now every pagoda write in English, like no blouse, no short, no socks, then they know, you know. Because most of the foreigner they are not same culture with us, completely different
so the Myanmar people they should not do it and they should have explanation for this. If you are real Myanmar people and guiding the foreigner please give explanation to guest how to go to pagoda. But some Myanmar people, not following the rule that’s why some foreigner they think it’s the same. Even last time in Mandalay in the pagoda on top of the hill, they writing no shoes but the Myanmar people they go with their shoes. And the Chinese people you know, not very good. They take the shoe to the pagoda and then “hey hey hey, no shoe no shoe.” Because they saw in the front a guy who was with the show, Myanmar people. And then I said “no no no, you should explain to local people first and then say the guy from Asia give explanation. I asked “you sure you are Myanmar” he said “yes” and I said “you can’t read”, “No I can read” so I said at pagoda they write in Myanmar you cannot wear shoes, in English as well and then the foreigner they said sorry. Before in the villages the people when they go to monastery but now they leave in the floor. Before when they just enter the monastery at the gate, they have to take off their shoes and then most of the lady should go with longyi and scarf. But now is different.

*What do you personally think about it? That change?*

It’s not good but everything is changing. Even some people if they do like similar like European thing, people say “you are crazy” so everywhere is freedom, Democracy is democracy but it’s not the same. Big change, like many investor came, too. They come with lot of money they buy the land and for local people is very very bad so that’s bad change, for local people is very difficult to find rent and house, because price is so high. This is very important. Only after the election here, the land price much higher. Crazy. After 2010 because of the price when the Chinese people came here they pay a lot of money to buy land. Normal salary in Myanmar is between 30 and 70,000 MMK per month but land price is much higher, so how do they buy land for home. If no family, no rich then you can’t own the land. Very bad thing.

*[So that’s the worst thing about this opening up of the country?]*

Yes, the higher to buy the land. The same in Yangon to rent a house is very expensive. Too much. Only few house to rent but many people want to rent, Myanmar middle class and many foreigner to work but the price is more and more and more and more.

*And you have to pay 1 year in advance.*
Yes. For example want to change for business and is very difficult because now the people who have a house to rent for shop, they know price is very high so they want more and more.

So you want to change location?

Yes, maybe I have to change that’s why. It’s from my husband’s family. If he stay alive okay but he is not here anymore so I want to be on my own. Not big house but my own small place. To rent, to buy is very expensive but the price for rent a bicycle is always the same, so don’t get more money, maybe little more cause more tourists but not enough. Big problem for local people.

Inflation, also for food?

The food is okay, not a problem. Just the land, big problem.

And can you maybe tell me about, you say you’ve been here since 2005, so you rally lived through this change of Nyaung Shwe because 2005 there were only few hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and suddenly 2010, 11 all the investors came. Can you tell me about that time? Can you tell me about, like what you thought about it, suddenly all these people coming, everything changed so quickly, from one day to the next. Can you tell me about that time?

Like this hotel in front, before nothing here. Yeah yeah, it changed something, can use the Wifi of the hotel. [laughing] something like this I can’t explain what really changed for me.

You know, elections were over and suddenly many people coming. Was it that sudden, or people coming slowly?

No, suddenly.

And then? How was that for you?

Very suddenly. But for us is okay. For us is, just arranged the tours, so it’s okay for me. I get more customer, I get more income from this.

And so also your standard of life also improved.

Yes, little bit. Tourists coming is improved for us. Before I did not have mobile phone, motorbike, nothing and I can travel also every year. Before, no. Big change for me. Now I own mobile phone, motorbike. After 2011 only. But more pollution, more noise and higher prices.
When you change something, you change many things. Impossible to have only good thing for the change also bad thing.

But bad thing you say has nothing to do with business, because income is good. But pollution and prices.

Yeah a little bit we don’t want to lose our tradition and culture. A good thing is we have more tourists, more income. And then also we have, I know more general knowledge from the foreigner. I see here in high season more than 50 tourists in one day, they ask information and I got friends and they came here and we can exchange each other our information. They give me ideas because I started to arrange tour and information, just Inle Lake map, but now with ideas, better explanation and photos and I explain where we go and then put photo in the wall. Advertising about the car and tour. I get ideas. Even I made this sign it’s also idea from foreigner. Hotel Remember Inn for example in the room you can see the mountain but now few meters away a new hotel soon coming and the view will be worse. Change with more tourists is good for something but also bad for something. We have to accept for this. If you don’t open for tourists. No, it’s good for everybody. Just pollution and culture, the difference is good for everybody. When they come to book the boat tour, I can’t drive boat I can’t go for guiding so I have to pay for boat driver, guides, sharing the money, it’s sharing, good for everybody. People who work in farm they got only 2,000 MMK for morning till evening, no lunch and now they got 3,000 MMK per day. Before most of the young people, between they finish their school they don’t have extra money for university so some people now when we have many hotel, start work in a hotel, so you can work there, more money. Maybe here the same as Thailand, hopefully not. If you have too many people, after they stop to walk, they just stay for the photo. It’s maybe dangerous. Finding the middle way is hard. If government don’t take care of this, it’s bad. Only investor have the power, more about money. They don’t live here, don’t live here and take away money, they don’t care about the pollution. Government has to regulate. They don’t care about problems.

Can I just ask you one last thing? You came here 2005 and then you worked in a restaurant. Was that as a waitress?

Like the waitress, my husband’s family they opened a restaurant so in the daytime if I have customer I go for the guiding, in the night time I work in the restaurant.
Okay.

Then I can, I get experience from them and can learn more and more and more. Best teacher is experience.

*Also the tour guiding, you didn’t have training just experience.*

Yes, my husband he teaching for me and then one two times then I go by myself.

*When did you open this place?*

This shop we open around 2006. After 1 year, then he teaching for the guiding but when he passed away, I just stayed here.

*Now you’re the only owner?*

Yes, the only owner. I run everything by myself.

*Is licensed?*

Not licensed but we pay taxes. So official but not license.

*Thank you so much for sharing!*

.....

You know, here they also build the hotels like high rise. Do you like that? What do you think about that change?

For me is not so special. Doesn’t matter. First problem is to get money and pay for children, not to think about pollution or buildings.

*You have to accept it just?*

Yes. The price to pay. But even if government say oh too big house, not beautiful, now it’s already standing so it’s too late. Must happen before all the change. They make a new law, like building a hotel, if you don’t pay tax, you can’t build hotel. So now if you pay for the tax, you can continue building. But here is different, not so big. Many people like Myanmar because little change for many years.

*Kommentiert [KT70]: ECONOMIC GROWTH/RESPONSIBLE*

Physical changes no problem, bad things price to pay, now is too late to change anyways. Soon maybe image of “new destination” gone and then?
Snack Shop Owner, Interviewee 4

71 years old
Residency: 21 years (before Inle Lake)
Ethnic: Intha

Thank you very much. So I would like to know about your life. How it has developed over the last years. Maybe the last 10 years, can you tell me about your life?

Last 5 years ago they broke down their business. They work a tomato shop. That business is very easy to break. Most of the tomato shop workers are sometimes, when they break down their business they lose everything, their home or something like that. So they have many debt to another business man, so they borrow the money and they build this shop just now is they can stand themselves. Now this shop is 4 years.

And when they lost the tomato shop, how was it? How was the whole situation? What happened? I would like to know more about that time.

And the situation is very bad for them, because of they got a lot of debt from another shop, you know.

From the tomato growing?

Yeah. Before the tomato shop they sold the chemical, chemical fertilizer but they don’t want to sell anymore, because of is chemical and is not good for health, so they closed the shop and then he paid for the small shop for the snack for his wife and then he did tomato shop for his business. No, sometimes is very successful, in tomato, they can get many business but when they break down their business is very, you know, everything lost. Everything is bad, also they have many debt on the bank or something on their friends or something.

Because when their shop broke down they needed money to build up something new?

Yeah. So they extent this shop and then they pay the debt. Now is better than before.

Now they have no debt? Or they can pay?

Yes now they can pay.

Why did the tomato shop break down? What is the reason?
One of my uncle has that situation, the weather if the weather is bad, tomato can be.

*Bad harvest?*

Yeah, the plants can die. At that time the tomato.

*Can you maybe ask him why?*

They cannot estimate at that time. It very depends on the weather, if the rain fall is very high, tomato plants can die. And also before the tomato plants grow here in the rainy season, only get in this region so they can sell higher price so they can be success in the business. Now that plantation also widely used in the whole country, so upper Myanmar, lower Myanmar can use that plantation so they can use that also, they can grow themselves and they can sell. So they haven’t any shock for.

*So it broke down because...*

Because they grow in Mandalay or Yangon now.

*Ah, I understand. Okay. So before they always had to get the tomatoes here but now they can grow it in Yangon.*

Yeah. It’s a big problem.

*So that’s why it’s not necessary here to have so many tomato plantations anymore.*

Yeah. At that time maybe for the weather.

*So those 2 reasons. OK. What does he think about the increase in tourists here? Has it helped the shop? What does he think the situation is for him with increased tourism?*

Yeah most of the tourists come and buy some of the shampoo or something cause like toothbrush or something like that and also if they stay in a hotel, the hotel may need some cosmetic things. So they come and buy here so he has higher.

*So because of tourism he has higher sales?*

Yeah. And also the local people come and buy here like for kitchen.

*Okay. And so compared to his life before this shop, what does he think about quality of life and standard of living?*
Now is, everything is changing for them because of they have their own mobile for each and also if they want to cook they can open the switch and then they can cook easily, before they used the charcoal and they had to cook with charcoal. And also for the car, if they want to go Taunggyi or somewhere, they have to wait the taxi, like traffic, car traffic to Taunggyi.

To pickup?
Yeah there’s a gate. And now if they want to go Taunggyi they can go with their own car, anytime. Everything is changing for them.

What does he think about this change? What does it make him feel?
You know, he is not very happy but not very sad. If he dead, he won’t be take this things, so. He has now own car, telephone, shop and home but if he dead he cannot take everything, he is not happy, not sad. Just stay in his life, in the religious.

That’s most important for him?
Yeah.
It’s nice that they own a mobile phone and car but it’s not what he really makes him happy.
Yes.

What makes him happy the most then? The religion, or?
It very depends on the religion.
So that’s his happiness?
Yes. The Buddhism.

Okay. So his job is only there. It’s not his happiness or passion but only to survive and make money? He only does it not because he likes it so much but because they need the money. That’s the only reason? Like, it’s not his…. Because of his son. For his son, he want to eh, what can I say, his son have to… Because of if he got married, he will leave all things and then he will go to a monastery and become a monk. He want to going to be a Nirvana. Paradise.

And so for his son he has this job?
That’s why he is you know, he is doing his business so that he can go. After he got married, he will go to monastery.

*So he is just doing this now, to have a business for his son, so he can take over one day and he can leave and find his happiness in being a munch.*

Yes.

*Okay and like does he have any concerns in life?*

Eh, you know, he is explaining about the religious, his whole life is concerned with religious. Very different.

*What do you mean, different?*

You know, is very difficult to explain for the religious. He always controls his life with religious. Maybe I can ask to Po Aung to explain. I explain later.

*And can he tell me about the time that he saw Nyaung Shwe change? When all the tourists came and when the country opened up, like 2010, 2011, how did he experience that?*

Now everything is changing so their income is more higher than before. Most of the teashops and hotels buy some products from here and also now they will go for, to Taunggyi for some product to buy. They need to sell some, wine or something like that. And also now is more than before, buildings are very higher, weather is also hot because they cannot get the wind.

*So, how does he like or dislike the changes in the town?*

He likes it because now is very developed.

*I would just like to know one last thing, about tourism, the good and the bad things.*

Eh, he knows that everything is changing that he cannot describe how the good and bad things but if there is a good thing, there is also a bad thing. He know, but he cannot describe.

*So he knows, there’s also bad things about tourists coming here but he’s not sure what and how?*

He cannot describe He know but cannot describe.

*Not at all?*
Yeah... he is very religious and in Buddhism, the Buddha told that if there is a good thing, also there is a bad thing. It’s our religion.

*So he knows it is there, but he cannot describe it for the tourism? He doesn’t know what it is yet himself or?*

Yeah. Because of he is just living here.

*And just because we were interrupted there. This, about Nyaung Shwe with the change, and high rise buildings, no more wind and all, what does he feel about it, think about it? Good or not so good?*

If the buildings are very higher, they cannot get the wind and so but for the highest building, is very developed for economy is good, but for health is bad.

*So is good for economy and jobs but not health?*

Yeah.
Local Restaurant Owner, Interviewee 5

36 years old
Residency: 36 years
Ethnic: Burmese-Shan

Thank you for meeting me. I’m doing some research for my university and I would like to know about how your life has changed over the last years. Can you just tell me from your school on until now, how your life has been?

Ehm, they opened this shop since 1998, from her mother. And then now her mother is gone just 7 months and here is they run with their family, her sister, her brother, her sister in law, some babies, like that.

So they took over from their mother? She opened it and now...

Yes. And then since 1998 they borrow this room by another person and 2006 they bought this shop and they changed the name like XXXX.

Okay, so they used to rent it but now they own it?

Yeah.

Okay, that’s great.

And then, now is more tourists are come here and they like very much Burmese food.

Okay. Nice. And can you tell me more about, how life changed, since more tourists come here. How does it change for her, how has it changed?

She saw many changes from environment, you know, most of the local people are changing, like wearing dresses and then they didn’t throw the waste on the road. And the municipality also run every day, someday they pick up the waste and someday they go and clean the canal or something like that. And also they grow the tree on, around the road.

So those are the things she sees changing?

Yeah.

And what does she mean with the clothing?
You know, if for example, if a tourist guide come and pick up the foreigner at the airport, she or he have to wear our traditional design, because we want to show our tradition. She means like that.

That now you wear more traditional cause you wanna show?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And also now most of the local people trying to wear our traditional design. Like that.

Okay, to show like you’re proud of being Myanmar?

Yes, now in Myanmar there is a popular in Korean, they watch a lot of Korean movie and they wear like short skirt or something. Is very, is not our tradition that’s why we adjust with our tradition. Like Longyi.

Okay, you want to keep it and show it to tourists?

Yeah.

Okay. And you know, there was probably one time, where suddenly she saw everything changing so fast. Suddenly so many foreigners came, can she describe her experience with that when suddenly there were so many tourists coming? When before it was only few.

For her is very good because of most of the tourists come here so, most of the local people can get opportunity to work with them. Also for the society is you know, is open.

Open in what way?

In eh, like, NGO, INGO something like that. Like social network.

Social network, what does she mean with that?

You know, economic and then the social. You know, when we pick up the garbage in the whole city, we can do that together with the foreigners.

And before it wasn’t possible?

Yeah. Now, is we can do together.

Okay, now is more free?

Yeah.
And...

She saw that we picked up together, that's why.

*That was nice. Okay, ehm, and so ehm, so how has her social life changed over time. Or how has her standard of living changed in her social activity in the community?*

Eh, yeah, okay. She has many work with in society, you know, she donate like the clothes for the orphanage and also she donate another donation. 10 percent. And also sometimes she hasn’t any employee in here just family owned so she pay to her niece or nephew or sister or something like that. The clothes, money and then if here has also the donation for like Novication, for the festival, Novice, she went there and she donate some you know, some things.

*So now, because of more tourists coming, she has more money to give away?*

Yeah, most of the tourists come here and they have the Burmese food.

Ok, and so...

Yeah, this shop is on the guidebook, also participate in a guidebook for the tourists. Lonely Planet. So most of the tourists they come here and they spend their money in here.

*So their income has increased since.*

Higher than before.

*That's very good.*

Thank you.

*Ok, but does she see anything not so good about tourism here? The development, the rapid changes, is there anything that is not so good or positive?*

Yeah, sometimes she has a problem with the guest.

Okay, in what way?

Eh, sometimes, in the lunch time there is also very crowded here with the local people and the tourists. But some of the tourists are not patient with waiting for their curry so they go back, away, so is a problem. Some of the tourists lie and they come and eat here but they didn't pay.
And how did she describe that, how was the situation?
Is very you know, bad for her mind. Because they were lying.

Okay, so they came here, ate and then they just left without paying?
Rice and curry she pays, but for the beer she shared another people, 2 people, table, then him and her is together rice and curry is 5,000 MMK and she 2, another 2 woman, she can share one table, 4 people and she don’t pay for 2 beer. For 2 beer she don’t pay.

She only paid for food.
Yeah food. Beer is “no”, for him and her 2 beer.

They said they didn’t have beer?
Yeah. I was very busy. She was alone and very busy at that time. And then at the moment. Only one waitress, very busy, eh, 2 beer, is in here (fridge) and I also forgot that she took.

And then did you think about it. How did that make you feel, when they just left without paying, lying to you?
I forgot. She just thinking like “oh, I just donate for someone”.

So, you took a good way out of. Stay positive.
Yes, stay positive.

So that’s probably one of the more frustrating parts?
Yeah.

Can you describe a very happy day in your job?
She is happy with her customer when they eat more, big dinner, she is very happy. And also sometimes when the customer has something like bad day, sometimes she give a present for them. If they are happy, she also happy. And also her son is only 8 years old, now he can speak English well and sometimes the customer come back again and again and for him, because he is very cute and speak very well. That’s why he is very attractive on the customer.

That’s cute, nice story. And, almost finished.
Is okay?
Yeah sure! Maybe just one last question?

Yes, sure.

_Besides the tourists coming here, do you also see that the local people can spend more money now on food?_  

Eh, she is running with the peak season, most of the tourists come and have their lunch and dinner. For the summer time is low season so most of the local people from lower Myanmar or middle of Myanmar come and like, Inle, they come Inle and then is also crowded in Myanmar people and is very balanced.

_Eh, she is running with the peak season, most of the tourists come and have their lunch and dinner. For the summer time is low season so most of the local people from lower Myanmar or middle of Myanmar come and like, Inle, they come Inle and then is also crowded in Myanmar people and is very balanced._

_Ok, so also many local people?_  

Yeah. Is no problem. Peak season is full of tourists and low season is full of locals.
Fisherman, Interviewee 6

Before he was fishing, now he just relaxed at home.

The father? And you also fisher?

No he is no fisher.

Can you maybe explain to the father that I’m doing this research on employment and how tourism has changed employment and lives of people? So I’d like to know about his life, how it has changed over time with tourism, his life as a fisher. Maybe he can tell me a little bit.

He is explaining about the fishing, a method of fishing I have never seen. His parents also fishing so that’s why when he was 18 years old he came from school and he was fishing near his home. At a friend. But he’s not always fishing. Sometimes, I will ask now.

Okay.

[Show fishing] He always do like that. Sometime he do with the driver, boat driver. Sometimes he go to the tomato shop.

So he did all those three things?

Yes and sometimes he works as carpenter.

And his life as a fisher, was it. Has fishing changed a lot with tourism? How has his life and the fishing community how has it all developed over the last decade? How have people’s lives changed?

Most of the fisherman from here are like him, some of them go to the wetland for the floating gardens to plant tomato plants. And also sometimes they are working as carpenter.

So only fishing is not enough?

Yeah. That’s why they do like that, many jobs.

So fishing alone is not enough?

Yeah.

So since tourism is here has the demand for fish gone up? His salary as well through fishing? Has tourism had any impact on that?
They export to the hotel that’s why they have a higher than before income. And also most of the tourists come here and visit their house.

So it’s normal that people come here and visit their house?

Yes.

To see family life?

Yeah. Family life and fisherman’s life.

Do they get paid for that?

Yeah sometimes they get paid for their children, for their education or something like that.

So when tourists come here they pay a little bit?

Yeah sometimes.

Okay. So can you ask them what they think about tourism as such and development that tourism has brought to Nyaung Shwe or Inle Lake? Is it mainly good or also bad things about it?

They have their own ponds, fish ponds. And also they export their fish to the hotels.

Because they have their own pond where they have fish and from there they take the fish and sell?

Yes.

Okay.

Maybe we can go and see.

Yeah that would be nice.

Before it was very difficult because of if they sold to the local people, they only got a low price but now the tourists are coming to this region so when the hotels or the restaurants come and buy the fish they go a higher price.

So per fish they make more money now?

Yes, here their roof are with the bamboo but now they can have aluminum.
So that’s how their life has changed?

Yes, changing. And also they have to, before they only had canoe and now they have motorboat and also that.

So they can afford much more?

Yes.

And how do they feel about this change?

Yeah last 20 years ago his father is also a fisherman so when he go for the fishing, he only got 1000 MMK for all fish in one day and is not enough for the whole family so they had the breakfast at 11 o’clock so they only had breakfast and no lunch.

So that they had two meals in one because they can’t afford three meals a day?

Yeah. Only two. And in the evening time the father went out for the fish and then he got the fish he go and take the rice and the oil. Is very difficult. But now he is very trying to reach, save money for the house, before was a very small tent, now is very big house.

Yes, nice. And this fishing pond, did they already have that before all the hotels were here or only now just because of the hotels?

It’s from the government, the fish pond. It’s to solve the problem for the fishermen. And that is last 8 years ago and they come and did the ponds. But only in this house, the neighbor house wants to put a fishbox in their home so they request and they also got a pond in their home. Now is many fishponds in the village. And also the ministry are paying for the fish and they have to feed them and after 6 months they come and pick all the fish and they got money for the fish.

So they are basically breeding the fish for the ministry who will then pick them up and where do they?

Also the government export to the hotels.

So it’s especially for the hotels?
Yes, hotels and restaurants but sometimes also in the market. Like Nyaung Shwe market, sometimes in Taunggyi. But this is for just under the government but the men who fish on the lake are not like that.

Okay.

They have to sell by themselves.

So is it possible now to live only from the fishing?

Now is better than before because of the fisherman’s wife are doing like sewing, like a tailor and some of the kids are like doing cigar, Cheroot, some of the kids are also doing another job, so now is enough for them but before is not enough.

But still only fishing is not enough so the family still has to work?

Yes, because they are not fishing every day. That’s why. And also for the weather, maybe or for their health if they are ill they cannot go for fishing.

And that’s a problem because they live by the day, they don’t have a regular income.

Yea.

Like they have a regular income because the government pays for their fish.

Yes. And also eh, and also the tourism coming more and more so they got a lot of jobs. He also like a driver so if they go back to home early they do the fishing.

Okay. So he has another job during the day and if there is time during the evening they
do fishing.

For more income or own food?

Yes, for own food and accommodation.

And can the father maybe tell me a little bit about the time when everything changed here?

You know, about the time 4 or 5 years ago when all the tourism started and all the accommodation was built. Can he tell me about it and how he felt? You know, hoe he felt?

Now is, they are very satisfied with their life, very changing life, education and also their living standard. Because of most of they tried for their best and so they could build like a primary
school so most of the children can go to school and learn about everything. And also the XXXX restaurant is very special here. Sometimes they come and looking for the poor and they ask which job the men do and also they pay for the poor family and then they supply for the children’s education. But now is everything is changing all the houses from this village are now very big and so they are also improving.

So everybody gets a share?

Yes. Even the villages from the lake is not improved but this village is much improved than others.

So not all the villages but this one?

Yeah.

Okay. Did they say anything about how it was for them when it changed, at the time when everything changed. Their feelings about when things changed and when tourists came, what they thought about it?

They thought that education and economy will improve.

So that was the only, thing? Okay not people will have jobs?

Yes and also the education can be you know, better for their health. So they go the hospital or the clinic. When they go to Taunggyi they get their medical checks. Now is very improving.

And is there anything bad in their point of view about tourism development? Can you ask about the negative effects?

They haven’t any problems with the guest.

And anything else maybe with the environment or cultural things become less or something like that?

Yeah he hasn’t any problem because of even if the tourists are not here, the most of the local people use the boat so is the normal thing for them.

So now they think that if tourism wasn’t here it would still be improving?
No, just the boat. Because of the, now they have to go, the lake is like 2 hours to get there, take times. Also for the waste, they all throw into the water so is the normal thing, also pesticide.

Ah so it’s used anyways, even if tourism wasn’t here? Still waste and pesticides.

Yeah.

Okay and one last question can you ask them about what their happiness in life is and what like, quality in life means to them?

Their happiness is to live their own family life. They wife and children, in their own house. Because of even in the small house they have 3 families, many children, parents and their grandmother and grandfather so it’s very you know, big family and so some of the foreigner come and donate for them, house to get a big house, they want to, because they also want to get a big house. Now she has 13 children so it’s a big problem, like the population is very crowded in the whole house so they want to spread themselves.

So they would like to have their own house?

Yes.

So it has already improved but they would still like to improve even more?

Yeah.

Okay.

That’s why they said they have to try their best.

Thank you so much. It was very nice talking to you.

Even if developing they have still problem, like poor, the poor families. Some of the families have not enough money to supply their children for education, to they support the school and go together. Some of the foreigner had this new and they came and they supply for the house, but only for some, not all. So they requested that if we have another person who can donate for the poor, please contact for them.

So for them now it’s fine but for others still struggling?

Yes.
Okay. Thank you. And tell them thank you for sharing their stories.

At the daytime their families are going to work and at the night time they all come back and they all have dinner together, 3 table together. It’s very happy everybody together.

Before he was trying to be a restaurant owner but that’s why he was going to the floating island to build a restaurant but he hasn’t any enough money and here have many restaurants so he didn’t build and then he donate his land for library. Library for the villagers.

That’s amazing, no?

Yeah.

Very nice.
Receptionist, Interviewee 7

Age: 19
Residency: 1 year – before village around Inle Lake
Ethnicity: Intha

I'm looking into people's lives and how their lives have changed over time also through tourism and I'm looking into people's jobs and their satisfaction with life and what they think about quality of life. So I would like to hear from you. Maybe you could talk about your life a little, you know, from school on, what have you done and you know? Yeah. I went to school until grade 11 and then I finished because of I wanted to stay in school until grade 11 and then change to university. But now we don't have the money and my family is very poor. So I went until grade 11 and then I wanted to continue learning and then go to university.

Okay so you have finished grade 11 or not?

No not yet.

So you went to school until what age?

Until 2 years ago.

And then you started this job?

Yes. And later I want to go to grade 11 and change to business here.

And why didn't you go to university straight away.

Yeah, Taunggyi.

Are you going there now?

No.

But you want to?

Maybe this year I can do grade 11 and then from grade 11 I want to do university. I have to think about that because of my family is very poor.

Okay, so you don't know if you can?
Yes, I want to learn until grade 11 this year. I want to, I need it, because I need to do grade 11 because later I want to change to the university.

Okay. What do you want to study?

Eh to the maybe here, study here and I want to go to grade 11 here.

And what would you like to study in Taunggyi?

The university.

And what would you study there?

First go to grade 11 and then to university maybe.

Okay. And can you tell me a bit about how it was to start this job here and how you found the job and just your daily life. Can you just tell me a little bit?

I didn’t know that because of I job here and I, tourist guide and I needed the job here.

So you went to the travel agency? You are a tour guide or no?

Yes. I want to become a tour guide and then join to the travel agency.

Okay but then that didn’t work out or?

Because of I just needed a job, 2 years ago I joined here but soon I want to start my own business. Maybe travel agency or as tour guide.

So you would like to do that?

Yes I would like to.

Okay and ehm, your job here what do you do every day?

Yeah every day.

But what do you do?

Here? I’m a receptionist.

Yeah and what do you think about your job, the good and the bad things?

I’m not sure because of my mind, I dreamed of another life. But I needed...
Sorry? You didn’t have a job?

No.

So you just took this job because it was available?

Yeah.

And you come from the village right?

Yes.

Okay and how was life there compared to here? How is village life compared to here? What’s the difference?

Because of the business job in my village not, I had to move to here. Very difficult to get a job there so I come here and get a job here. Many foreigners come here because of tourism.

Okay so you just go back to the village for holiday during low season?

Yes.

How long do you go back then?

1 month.

Which month?

[interruption]

Since you have this job here, how has your life changed and the life of your family?

I want to take a business and bring to my family, my younger brother also, and I want to go to village and make change to our house. I need one business. One business for my family.

You want to have a business for your family?

Yes. Accommodation business.

In your village?

Yes.

Okay. So you would like to build something there as accommodation for tourists?
Yeah. Not accommodation for tourists, just one business for my family, to working everyday here.

*So you want to build a business where your family can also work?*

Yeah.

*Okay. So that you can build a nicer house for them?*

Yes.

*Okay and now that you have this job and are not a student anymore, has also the standard of living has that already increased for yourself and your family? You know, can you already afford more now? Is it better life now?*

Yeah that’s right.

*Cause you say your family is quite poor.*

Yes.

*And now that you have this job you can support your family or?*

Yeah. I have a job here and I take the money and bring it there.

*Okay so what you don’t need to live, you give to your family?*

Yes.

*Okay and so you think, what do you think about working in tourism and quality of life? Is working in tourism good or?*

Yeah.

*Why do you think it’s good to work in tourism?*

The next year I want to develop tourism business.

*Then you want to have this business?*

*And what is your opinion, what do you think about tourists here? What are the good things about tourism, are there any not so good things about tourism?*
There is no tourism where my family is, so I have to develop a business here for my family. Because of my family has to be included for happy life I think.

Happy life through working in tourism?

Yeah.

But what is happy life for you? What does it mean?

Because tourism here, and I will bring to tourism life and then happy life. Because they have to join me here and then I bring to village along the Inle Lake and then find a business for my family here and then.....I think.

And you’re saying that you want to make your family have a happy life? But what does it mean for you to be happy? What is important for you to be happy? What do you need to be happy?

Because of I need my family, one business for working every day and then to happiness for my family.

What is a happy life for you? Can you describe a happy life for you?

Because of happy life, my life right now is not happy because of my family need to come here to have happy life in tourism, have my family work in tourism here and then have tourists come to my village. Everyday enjoying and work, I think that everybody needs that to have happy life.

Everybody has happy life when they have a job here?

Yes...

So for you happy life means you and your family all together have a job and you can live, have a house and you can live well?

Living here and then to the happy life to the family, one business, to the foreigner, tourists is enjoying, then happy life. Family working here and then everyday enjoy.

So happy life is that you don’t have any worries, just enjoy?

Yes.

So you want to take your family to Nyaung Shwe, take them out of the village and move here?
Yeah. Because now I don’t live with my family and they should live here and we can all be together and every day enjoying.

Okay. Sounds good. And how did it make you feel to move away from your family? Cause now you see them only once a year, or do you see them more often?

Because of to see my family. You come with us to my family?

How far from here?

2 hours.

So you go there on the weekend also or just in 1 month?

I will talk to my owner and then you pay my holiday and then day after we can go.

So you only go once a year to see your family? Or more often?

Not more often.

How do you feel about being away from your family so long?

This is not, my family is very, one business. My family, one business, I have to think about that.

But now you don’t see your family so often right? Just once a year? And then how is it for you to be away from them, is it difficult? How do you feel about that?

I didn’t wanna say because my family is very poor so that’s why.

So it’s difficult to be away from them. So you want them to be here and live together?

Yes. I will build one house. I need a lot of money I think.

And now that you have this job and make money with this job, in what way has your life and your family’s life has that changed? How has their life changed through more money from you?

Yeah, not enough for the money. But my family is 5 people. Not enough for all. So better to have business here. My father is carpenter and my mother is weaving. My sister also weaving. Not enough money for changes to the building, I give them money, but not enough.

So it’s not enough yet so you want to have a better business, make more money?

Yes I think. One business then take money and send that to them, some money one business and I would like to give money to father and mother.
And what business do you want to have?
I business, I have to think about it. Online, travel business.

So you want tourist business but what do you want to do?
Travel agency I think and tour guide.

And is there anything about so many foreigners coming here that you don’t like?
6 or 7 months ago I was working here and many people coming here, local people they are making business but we don’t have money, but I have dream, I sleeping I dream every day.

And you know, so many tourists come here. They bring jobs and money here, but is there also anything that is not so good about so many tourists coming here?
Many tourism to here because of the different, many hotel and travel agency, somebody they work in here and I think about what job is better here. I don’t know.

So you think there are already so many tourism businesses here that it’s hard to compete?
Hard to set up your own business?
Yeah. Many tourism business here, one business my own, good working, I think about that.

And for your job here, did you have any training? Did you learn it here or in school?
Yes, in school.
Training is to the little bit here. The first time in the reception and again first time in the hotel.
I was training for one month, 1 year ago.

To be a receptionist?
Yes.

And English?
School a little bit but then teacher here. A tour guide.

And if you think about your job now, what are the good things about your job? What are the good things about your job?
I don’t like so much, I want to change when I have the money. Become tour guide.
So you only do this job because you need money?
Yes.

So you don’t like this job so much you prefer different job?
Yes, different job but I needed money to give to my family who is very poor and then take money for business. Then give more money to family for happy life.

So also for yourself you would be happier if you had tour guide job?
Yes. I didn’t have, because of my family, I have to think about that.

So you are worried about your family? That’s why you can’t be happy?
Yes. Because of my mother and my father and my sister and brother, everyone is to their happy. I job here and they is to the very very.

So you think they are happy right now?
Yeah.

But you are not happy right now?
No, I need a lot of money to give to them. For being happy is I need more.

Thank you so much for your time and sharing your story.
Mobile Store, Interviewee 8

Age: 31
Residency: 3 years
Ethnicity: Burmese

Ehm, so how long have you had this mobile phone store?

Nearly 2 years.

And what did you do before?

Before we traded, trade. We trade business.

Okay and then because of the situation changed that’s why you can sell mobile phones, right? Before no mobile phones right? Was it 2 years ago no mobile phones? Before not too many people, only few. Now a lot of people using mobile phone.

And how has that changed for you going from one business to another? How has your life changed?

Now good. Before and now, our business is good. No problem.

Okay and like for you personally how has all of this change that is happening here has it affected your life personally, like quality of life? Can you just tell me about the last years of your life? From school on or how your life has changed?

Last 5 years ago he did the trading but that business is not very ehm, high the income that’s why he changed to mobile shop. Now everything is okay. Healthy, wealthy.

And it’s mainly local people who buy it?

Yes.

So would you say that through all the change, like the country opening up, through that people have more money to spend on mobile phone?

Not more money. Before government and now government change, right? Our people is not changed everything. Same salary, same income money, same. Before 5 years ago same, now also same. But phone price is maybe down, sim car price is down. Before we sell one sim card 3,000 USD but now 1.50 USD so very very different so our people use smartphone.
Okay.

Not government support, no.

It’s only because it is cheaper?

Yes. Because of sim card is price before 5 year very high but now very cheap. So everybody want to buy, want to use cell phone. Everybody use phone.

And for you personally changing from trade business to mobile phone business, how has your life changed?

Not changed, trading same. Before our terrain is rice, bean we buy and then we sell another place like China or Yangon. Also same, now also like trading. We buy from China mobile phone and we sell here. So trading is same, not changed my life.

But you say it’s more profitable, right? So in what way has your life changed with more money that you earn?

Because before we traded rice and beans, we have save money is low but now we sell cellphone so now trading is very fast. So income money also okay for me. So you say also quality of life and standard of living is also high?

Yes, standard of life? Is more higher.

Higher than with the trading?

Yeah.

But you don’t think that it has anything to do with tourists coming here? Or do you think it has also, tourism has also influence on people’s lives here?

Yes that is right. If tourists coming, our business also include 80%. If no tourism, everybody cannot buy cellphone.

Okay so...

Tourism also our business include 80%. Because of now you come, you arrange guide or boat or bicycle so after you pay money, right, so boat driver come to buy cellphone. I think my business and tourism is 80% included.
Okay. Interesting. And what do you think, is there also something negative about tourism, growing tourism here in Nyaung Shwe? Is there anything that is not so good about it, that’s affecting you?

If 100 people coming, 10% negative maybe.

In what way?

I’m not sure what happened I don’t know, but I think 5% or 10% negative. 90 or 95 % okay.

Okay and negative in what way could it be negative? Affecting what? The people or?

Because of some tourism, example 5% tourism, they don’t know our people so sometimes have some problem.

Because they don’t know the culture and don’t respect culture?

Example, 5% but 95% ok no problem.

So that’s the only thing that you think is a little negative? Sometimes they don’t respect? But from an economic point of view it’s just positive?

Good.

And what about prices? Have they gone up? Like prices for food or house? Has it increased because of tourism for you?

Maybe I think no problem.

Okay and now when you think about your life before and now how do you feel about your life now?

Good.

In what way good?

Good.

So happiness in life?

Yes now happiness in life.

So what does happiness mean for you? What is a good life for you?
Ehm, example, before I’m not do this business, I trade rice or bean. I cannot use this phone, but now I can use. What I mean, not too big money but for me, little bit, little bit every day okay. So I mean happiness life now. Happiness means little bit of money okay.

Alright but it’s still important for you that you can buy such things or is not important? Buy phone or TV or so?

Now my life is enough for me. No problem.

So you can afford also the nice things.

[laughing]

Okay. And can you describe a very happy moment in your life and one that was more frustrating? You know one good moment and one not so good moment? Can you describe?

[laughing] Sometimes I have, sometimes don’t have.

What do you mean?

Sometimes he is very happy.

But why then?

That is like everybody. You also sometimes happy, sometimes not. Like everybody. No reason.

Okay that’s fine. And what do you think about how tourism has changed Inle Lake and Nyaung Shwe? What are your personal thoughts about that because your whole neighborhood is changing right? Changing fast with all the tourism coming in. What do you think about that?

That is good development I think.

In what way good you think?

Maybe the living standard of the local people. Maybe they can use higher price of things that means like furniture or decoration things. Maybe TV they can buy brands.

And what do you think about, you know, tourism also changes like appearance of the town. Because now like all the high rise buildings and all of that. What do you think about that? How the neighborhood changes.
I think that is good because of tourism coming so the income money, example, before the income, 1 day 1 $ but after tourism coming their income is little bit higher. 100$ per month for example. So they can build their house, or hotel or inn or restaurant. So now, Nyaung Shwe town is higher level, you know. Before other town and Nyaung Shwe town not the same, you to Shwe Nyaung, everybody is, so I think tourism coming for Nyaung Shwe good.

Okay, so compared to Shwe Nyaung, how, what did you mean?

Shwe Nyaung, tourism never come, that is junction city only.

And you think there is not as good life as here?

Yes that is not good. Better Nyaung Shwe, but Nyaung Shwe is I think more than Shwe Nyaung.

Just like your satisfaction with your job? Satisfaction of your life and your job, how would you describe that? The level of satisfaction. Like how much you like or dislike the job.

70% I like. 30% is not enough for me.

And what is this 30% that’s not enough? What’s missing?

Example, I want change, make big my shop. But I don’t have money so that is 30%.

Okay so it’s only that.

I’m not enough happy to upgrade my shop. Because another shop can upgrade but I cannot upgrade because I’m not enough money for that.

And why do you think other shop has money?

Because they have own money. From before, because father mother.

Okay and you are the owner of the store. Just yourself?

Yes.

And the people you employ here is that family?

Like family. Family is only 3 person, 4 person my worker from outside.

And the workers did they have any training as sales person or so?

Just, we don’t have training but we train together. If you want the new job okay you come and together we do. So after that they already training, no need to take time for training.
So doesn’t matter if they have experience or not, you will train them?

Yes. Our work is like team.

Okay. Is your shop a licensed shop.

Yes licensed, every year taxes.

And what do you think about being self-employed, why do you think. Or do you think it’s better than just being employed. What are the good and bad things about being self-employed?

Sorry?

It’s your own shop, so you’re self-employed and in what way is it better than being just an employee somewhere working for someone else?

No, we not do like this. We want employee we call out hometown or village and say I want 2 employees so they come and work. My hometown is Shwe Nyaung and I want to help the people there get a job.

And what do you like about being your own boss?

For me okay.

And what do you like about it?

Yes, okay. I’m owner but I’m also employee, we work together. For me every day okay for my employee.
Okay. So you already heard before with the fisherman. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Yeah he has many money problems. Before he was a student, his family is very poor so he didn’t want to go to school so he dropped out.

When was how old?

When he was 7 years. And then he caught the fish, after 1 year his no more interest in fishing and so he joined with the rice mill and then he carried the bags, rice bags and it takes 7 years. Also he drives, after 7 years he quit from the rice mill and joined with the tomato shop, 10 years and after that he is a boat driver.

When did he change to be a boat driver?

3 months ago. Just 3 months.

Very new! And why did he change?

Because he got low salary and so he quit from tomato shop and changed to boat driver.

And now he earns more money?

Yeah.

Okay and how has his life changed because of being a boat driver, how has his life changed because of that change, standard of living compared to before?

Before he worked at the rice mill or tomato shop, he only got a low salary so it’s very you know, so it’s a very bad situation between his work and family so now is better than before. Because of now he got higher than before.

So now, how has his life, his family life, changed? Like bigger house or car or in what way has their life changed?
They have their own house, before it’s from their parents but it’s built with bamboo but it’s their own house. Not very changing the main point is the salary.

So they can afford own house and food?

Yes.

Okay and ehm, so what does he think about tourism and you know the development of tourism, positive and negative?

For him is very good because if the more tourists come here he can go with the tourists with boat more times, so more salary.

In order to be a boat driver did he already know how to drive before and now he just works for tourists instead or did he have to learn it?

He used to drive the boat when he was 13 years old because he went to Kaya State and at that time he went from there to here with boat driving.

What did he do there?

For trading. Trading the rice.

Okay. And ehm, so there is nothing negative about tourism for him?

He hasn’t any problem with the tourist but in general we are all faced with other things. Like the boat driving in the water, so pollution, same problem.

So now those problems are increasing because there are more people coming, more people going on the lake.

Yeah and also for the accommodation, because of the tourists come more we have to build many hotels and so we have to lose the land.

Okay. So prices for that go up for accommodation?

Yes.

And so ehm, how does he think about his life now with the boating, compared to before? His feeling and level of satisfaction compared to before?
He is driving because before he worked at the rice mill or tomato shop is very tired because he had to carry the bags. Now is only boat driving, it's easier and salary is higher.

Okay so overall just big improvement health and money. And can he describe maybe a happy day in his life and a rather frustrating day in his life or job?

When he got a high salary, boat driving is his happiness. Also when he has any, no, when he faced with a bad situation like family and work he. Sometimes, when he worked at the rice mill he had many bad situation about money problem between work and family. He only got low price but the family have to eat and wear clothes etc. So bad situation.

And now is there anything else he is concerned about in life? Worried about?

He is worried about the health of the family.

Okay. Worried that it might be bad health in the future.

Yeah.

And what, is there anything bad about his job, about being a boat driver?

Is very depend on the conditions, if he has a better job, he will change.

So if he finds an even better job he will change again?

Yes.

So what would be a better job for example?

He wants to own his business, like trading.

Like rice and vegetables?

Yes.

So he would like to go back to that but then not as a normal worker but with his own business?

Yes but he don’t want to carry the heavy things just a boss.

Is he also using the boat driving for saving money for the future? Can he save money?

Now he cannot save his money so it’s difficult. He needs all the money for the family.

So it will be difficult to fulfill his dream?
Yes.

Okay and maybe just like one last question. What are the good and bad things about working for the tourists? Any good memories about driving with the tourist or bad memories?

He have, not met with bad guest, only with good guest. Because all the tourists are good on him.

Okay thank you very much.
Chef, Interviewee 10

Age: 36
Residency: 36
Ethnicity: Intha, Shan

I’m looking into people’s lives and their employment situation so I’d like to just ask you a few questions.

Yeah.

How long have you been a chef here?

Ehm, nearly 4 years.

And before that? What did you do?

At the market he sold, many kinds of food. Like traditional food.

But already cooked, he cooked at the market?

Yes.

Okay. And how did you get to this job then?

His sister is the GM of XXXX Resort so he heard that this hotel will open so he joined here.

So this hotel opened 4 years ago?

The restaurant, yes.

And where did you learn being a chef? Training or?

XXXX Resort.

You worked there before?

Yes, they have a training before he joined here for this restaurant. After training he joined here.

But the training was for this job specifically?

Yes.

And before that on the market you didn’t have training for that or?
That was his own business, he haven’t any training.

You just liked to cook or?

Yeah.

Okay and can you tell me about this change from being self-employed, having your own business and to coming here and working for XXXX Resort or XXXX Resort? Can you just tell me about this change in your life? How you felt and how it was for you?

Before like 5 years ago he worked with his auntie for his own business, but after that he wants to change his life so that’s why he joined with his sister to work here and finally he got this job and he had a training in Inle Princess and the training is about 3 months and then he moved to here and worked with the chef, big chef. Because of at that time, the big chef is in Dubai so he worked as the leader.

And why did you want to change your life? You said you wanted to change your life… because of he thought that this job can improve his life. That’s why he changed to this job.

Okay and has it changed your life? And in what way has it changed your life?

Now is changing, yeah,

And how? How has it changed? In what way?

You know, now he has many experience and also he has many things, how can I say. And also he believes in himself. You know, he has many confidence.

That has grown? Your confidence? So it makes you feel better and more confident?

Yes. To stand as a tourism here.

How do you mean?

As a chef he can stand himself.

Okay. And what do you think about quality of life and standard of living? How has that changed for you?

Now he has to try to improve his life. He will try the best.

And in what way improve? What does he mean?
He will go to training for this job and then he will read many books concerned with the food. Like that.

And so he wants to do more training?

Yeah.

What would be an improved life for you? What does that mean for you? You know, better than what?

Difficult to answer. He is thinking a lot.

You know, I would just like to know what his expectations are of the job changing his life. You know, this change in the job, what are or were your expectations when you changed the job? Of your life?

He has many changes, when he changed this job. Like he has many experience, he is the big chef. And you know, like the manners and also from his mind.

In what way?

With communication with other people?

So also social?

Yes his social life.

So that has already impacted his private life?

Yeah.

Okay. And also what about income has that also improved?

Yes.

Also improved okay. And now with the money you earn more, how do you spend it? Now you earn more money so what do you do with this more money that you earn?

He just use for his life. Individual cosmetic things and for his wife and his family from Nyaung Shwe, he supply to his family.

Support your family with more money?

Yes.
Okay. And what is for you happiness in life? A good life? How would you describe happiness in life?

His happiness is to work with this job and the improving his life. Is his happiness.

Improving his life financially? Improvement from money or other things?

Everything like family.

Also more time for your family?

He loves his family so he spends time with them.

So but is there anything, any not so good changes that came with this job?

Yeah sometimes if the order is so much order, the kitchen is very busy, at that time if someone makes mistake this is very bad for him. If someone cooks like, fried the egg is very burned, something like that. So they have to renew it.

That's frustrating then?

Yeah.

And for his personal life, has his job had any not so good effects on his personal life?

He haven't any you know, unsatisfying things with his family. Everything is okay for him.

Also with the change of job there were only good changes for family?

Yes.

And can you describe you know, 4 years ago they accepted you for this job. Can you describe how you felt in that situation? How did it make you feel?

Last 4 years ago he applied this job and he was waiting or like 2 weeks and then they called him to interview and he was very happy. And then he came here to interview and after he passed the interview and after 1 month he went to XXXX Resort to training and after 3 months training he came and joined with this job. At that time the staff was like 15 or 16, very few, salary was very low in the beginning. At that time the staff is very few, so they ran like a family owned business, all the chef came here and can serve to the guests and service staff came to kitchen and they cooked, too. Sometimes like that.
Income was low in the beginning but then it changed and it got better? And why do you think now is better income? Because of tourism, or?

It’s one of the parts why they got the salary, tourists coming here, they stay here like a hotel and also they have their own souvenir shop and that’s why they have many income and can pay to their staff high income.

Okay, so within the last 4 years, more and more tourists come and so more and more staff and income?

Yes.

And is there anything not so good about more and more tourists coming? Do you also see negative things about so many tourists coming here to Inle Lake and Nyaung Shwe?

At least we have to use many boats for tourists to come here so it’s the negative part.

And what’s negative about it? So many boats?

When they use more boats the water will polluted, like air and water pollution.

So you’ve seen Inle Lake change because of so many boats? So water quality?

Yes.

Okay, one very last question. How do you feel about your life now compared to before?

Now he has confidence on himself, before he hasn’t any confidence on himself, but now is better.

Okay. I’m happy for you.

Also he got married 3 months ago.

Congratulations.

Thanks.
Local Artist, Interviewee 11

Age: 46
Ethnicity: Burmese
Residency: 20 years

I’m looking into social change here in Nyaung Shwe through tourism but also in general. And I’m just looking for people’s personal stories about how their lives have changed over the years, you know and how tourism has impacted or affected their lives, you know. So I was wondering if you would be willing to share with me how the last years of your life have been like and how it has changed.

You mean like tourism?

And just in general and I’m also looking into employment, so I’m looking into how tourism has affected or if it has created jobs and what kind of jobs.

This is for me is difficult. There’s other, you know tourism people they don’t understand. We are just generation like the puppet for you know, other kind is we didn’t understand like the meaning.

I’m just wondering for you personally, your life over the last years, so how did you experience this change, social change with the country opening up and people coming in, how has it affected you personally?

This one is good. How the people is life, how they changing, you know. People come to visit in Myanmar, they love. More and more the tourists. [Selling a ticket to a tourist for the evening show]

Just how your life has changed, a story, you know, just tell me about your life openly.

How do you say, this is difficult. My business is only, we are tradition, we know about, a lot of tourists. Some people interested, some people not interested.

In the culture?

Yeah culture and difficult for culture, the people. Some people enjoy to come, they love to see this. I know about the tourists more and more. Before like hundred people, is eh fifty person want to see puppet show. Now 200 people, 100 come, like that. Is a good thing. We are politics
and opening to Myanmar. Other kind is, I don’t know how their business. For me is difficult. Just in day time we are relaxed, evening we do the dhow. But we, last year and this year also is good for the people come. Someday good someday not good.

Is it very seasonal as well?

Yeah, high season is more better. Now is summer time, is some low.

How many years have you been doing this?

We are XXXX master for 30 years, 1985, we are from Bagan. I left to here 1985. My own shop is 1995 after public competition. We are 1985 October in Yangon XXXX competition. After we do like we are own job, own XXXX show. We like it. Our family tradition we love my job.

And it’s a tradition all over Myanmar?

Yeah. But today Myanmar is very less tradition. Some people they don’t know. But everywhere like XXXX show. They know things, like oh, everywhere there is XXXX master but real tradition master people is very less in all Myanmar. Today young people not like the puppet. People today, no interested. Some people they don’t know it. Our government is eh in TV, our Myanmar TV they are advertising but today young people I think, they are not watching.

The younger generation not interested.

Less interest in our tradition.

Yeah.

No I never see anymore old XXXX master. Today in Mandalay old XXXX master or in Yangon but other division not. Kachin, Kayin, Shan State, not tradition. People, we come to in Shan State. We come from Bagan. I worked there first hotel XXXX master and in Inle nearly 10 year I work in XXXX master. After we are own shop we do the show. Only division, other divisions all XXXX master today I never meeting second time. We are only 95 first time we are meeting, now 20 years is over. We are meeting about 70 over you know, 60 over, all XXXX master people I think now they retired. But in Mandalay is now 83 year old XXXX master. In Yangon also 82 or 83 year old XXXX master. There are only very few in Myanmar. But tourist people travel, they don’t know. Why not, they are everywhere they are XXXX selling, this is a souvenir shop but people know a lot of XXXX in Myanmar, a lot of XXXX master but they didn’t know about...
the story. We eh for every tourist we have translation [of the story] in Myanmar, how many people but is very difficult. Today young people, you know, young puppet no, only old XXXX master, nearly 100 people, maybe less, I don’t know.

_all over Myanmar._

Yes, in all of Myanmar only about 100 or less. Very difficult to have tradition.

_So this is a very unique place? Where yu actually show the XXXX?_

Yes. You mean?

_To tourists?_

Yes. Only today for only tourists.

_And before?_

Myanmar is tradition specially, Myanmar tradition is king palace entertainment for evening time. The XXXX is king palace entertainment for dancing. Now the same time we have 7 character in the dancing. But now the program we are changing. In more, different character we can do it. Now I 8 character I do that, but I mean the king palace for entertainment like dancing. After Myanmar, the very popular time, the grandfather, he owned a local shop, is especially during full moon, the pagoda festival and villages, like they play the whole night to different story. The real original story is real musician, the group, 3 kind, XXXX master, the singing. Less less less now. Like dancing, people like we can use the XXXX story. _The whole night, almost 8:30 till the next morning 4 o’clock. We remember with our family, we recording with a cassette, 1 hour tape. But not anymore like this. I remember in, we are from Bagan, I remember 1990 after no more our family outside the shop._

_No? After 1990 it was not popular anymore?_

No. Only before 1990 we do it like our family. My grandfather the leader, then we go to any village near Bagan. We cannot play in Mandalay, big city, no, just for village people. Enjoy. Less less less. Now never in village, no more like big set. Our group, other group I don’t know, they must still play or not, I don’t know. My family’s story. Now today ma grandfather died, he finished. My parents in Bagan do like XXXX show. In hotel, restaurant in Bagan. But people to say why not they like private show. In Bagan area is very big city. How the New Bagan, Old...
Bagan, Nyaung-Oo. People not to come to see the show. Not possible. Only just he work every month for restaurant. My young brother, older brothers, cousins all family. My sister also in all Bagan they do. All in Bagan, in the evening, 6 to 10. Other daytime they do other job.

*And you, is that your only job?*

Yes, only job.

*Okay. And after 1990 when you said okay people were not interested anymore, how did you cope with that?*

Yeah we were changing also, you know, my family moved to New Bagan. Nobody knew, no contact, nobody come to call. I think they were interested, the information where we are, address, you know, XXXX master but not anymore like this. I remember we in Old Bagan we still do like the show is one of the year, 3 times, like this. But not so many.

*But how did you, because you needed the job for money right?*

Yeah, was very difficult. Today young people something like this. *Their money is, today everywhere money important. But tradition job is not specially.* Now for me, I do XXXX show is like tourism, stay in Myanmar, we can do it. No tourists, no money. It’s very hard, very difficult with art. But now every tourist is for tradition in our Myanmar. You must come to visiting. We are for my family. This tradition master people, real old master, real professional, second master no professions, next generation, less less less, tradition die.

*So the tradition will die, you think?*

Yeah, sure. Just only moving like the XXXX, just to move is not specially professional. Professional is like they is very complicated to make the XXXX. You know, they are painting, posing, chaining the straps, is like the XXXX master is like a doctor in that sense. Their own cultural, different color.

*And why did you move to Inle Lake?*

Just my job. They come to call the owner of hotel.

*Which hotel?*

XXXX. They opened 1980 something like this. No hotel, 2 guest houses here, like XXXX and XXXX, 2 guesthouses. The foreigner people stayed.
And what did you do there?

I worked the XXXX master. 1985 we come to work. In Bagan my grandfather you know, they stay like XXXX show but we had to go another place. Enough for one XXXX show in Bagan, Old Bagan. But in Inle no XXXX show so I come to work.

Okay. And what do you think about how has this tourism changed your quality of life and standard of living? Now the last few years because it has increased so fast, right?

Yeah.

How has it affected your life and standard of living?

Ah this is one day, one year they were changing. But we are kind, we like this tradition, everybody they keep it must together. Everywhere you know, eh, no more tradition no more come tourists. This is important. Just not only good for just me, not possible. Always I saw we will be here, real natural style, simple like the people, today is very fast to changing.

Yeah. What do you think about that? That everything changes so fast?

Hmm, some good, some is not good. Half to half.

And what do you think is good and what is not so good?

This is how do you say, young people is mostly good. Today they, everything they are opening. We never saw when we were young. Like telephone. For young people is good thing, bad thing.

What do you think is the bad thing?

Eeh, the bad thing is very you know, they now like Korea style you know, not tradition style. They are the travel people, like you know, Thanaka, Myanmar people everywhere, Longgyi and all, young people don’t like it but is very important. Just not only me, old people they say more and more they don’t understand. Younger man is the not real tradition, real like the old people they know. Good thing changing come also bad thing.

So you think the bad thing is that through all these fast changes the tradition will die even faster?

Yes, not only for XXXX. Every tradition. Clothing, dancing, all kinds.
A challenge, right?

Where do you work?

“I'm here with my university. But also with Inle Speaks and GIZ.”

Yes, I know.

“This is not for GIZ, just for my own.”

Okay. She works XXXX.

Yes.

She is my daughter’s friend. Now my daughter in engineer.

In Yangon?

Near Taunggyi.

She works there?

Now study in university. Second year. But here 6 years they will study. After the Master in Mandalay. Next 2 year.

First here and then she goes to Mandalay?

Yes. My biggest son is in Taunggyi University. They know how to move the XXXX player but not like me, not professional. For their job they will keep it, like tradition. But they have no free time. My son is geology, second year. My daughter second year. We have two children so we need to work much. We are not rich but winter time, people come and we save the money for my children to learn. First comes always my kid.

So the money you make during high season you save so that they can go to university?

Sure.

And what do you think, can you tell me about the time that Nyaung Shwe, that everything changed here. Did it happen very quickly? 2011 country opened up. Right?

Sure.

What happened then? What happened during that time? Can you explain?
You know, this is eh, everybody know, their hotel, some people selling their land. Rich people they buy like the land, to build for hotel. This is not only for 2011 the changing is the, how do you say, some before also changing in Nyaung Shwe, every house not like the wood, bamboo, but concrete but eh, 2011 there after is good for business, travel tourists come. Is important for travel people, like trek shop man, ey they are free, they can work. Local 200, 300 in the tourist 500. Everybody good to work. Vegetarian, normally the people don’t eat a lot. In the restaurants people come to buy vegetables. Is important tourism. But some is good, some is not good. Like this. There is a tradition, like small village still bamboo hut but to work they have money, then they build bigger house.

Okay. So that’s how it changed. People sold their lands, hotels were rising up and yeah. What do you think about at that time, how did you feel about it?

Is difficult how to say. Good is for our future, sure.

And not good for the tradition.

Yes. One side good, one side not good.

Okay. Yeah. Do you think that people, is it wrong or a challenge that people see only the good thing? They don’t want to see the bad thing? Do you think that’s a problem? Also government and many people see they can make money with tourism but they don’t see the bad things, is that right? They don’t realize that there is also bad things?

This is difficult, I don’t understand.

Like many people see okay, tourism or this changing, I can get more money. So that’s the good part. So they don’t want to see the bad part? They don’t see that it’s maybe bad for tradition?

People you know, they see good thing. Not lose. Any tourist come, today is tourist come and they return for tradition. It’s important.

Okay thank you so much.

You’re welcome. But no job, we are friend come to their school just for you know, duty in the outside. For like the facility.

Okay for the exams?

Yes. For road blocks.
Where did you learn English so well?

Our teacher are travel tourists people.

Didn’t learn in school?

Only little. 10 year we work here every country we know and learn English. Directly through tourists.

Wow. Thank you so much!

Welcome, come to see the show.

Our XXXX show is 7 o'clock and 8:30, every guidebook inside. Then they come. Japan, Germany, Korea, Chinese inside the guidebook. Tripadvisor, recommend for our XXXX show.

I don’t know how many people. Last night 21 people, 8:30 only 4 guests. Depends you know. Some I don’t know how many people. For today, 2 people reserved. Some people love to see our culture, they come exactly and buy ticket. Some people we are talking about not yet.
Okay. So have you always been a hairdresser?

Last 10 years ago she went from Taunggyi and she lived in Taunggyi, 10 years and she moved to here, 4 years ago.

And can she maybe tell me a bit about her life, from Taunggyi until now. A story of her life?

When she lived in Taunggyi she had many difficulties with studying for the hairdresser. Because of she lived with the woman who teach them and she lived in..

The woman taught them...?

About the hairdresser, yes. And also for the beauty. And they are not a family so she had to you know, stay...

She has to stay what, sorry?

....

Flatshare?

Yes and then there has also many girls who come and learn about beauty and hair.

And what difficulties did she have?

Because of you know, the girls are very, very, how can I say, 15 girls, studying about hair, very the same.

So, they had fights or?

Yeah, sometimes. And sometimes she didn’t eat the rice in the day, because she was very busy. The teacher is afraid that if she know all the things about the beauty, she afraid that she will quit from her shop.

Once she knows all the?
All the things. That’s why she take too many time, so it take about 4 years.

4 years in the school?

Yeah.

Cause the teacher didn’t want her to leave.

Yeah.

Okay and then, but then after 4 years she left?

No, she just stayed and worked there because she has many, you know, many … from her teacher, so she lived there and worked there and then after 6 years she left that Taunggyi and she moved to here and now is she is fine.

And why did she leave? Why did she come to Nyaung Shwe?

Eh, because of she want to open here and also in Taungyi, is, you know, the roomrate is very expensive.

Okay.

It’s like 50 millions.

50 million for having own shop?

Yeah the own shop. That’s why.

Rent?

Yeah. So she just moved to here and she opened here. Here is like 10 million, it’s okay.

Per month or?

Is for the equipment for hair, scissor or something.

For everything?

Is for everything. But for the room rate is 60,000 MMK per month.

Okay. And so but she went to school and then she also got a diploma in hairdressing. From the government or from, I see it there, where did she..?
The left is from the Bangkok. Yeah, the teacher from Bangkok came here and teach about how to do. The right is from Taunggyi.

Okay. And then when she came here, compared to now, you know, like, how has life changed for her during this time that she lived here? Has anything changed for her during this time that she only lived in Nyaung Shwe?

When she lived in Taunggyi, she got a salary, 50,000 per month and they paid for stay.

Accommodation...

And food. She haven’t any problems with the money. Now she moved to here, she has many sister, so she has to pay the money to them and also now she got married and she has a baby, so she has many costs.

Okay, so quality of life or standard of living has gone down since she opened her own shop? So being employed was better than having her own shop or?

Now is better than before because of she can stand on her own. Yeah so is better.

Okay and moneywise it was better before or also now? Now she has problems with it, right?

They, now, her income is higher so is better.

Okay and can she, does she recognize that now that the country is open and so many tourists coming, people spend more money on their beauty? Is it, you know, since more tourists come here, maybe they get more money, and does she also realize that, that people come more and spend more money on beauty or not?

Sometimes the tourists come here and they cut hair, but the local people are...

The main customers?

Yeah.

And do they now have more money to spend on their beauty or?

Yes.

And she thinks it’s because the economic situation has increased?
Yes. Sometimes if they have the festival or something. Like Novation, like donation, when they have that, they come and they prepare themselves.

And that’s more now than it was before?

Now, yeah, they spend their money in here.

And before, a few years ago it was not like that? They didn’t spend much money?

Yeah. Now is better than before.

And ehm, can she, like, can she describe a really happy day in her life and one that was a bit frustrating?

She is very happy to work with this job. Ehm, when she close the shop, the customer, when the customer come here, she is very, you know, very sad. When she closed the shop.

When did she close the shop?

Ehh, like a kind of reason. When she eat or something.

Oh when she eats, okay, and then when customers come here and the shop is closed...

She is very sad at that time. Yeah and sometimes if the customer is very, you know, very, the customer is very much in here, in that time she hasn’t any sister here and at that time she is alone and she is very busy, at that time she want to close. Haha

Too stressful.

Yeah.

And how would she describe happiness in life or a happy day in her life?

Eh, their father and mother live in Pindaya, so every month, she sends the money for them. So it’s her happiness.

Being able to support them.

Yeah.

And then the people she employs here, did she give them training for hairdresser or did they already know how to cut hair? When she opened the shop and the people worked here.

She teach herself to another sisters.
Oh it’s her sisters.

Yeah. Her sister and niece.

Okay. And then she trained them as hairdresser.

Yes.

Yeah, ehm, maybe just one more question, like what she thinks about the good and not so good things about more and more tourists coming here? Is there anything she thinks is really good about that or maybe something that is not so good about it?

She cannot describe because of, she cannot speak English well. So when the tourist come here, like, how would you like to cut your hair or how much is it. Then she cannot describe.

Okay so that’s hard for her.

Yeah.

So she would like to learn English better so she can?

Yeah.

Okay. And ehm, you know, now with her own shop, she earns more than before and how can she, how does she realize that her life has become better, you know, in what way does she see “yeah I can spend more money on this or that”, in what way does she realize, “yes my life is better now”, how can she, you know what I mean?

Yes. She just want to, she just save her money, because of, she cannot do all the time this job.

Ah okay when she is older.

Yeah for later maybe she will change another job or something like that, so she save the money.

Okay, why does she think she cannot do this her whole life?

Eh, because of, she believe on the right, on the religious, in our Buddhism, we have ... and ..., so

And that means?
If you do like this, you know, if you do the best thing, you can be the best person, that’s why.

For example.

Okay.

So she believe in her previous job.

Previous job?

Yeah, the previous, it’s with the religious.

So she thinks that maybe one day she will have to do another job.

Yeah, one day she will be old and she cannot do this job, so she will change another job, something.

And does she have an idea what she wants to do then?

She, you know, she will just save her money and she will pay to her husband for their future. And maybe her husband will do something.

Okay yeah, and is this shop licensed? Like an official shop where she pays taxes or?

She have to pay license.

And taxes to government.

Yes.

Okay, thank you.
Tuk Tuk Driver, Interviewee 13

Age: 21 years old
Residency: 21 years
Ethnic: Intha

Okay, thank you. So I’m doing research about people’s lives and how it has changed over time. And so I would like to know about your life as well, like how is your life since school? Can you tell me a story, about how his life has been since school?

He’s thinking.

Just tell about his life. Like “then I went to school, I got my first job”, you know, like that.

Last 4 years ago he was a student and he quit from school and he work as a cement holder, in construction and he worked. And then he drive his friend’s tuk tuk and now.

He has his own tuk tuk now?

No. The owner is near the shop.

Why did he quit school?

He failed high school and so he quit.

And then the construction was just the first job that was possible or available for him?

Yes.

And how did he get into the tuk tuk driving?

8 months, nearly 1 year.

And how, what does he think about his job, what’s the good and what’s the bad?

Better than before.

Better than construction?

Yes.

Is it because why? Why is it better?
Eh, you know, they are not very tired for this job. But they have to come early in the morning to here because of the express bus. The guests are come here and if they come early they can get money. And if they go early in the morning they can get money, it’s easy for them. Also the construction, for the construction, very tired for that. So their income is very low and now is higher than before. If they do more, they can get more.

And like, he is mainly driving tourists or also locals?

Both.

And in low season how is it then? Then no tourists are here, or not many. How is it then for his life? His income and his job?

They have the order from the hotel. In the hotel if they order then to winery or something like that. Now is, they have to be patient because of they are waiting for the guests every time.

They are waiting for the guests to come from Yangon or so? What guests are they waiting for?

Yes, they have to come early in the morning to wait for them. And in the evening or something like that time they have to wait.

Okay, so during the day is not much?

Yeah.

Not much work? Only morning and evening?

Yes.

And what does he think about quality of life, before tourism came and now that there is more tourism?

Last 3 years ago, tuk tuk is not very popular in Nyaung Shwe, so they have to go with Trishaw.

The cycle?

Yes and they pick the foreigner and they go to the destination. Very hard for them.

Very tiring?

Yes.

And now they have the tuk tuk and that’s better.
Yes, that’s better. But he hasn’t his own tuk tuk.

*Somebody else owns it. And he has to pay for the rent?*

Yeah. They have to pay 30% to owner. They can keep the rest of the money. They pay once a week or so, depending on how much they use it.

*And if, about his life, how does he feel about his life and satisfaction of his life now compared to before?*

He said that he want to be a tuk tuk owner so he want to save money to become an owner.

*And why?*

because of now is, he has to pay 30% to owner so you know, if he has more customer or one day is no customer and he has to pay anyway, is very bad for him so he want to be an owner.

*And is it hard to buy own tuk tuk, or how long will it take. Does he have any idea what it takes to have his own tuk tuk? Is it difficult?*

It takes many times. Because of the tuk tuk is roundabout 40 millions, that’s why. They’re trying to save the money, take time.

*So it’s gonna take years?*

Yes.

*And can he describe maybe one very happy day in his life and one frustrating day in his life? What is the happiness in his life and what is the frustrating part?*

The happiness time is to go with the customer many times.

*Many different places, so that they pay for the whole day?*

Yes, and also sometimes you know, they have their duty number 1, number 2, number 3.

*What do you mean?*

It means maybe they have their own number, 1, 2 like that and number 1 and if number 1 is go, then number 2 can go. If his turn is you know, let’s say 2 and the other one came out with the customer. At that time he is disappointed.

*Disappointed when he is number 2?*
But when number 3 or 4 go.

So, when they take his turn?

Yes.

They don’t care about the list?

Yes.

So it’s competition between the tuk tuk drivers?

Yes. But only sometimes.

Okay and on a normal day, how many customers does he have? How many rides does he do on 1 day?

Peak season, they have to go 4 times in a day but now is, today he didn’t go anywhere, just waiting here. Like the low season. It depends on the customer.

Okay, so he has a problem actually in the low season. It’s very slow, so does he actually have to make money in the high season for the whole year or how does it work?

They have the family, his sister or brother so is not very dependent on his job.

Okay, so if he doesn’t make any money, his family supports?

Yes. So they all support each other?

Yes.

And so basically is he saying also that if it wasn’t for the tourists coming here, his life would’ve been in construction? And he would’ve had a worse life? You know, if tourists wouldn’t come here, no tourism in Nyaung Shwe, so then he would’ve had to stay on construction and then his life would’ve been worse? With tourism everything better?

Yes the construction is if here no tourists he had to stay in construction and he had to try to become the head.

Because then he gets more money?

Yes. The head is, got much money than the others.

But now with tourism is better?
Yes.

And is there anything about tourism here? So many tourists coming here, anything not so good?

Some of the tourists they don’t believe the tuk tuk driver because of you know, they are not very believe in them.

You mean, like when they say it’s 3,000 MMK and then they say “no it’s too expensive”, or how does he mean?

No, when they go to their hotel is very you know, far from here, they don’t believe and say I will walk. Like that. Sometimes like a guest who want to drive with the tuk tuk but some of the girls called to walk with them, then he also walked. That is a problem.

So he wanted to drive them but then he said no we will walk?

Yes. They just believed on their you know, the others, not the driver. The other tourists.

And why does he think it is that the people don’t believe?

He cannot describe but most of the guests from Asia don’t believe them. So it’s a problem.

What does he think then when he goes to tourists and says “it’s very far, I will drive you” and they say “no no, I don’t believe you”. What does, how does it make him feel?

No, they don’t reply his answer.

And how does THAT make him feel I would like to know?

Disappointed.

And he is disappointed that they don’t believe him or is he disappointed that he loses the money?

Both.

Of course, I understand. One final thing, what does he think about how tourism has changed the town and Nyaung Shwe. What does he think about tourism development changing everything here?
Now is the tourist come more and more they have higher income and then other employees get the opportunity for work, is very good for the local people and also before the express bus stopped at Shwe Nyaung, they have to go early in the morning, like 3am and then very cold or, now is better because they come and stop here.

Then they have to drive them only to the hotel?

Yeah, now is very better.

Okay, so he doesn’t see any negative things about tourism development here?

He hasn’t any negative.
Rice Farmer, Interviewee 14
Age: 63 years old
Residency: 63 years
Ethnic group: Burmese

Okay so, I’m doing research for my university about people’s lives, how they have changed in Nyaung Shwe through tourism and all the things that have changed. And if you could tell me the story of you, your life here, how it was before and how it is now.

Yeah, eh, I think 10 years ago, they grew the rice with buffalo, they haven’t any machines and also they can use the fertilizer, natural fertilizer. Now is the population is higher and higher so they have to grow more rice so now they use with the machine as replacement of the buffalo. And also they use the mortar for the water and they can absorb water for their farm. Yeah and now is better than before.

Also the way they are now growing the seeds is better than before? What does he think about the change to machinery and chemical fertilizer? What does he think about that change?

When they use the fertilizer they mix with chemical and organic but chemical is a little bit more than the organic.

They use more chemical?

Yes, because of they use more chemical, they have more rice and then they have more income and they can hire more machine and also the employees. And also they have the grow system.

Yeah and he is saying that growth in population has also increased business for him. And does this growth of population, what does he think, what does it have to do with? Like why are there coming more people here. Is it because of tourism or?

Because of not only the foreigners but also the local people. Especially they have only 5 acres, for example they have only 5 acres but the local people, they have the new generation and is normal life. They have grandchildren, like that. They have more generations. So ehm, they are farm is not increased just the generation is increased.

Can you asked him how much the machines have reduced the number of workers he needs here? Since they introduced the machines, do they have less people working on the farm?

Kommentiert [KT159]: ECONOMIC GROWTH
Rise in population also through migration workers for tourism.
Technical advancement, through economic growth can afford machine

Kommentiert [KT160]: RESPONSIBLE / ECONOMIC GROWTH
Also here financial gain more important than environment
Thought of economic growth is prevailing
Eh they have a long process, from the start to the end. They have to use about over 50 people, for the machine is at least 2 people they need. And then for the rest they need about 30 people to harvest. And then they have to carry the crops to the tent so they need roundabout 10 people and then they have to use a big machine that is, this machine, threshing. Harvester.

*Does the machine help them to produce more products?*

Yeah

*With the same workers, amount of people?*

Eh, 30 horses. They use with horses.

*For the machine?*

Yeah, for the machine.

*And it’s faster than with the buffalo or?*

Yes, faster and also the employees.

*And he said that the population growth has a good impact on his, because he is selling more, right? But does he also see any negative effects with this? More people, more foreigners? Does he see anything negative with this?*

Okay. Now some of their workers moved to another place, like construction or something like that. So they have a problem with the workers.

Okay and why do you think they move to another field? Why did they move to construction and didn’t stay here?

Eh because of the price, you know.

*The pay is higher?*

Yeah and also the farmers have to work, even raining or even hot. And also they cannot pay that amount of money, so they moved to another site. And another site they get more price.

*So it’s working conditions and better price?*

Yeah, so they have a problem with the workers.
Okay and the workers here that you employ, are they all unskilled, or what kind of jobs does this farm create? Unskilled or are there skilled workers?

Can you explain again?

The jobs here on the farm, are they all without training or are they all unskilled?

No, they have, they are learning with their experience.

So they come here without any knowledge of farming? And then they learn here?

Yes, learn on the job. They call the workers from the farmers’ family. So they are also experienced.

Okay, so they have a farm at home so that’s how they already know about farming?

Yes and also they are from the agriculture university.

Like you, you are from university?

She is from Mandalay University. No, Naypidaw. There is agriculture university.

So it’s a mix of skilled and unskilled work here?

Yes. And also they are technicians too, for the rice. They share the methods of how to grow the rice. She explain about the methods.

Okay so you learned in university how and then you give your knowledge to other people here?

Yes, yes.

Interesting. And I would like to know how this change how it has affected his personal life, quality of life, standard of living. How has it affected his life, all this change, growth of population, technology.

Now the communication is very developed and so most of the people from here have moved to another place and also another place from, moved to here. You know, they are sharing about their life. Like you know, the technique, like that. So now is very developing.

And that has, what kind of impact on his life? Like, what does it change in his life?

Eh, before, he did with the only with the workers, not with the machines. So it was very tiring for him. Now is very improving in his life.
So also his health is better? Because he has better condition.
Yes. Now he can use with the machine.
So that improves his quality of life?
Yeah.
And what does he personally think, what are the positive and negative things about his job?
The good things and not so good things?
Yeah, growing the rice is his life so it’s the best job.
He’s done it all his life and he likes it?
Yeah.
Okay. And how does he feel about his life now compared to before? Like how does he feel about his life?
Yeah he is very satisfied on his life. Because of since he was 18 years old he start working with the farm so he is very happy to work here.
And he’s happy because now he sees it improving, like income? He sees that’s improving? With the income and all of that?
Yeah.
And ehm, can he maybe share like one of his happiest moments and one of his most frustrating moments maybe? A small story, one of the happiest and one of the most frustrating moments.
According to his life, when, it’s because of the weather. When he got many crops at that time is happiness time and also when he lose all the crops because of the weather.
He can’t control it and then he loses money if the weather is bad?
Yeah, he have to you know, pay for the year.
And one last thing, his personal thoughts about how Nyaung Shwe has developed over time. How it has changed. Does he like it or what does he think about it, the change that came with tourism and tourism development? How does he think about it personally?
Ehm, now, eh, he is very happy to come the tourists here because of most of the people in Nyaung Shwe get the opportunity to work.

Okay, so tourism has brought jobs?

Yes. And you know, the people from Yangon and Mandalay they come here and they share their knowledge to the local and then our local people do like the people who live in Yangon and Mandalay.

So they can benefit from tourism and outside people bringing their skills and knowledge.

Yes.

Just may I ask, how much would the average worker here earn?

It depends on the situation. You know, today is 10 workers but maybe tomorrow is like 20 or 30, so it depends on the situation.

But how much do the workers get per day?

For the women is 3,000 MMK per day and for the men is like 4,000 MMK. For the machine holder is 5,000 MMK.

So the jobs here are not very regular, right? So workers never know, do they have a job today, do they have a job tomorrow?

Yeah they have their own group communication with their job. He said that tomorrow they have to come here so they come. Sometimes they haven’t any, they’re not busy so they take their day off.

And then they don’t get paid for that day?

Yeah.

They move to other farms and work in different places?

Yes, exactly.
Clothing Shop, Interviewee 15

Age: 36
Residency: 36 years
Ethnicity: Shan

I’m from a university and I’m looking into social change in Nyaung Shwe and how lives have changed over the years and so I would really like to just hear about your life. Can you just tell me something about your life and how it has changed over the years? With all the political changes and all the tourism coming in and how all of that has changed your life. You know?

Ehm, just 3 years ago her economic is very higher than before cause most of the tourists are come and visit around this region so her business is always high.

So before that you only sold to locals and now also tourists?

Last 3 years ago here has only local people so is very, foreigner is, most of the tourists didn’t come here so her income is very lower and now is very better than before.

Okay and can you tell me how it was for you, suddenly all this people coming in? All this foreigners, how did that make you feel? Were you very surprised or how did you feel about that?

Eh, she is very happy to share with the foreigner because of her own business.

So because that has picked up.

Last 3 years ago when she bought the house for her shop, she cannot sell because of the money, so eh, and then, eh when the foreigner come here, now she can pay the rent for her business.

Okay. And do you also feel that the locals spend more money on clothing or is it just the tourists?

Locals also.

Also? More than before?

Yes.

Okay, because now everybody has more money?
Yea. She said that the local people bought 75%, more than the tourists.

Ok, now also?

Yeah.

75% local?

Yeah.

But because they have more money now?

Yes.

Okay that’s nice. And ehm, so about quality of life, standard of living, how has that changed for you through this? Can you just give me an example how that has changed?

Now is, they have their own income, so their living standard is more higher than before.

And before they didn’t have their own income?

Yeah. Not too many.

Oh okay, it was very low?

Yeah.

So now your income is higher. But also, are prices also higher for you? Like when you go and buy something is that more expensive?

Eh, no.

No?

Just a little higher but not so much.

Okay. And but you have always sold the clothes or have you done anything else?

No, always clothes.

We have a farm. My brother in law works there. They have a rice plantation.

That’s your brother in law?

Yeah.
But you don’t work there?
No.

Okay. And how did you get into selling clothes? Was it through your mother or how did you get into the business?
Is by the generation. Her mother also sold the clothes.

Was it the same shop your mother had?
Not like that. Like that is just 20 years.

Oh, ‘only’ 20 years.

Her mother sold for the local people, something came from Thailand, or Laos or Indonesia like that but herself is for the local people like Intha style, Shan style, like this.

But you only sell, you buy the clothes somewhere and you sell? You don’t sew yourself?
No.

Okay. And can you think of anything negative that this tourism has brought? Like all the tourists coming in, is there anything you don’t like about it, anything that’s not so good?

No she hasn’t any negative for.

Only positive?
Yeah.

Ehm and what about the really positive and some maybe not so good things about your job. Is there anything really nice and something not so good?

She is always you know, worried, finding the customer so she hasn’t had any problem with the customer, everything is okay.

When you think about your life 2 or 3 years ago. And then you think about your life now. How does it make you feel? How do you feel about your life? Those 2 times compared?

Before, last 3 years they have their niece and student so they apply for them. Many cost for them. Now they already go to university. Only 2 years left so now is their cost not very higher, now is better than before.
Okay. So it was a problem before, sending them to school, it was expensive, but now?

Now is okay.

Okay and can you describe a good life or happiness in life? How do you personally describe a good life?

She is always happy so she cannot describe the happiness.

But what is important for you in life? What are the things that are important for your happiness? Is it family or?

Family.

Anything else?

Just family.

Healthy family and?

Healthy and happy family.

And are there any concerns in life. You know?

Sometimes they have a problem, no, the running of the business. Yeah, sometimes, they pay with like, you know, like a million Kyats, billion. So, when she sold to customer she only get like 25 million for her, so she cannot you know, cover the cost. Sometimes she has a problem but can stay happy in her life.

So, sometimes money is a problem but overall the situation is okay?

Yeah. And also here is no debt system that you can borrow from bank. Everything is done on credit. When they want to borrow from the bank they have to pay our home agreement or car or something but her mother didn’t like the system so they have no bank. My mother is older, she don’t believe everybody. Only she believe herself.

Why do you think that is?

Because of since their life, now is changing, everything is changing but not the same with different people. My mother, younger time is not like that, but now is changing, they don’t want to change.
What about you? Do you want the change, like the change?

We want change but in Myanmar we have to respect our mother. That’s why.

That’s why you still do it the old way?

Yeah. And the money holder is just my mother. She’s the bank. So that problem for me.

What do you like about the change? You know, everything is changing, what do you like about it, why do you like it?

Now is you know, Myanmar developing country like internationals, so if we also changing, we will be improved like the living standard.

So you believe that if you go with the change then you can be better, your life can be better?

Yeah.

And then one last question. What do you think all these changes, especially the tourism, how has that changed Nyaung Shwe, your neighborhood, your community?

Eh, her thought is that Nyaung Shwe is this small township in this region so we haven’t like a business, so we only do like tourism like hotel and tour guide, restaurant. So if the more guest come here, for the people who live in Nyaung Shwe will be better than before. Standard will be higher than before.

Okay, so you think like, but before all the tourists came people also had jobs, right? They did something else, but now you think jobs in tourism is better for them?

Yes, because of they only do the tomato from the Inle and we export to like Mandalay or Yangon. Now is you know, jobless are lower and lower.

Unemployment is lower.

Yes. And also most of the people from another region come here and work here like construction.

What do you think about that? Like people from other regions coming here to work, you think it’s good?

Good. For me. Because town is small, not so many people but construction worker they coming in my town, so they can buy everything.
So also good for your business?

Yeah

And can you describe maybe, as one last thing, one situation in your business that made you really happy. Can you describe like one story that made you really happy?

Eh, her happiness is at the moment she design like a shirt or like a kind of Longyi and she sent the design to the tailor, eh weaver, and then when she sell to the customer and if the customer like, that is her happiness. Scarf or so.

Okay so you design and then you order at tailor. You do the design yourself.

Not myself, we look in magazines or so.

Okay and are your nieces or children are they also going to be in the shop?

No.

No? So, you think after this generation, the business will be down?

Eh, now is they are learning other things, go to university. In Yangon and one is now in Singapore. Investment government.

So they are not interested in working in the shop?

No. Not yet. They have their own interest.
Waitress, Interviewee 16

Age: 22 years old
Residency: 22 years
Ethnic group: Burmese

So, ehm I would like to know about your life and I’m looking into the employment situation and quality of life, life satisfaction before 2010 and now. And, so I would just like to know like how and in what way has your life changed over the last 6 or 7 years? Can you tell me just something about your life in general?

Yes. She though that the customer, most of the tourists are come here, so eh, the living standard is more higher than before.

Okay, and in what way, like for money reasons, or in what way does she think it’s better?

Now is, before here has many jobless, they are standing on the road, no now is, they are trying to work for the international standard.

Okay, so tourism has created employment?

Yes.

And how long have you been a waitress? How many years?

Yes, 2 years.

2 years. And before that?

Before, she worked here, she was a student and she learned about the food, how to make the food and how is the food named. Like that, and then she joined here.

Okay, so from highschool you went to study about food and hygiene to become a waitress?

Eh, she is very interested in cooking so she learned about the, how to cook the tasty food and then she joined here.

Okay, but, so would she in the future like to be a chef or?

Yes.

So now waitress and then you want to.
Be a chef.

Okay, that’s nice. And ehm, so how satisfied are you with your life now? Are you satisfied with your job and standard of living?

Yes, she is satisfied because of, eh, this is her dream, so she is satisfied.

Okay. So this has been her dream?

Not yet, but..

The chef?

The chef.

So, you’re on your way to being a chef.

Yes.

And can you say anything about the tourism here. What do you think about positive and negative effects on life about more tourists coming?

Now they have a lot of changing concerned with the tourism. Yeah, they are trying to change the menu for the customer so the customer will come here more than before. She thought that, she haven’t any negative from tourism.

And she personally? Positive and negative for her personally? What does she think?

No she haven’t any negative. For her personal.

Okay. And ehm, how would you describe a good life or happiness? What is your meaning of happiness in life? And good?

Cooking and serving for the customer is her happiness.

That’s your happiness. Okay. And like thinking of, economic happiness, material happiness, does that play a big role? Money. Is that important to her?

For the economic?

Yeah, for her own life, how important is money and having material things?
For the materials, eh, the owner went to Yangon, Mandalay like that and there they bought a lot of material, like the ingredient of the pasta or pizza. And also all the furniture are from another place, so...

Yeah, what I mean is ehm, how important are, for her personally, how important is money for her happiness? That’s what I means.

Ah, okay. She hasn’t any problem with.

So, ehm.

She is happy.

She is happy with that as well?

Yeah.

So it’s not so important for her to get more money?

Yeah, because of, she is from the near, from this shop, living in the Eastern of Naung Shwe. So she is very happy to work here.

But you live there, in the East.

Eh, is very close to your hotels.

Okay. And can you maybe explain to me like ehm, how it makes you, how going to school and how being able to work in a restaurant, maybe becoming a chef, how it makes her feel? Like, you know, maybe just share a story, like, how it makes her feel to...

Eh, she attend the highschool but she failed, but she learned about speaking about English and she has a teacher. She is very poor, so her teacher is, close to this restaurant and he believed that if she works in a restaurants, she will be good speaking and good skills. So she works here.

While going to school?

No, after school. And then, now she can work whatever, maybe she can cook, she can serve the customer. She is very improving.

Okay, that’s nice. And ehm, where did she go to school?

Just in Nyaung Shwe.
In Highschool or? What was the food training?

It’s very close to, Eastern part of the town. And there is a teacher who teach for the English speaking and grammar, or like about hotel working, about the guide.

Okay, so it’s private, it’s not like government?

Yeah, private teacher.

How many years?

Just for one month.

One month training and then she came here?

Yes.

And why did you decide to do the training and then work as a waitress? Like, what made you want to be in this career? Why?

Eh because of, eh, her teacher is, want to her to work here because she can get many experience from her work, so.

So it was all through her teacher?

Yeah.

Okay. And can you ask her, what’s important for her in life. Besides her job. Is there anything else that’s important for her?

She want to teach in a, on an orphanage as a English teacher, or speaking teacher.

Okay, so that’s your other dream besides being a chef?

Yes.

Okay. And ehm does she have any concerns in life? You know, like anything that she thinks about that makes her sad or you know, like, concerns.

Can you please repeat that?

Yeah, any concerns in life? So what does she think about a lot that might be a problem or does she have any problems in her life?
Eh, now, no, before she was working here she has many misunderstanding from everywhere. Like the customer and also from her or family.

*Misunderstanding in what way?*

Sometimes she work at 9am to 9pm and sometimes if the customer too much, so she came back like 10pm or 11pm, so you know, her boyfriend is worried, or her family worried.

*Okay, but now not anymore?*

Yeah and then, now she is single. Her family is not worried about this. Cause they understand, this is the work for her and for the work the customer, when someone make a mistake, the customer told to her, so also the misunderstanding there. Sometimes she is crying, but now.

*Because it’s hard to understand or?*

Yes, but now she is trying to solve for her life.

*And now she can improve and then it’ll be easier in the end?*

Yeah.

*Okay. Last question. In the last years, can she remember one specific situation that made her very happy? Like one story, one specific situation that made her really happy?*

Yes, she has many happy memories with the customers. When the customer said, your cooking is very nice or you’re very good care.

*When she gets compliments from the customers?*

Yeah. And sometimes the customer go to their country, “come with us and work in our country”, like that, then she’s very happy.

*Would that be something you would like, go and work abroad? Could you imagine leaving Myanmar?*

Yes, yes. Yeah she wants to leave but she is trying to save the money.

*And about your job now. Can you tell me about the good and not so good things? You mentioned sometimes you work so much? So maybe that’s something that’s not so nice, is there anything else that’s not so good?*
Sometimes, if the customer don’t like the taste of the food, eh, the waitress is.

*The waitress gets the complaints but actually,*

It’s not concerned with them.

*Yeah I understand, that doesn’t make you feel so good.*

Yeah, yeah.

*And the really good part of your job is you say, the customer contact when they’re happy, right?*

Yes.

They will prepare new menu with Shan food, Thai food, Western food and try to get with agency who sends customers. For the next year, they are planning to do better.

*But does she have any idea, how long it will take to become a chef? What is needed until then?*

Yeah she cannot estimate the time but now she has pupil that she teach for the…?

*For the what, sorry?*

For the girl, to become a waitress. After she learned about the waitress she can be chef in this restaurant. Maybe she can save the money to be owner of a restaurant.

*So you have a whole plan? But it’s like your boss knows you want to become a chef and they support you in it? And they give you the opportunity one day?*

Yes.

*And then the chef now will teach you how to become?*

Yes. The owner teaches all the girls to become a chef or waitress.
Furniture Shop/Maker, Interviewee 17

Age: 46
Ethnic group: Burmese
Time of residency: 10 years

Please tell me a little bit about your background.

They are from Yangon and they moved to here roundabout 10 years ago.

Okay and ehm yeah, I would just like to know about his life like, how has it changed over the years. Has he always been a furniture maker, or, has he done anything else before?

Just the furniture making. Since he was in Yangon he makes this furniture, until now.

Okay, and why did he move here?

You know, in Yangon, the economy is very bad for him so he moved to here.

So, here economy is better because the people have more money or why is that?

Because of his wife is here.

The wife is here?

Yeah, so they moved here.

Okay.

In Yangon they haven’t, not many profit for them. So they moved here and then here, now I more better than in Yangon.

So here people buy more than in Yangon?

Yangon is more expensive than here, so. Because of the room. The rent is very expensive.

And you know, from before the country opened up, before 2010, compared to now, in what way has his life changed?

Because of now is, you know, the price is very high, also the money problem.

Okay, so now prices have increased because of tourism or because? Land prices and food and all of that?
Yes, all things. The price for everything is very high.

So it’s actually has got worse for him, the situation?

Yes.

So, the people now, do they spend more money on furniture than before?

Now everything is more expensive than before, so, ehm, the past was more value than the present.

What do you mean?

Because of price is changed and in the past it [the chair] was only 1,000 MMK now is more expensive.

So now, it is still balanced, people don’t spend more money, because everything is more expensive.

Yes.

Okay, I understand.

Okay, also cause of, the buildings are, like construction buildings and they have to create the decoration with the furniture so they spend more money.

So with the tourism, all the hotels, they need furniture and then they come here and also to buy furniture?

Sometimes. It’s just for the beds.

Beds?

Yeh.

Okay. So in that way, tourism has kind of increased his profit.

Yes.

Okay. And what does he think about quality of life and his standard of living now compared to before? The quality of life, what does he think about it, now compared to 6-7 years ago?
He is satisfied with his life. Because of, in his normal life, he is also a Buddhist so he is satisfied, how can I explain. He don’t want to do any, eh, greedy. So in normal life he want to reach like 75% but.

75% of what?
Want to reach.
Reach? 75%?
Yeah. In his mind he want to reach 75%.

What does that mean?
It’s, you know, he want to reach in his mind. Because it is impossible in our country to reach.
To reach the present.
To reach what?
To reach their life.

I don’t quite understand. To reach money, or?
Yeah.

And what is 75% then? In money or?
Ys in money. He want to reach 75 percent but impossible.

Okay.

Because of in our country is not very developed. To our public people, so. He is 65.

Okay, and so like his standard of living has it improved as well over the years?
In 24 years old he got married and he learned about this furniture and he has a son. And then his business is broke down.

His business broke down?
Yes, so they moved to here and then he tried to success again. Now is better than before.

Okay, and ehm, you just said, his life is better than before, because cost of living is better than in Yangon?
Yes, because many furniture store, so you know, very complicated.

And many customers here. More than in Yangon.

Many saturation that cost the break down. Of his business.

Saturation?

Yeah.

Okay. And how did he learn about the furniture building?

In Yangon there is, like a furniture store and he learned about it there.

Just there, locally?

Yeah and then he studied about one thing and then he can do everything with his experience.

He studied? Sorry, 1 year?

No, 1 thing, like a chair.

So he studied how to make a chair and then from there he went on to make closets and more?

Yes, and his idea he can do everything.

The design he makes himself.

Yes.

Okay, nice. And just one last thing. So the impact of tourism and all the foreigners coming to Nyaung Shwe, how has it changed or impacted his life in a positive and also negative way?

They have a problem with, a problem, because of the government not allow to take the teakwood. So they have a problem. So they don’t dare to use the teakwood or more widely, you know?

So before it wasn’t a problem but now it has changed and the government.

Yes before they have a permission with the government now is not allowed to use the teakwood anymore.

And why is there? Why is it not allowed to use anymore now?
Because, you know, now is the teakwood deforestation and also the teakwood is very expensive and very valuable. In the Golden Triangle area, you know, they stole and put to Thailand so the government don’t allow to take anymore.

Okay, and that’s also because now through tourism more teakwood is used in the hotels and all of that? And that’s also one of the problems?

Yes, one of the problems.

And that’s why now the small company like this has problems because he’s not allowed to?

Yes.

And how does he do it now? Because he needs teakwood, right? So how does he handle that? Like what does he do?

Yeah they have to replace another kind of wood. Now is you know, the teakwood is the best wood in, for the furniture, so they have a problem with that.

So the quality is worse, or?

Yes.

And people want teakwood, right?

Yes. And if they replace with another wood, it’s easy to damage.

Ah okay, so this is better quality?

Yes.

So, does it also mean if he has other wood that he can only sell it for less money? Will he only profit less with other wood?

Now is, you know, the replacement of the wood is from China. Is more expensive than teakwood.

So he gets his wood now from China then?

Yeah but doesn’t use. He just the teakwood now is not available.

And then he has to buy wood from China now?

No, he doesn’t.
No, but then now he is not allowed to use teakwood anymore, so he has to use other wood soon?
Yes.

And that’s from China?
Yes.

And importing it is more expensive than the teakwood?
Yes.

And then he has to sell the bad quality for more money basically?
Yes. The amount is a little bit higher than teakwood but he thought that the quality of the teakwood is better than this.

And then he has to sell the bad quality furniture for the same price or even higher.
Yes.

Remarks from translator later: Government controls teakwood and he wants permission for all furniture stores but government allows organizations with more money, who give “donation” to the country but not small businesses.
Construction Site Hotel, Interviewee 19

- Construction company: XXXX
- Workers from Yangon and Mandalay
- Payment: women 3,000/day, men 6,500/day
- Engineers from Yangon, but not trained
- At the moment/in general here (Nyaung Shwe) there are too many holidays and festivals, so not enough working days for locals → workers from Yangon/Mandalay preferred
- Construction site there for 1 year, expected to be finished in 4 months from now
- Supervisor would prefer trained workers from Nyaung Shwe if they work the same hours as others then
- Most of the workers from Yangon were trained before by foreigners, such as Japanese or German hotel investors who trained them for own construction
- 100 people employed here

Construction Site Bank, Interviewee 18

- Yangon-based construction company: XXXX
- Workers come from Yangon, Mandalay and Nyaung Shwe
- Skills only from experience, no training. Few trained workers from Yangon (electricians and aluminum workers)
- Women: 3,000/day, men 4,500/day
- 8-5 workday, 1h lunch break
- Bank pays the salary, 60 people employed
- Trained local workers would be nice but they will only be employed if they aren’t more expensive

Construction Site Hotel, Interviewee 20

- Construction company: XXXX
- Workers come from Taunggyi → they call the leader of the village workers who then selects and sends the workers to the site, they are the supervisor’s friends
- 50 people working on site
- Payment depending on job, between 4,500 and 8,500/day every 5 days