

AND THAILAND STILL SMILES

**A Study on Post-Tsunami Livelihood Recovery of Phuket and
Khao Lak**

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Master's thesis

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AND THAILAND STILL SMILES: A study on Post-tsunami Livelihood Recovery of Phuket and Khao Lak

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the thesis is to explore the ways in which tourism related livelihoods of Phuket and Khao Lak have recovered from the tsunami. The study also looks at the underlying reasons for why some livelihoods of the disaster-affected communities have recovered, while others still struggle for survival.

The conceptual framework is built around sustainable livelihood recovery. Special attention is paid to four recovery aspects through which the recovery of livelihoods is studied; reputational, economic, social, and relational recovery. Key areas of these recovery aspects include tsunami-related risks and images, governmental assistance, the role of the NGOs especially in relation to skills development, tourist-host encounters, and vulnerability.

The empirical data is derived from author's observations and five theme interviews between October and November 2006 in Phuket and Khao Lak. The empirical data is reflected to other tsunami related studies as well.

The findings of the thesis indicate that tsunami had both immediate and long-term consequences on livelihoods of Phuket and Khao Lak. The state of livelihood recovery varies between disaster-affected communities and Khao Lak, in particular, is still struggling for livelihood restoration. Livelihood recovery has been especially challenging among the minorities of Southern Thailand as well as the poor in general.

Relief aid provided by the Royal Thai Government was considered efficient in most cases, but lack of long-term assistance, mismanagement of disaster funding and corruption have prevented the recovery of livelihoods. The role of the NGOs was considered important in providing long-term aid and community-based development.

The thesis emphasizes the importance of long-term commitment in assisting the disaster-affected communities to rebuild their livelihoods in a sustainable manner. There is also a need to consider alternative livelihood opportunities for tourism in Phuket and Khao Lak. This could contribute to reducing vulnerability among the communities and increase the sustainability of livelihoods in Southern Thailand.

Key words: tsunami, Thailand, livelihoods, recovery, tourism, risks, sustainability.

JA THAIMAA HYMYILEE: Tutkimus tsunamin jälkeisestä elinkeinojen toipumisesta Phuketissa ja Khao Lakissa.

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tutkia tapoja, joiden avulla turismiin liittyvät elinkeinot ovat toipuneet tsunamin jälkeen Phuketissa ja Khao Lakissa. Tutkimuksessa etsitään myös piileviä syitä sille, miksi joissakin yhteisöissä elinkeinot ovat toipuneet toisten yhä taistellessa selviytyäkseen tsunamin seurauksista.

Tutkimuksen käsitteellinen perusta on elinkeinojen kestävä toipuminen. Erityisen huomion kohteena ovat toipumisen neljä osa-alueetta: maineen, talouden, yhteisöjen ja suhteiden toipuminen. Suhteessa toipumisen osa-alueisiin tutkimuksen tärkeimmiksi asioiksi nousivat tsunamiin liitetyt riskit ja mielikuvat, hallituksen tsunamiapu, kansalaisjärjestöjen rooli erityisesti taitojen kehittämisessä, turistien ja paikallisten välinen vuorovaikutus sekä haavoittuvuus.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen aineisto perustuu Phuketissa ja Khao Lakissa loka- marraskuussa 2006 tehtyyn havainnointiin sekä viiteen teemahaastatteluun. Tutkimuksessa verrataan empiiristä aineistoa myös muihin tsunami tutkimuksiin.

Tutkimus osoittaa, että tsunamilla on ollut sekä lyhyitä että pitkäkestoisia vaikutuksia Phuketin ja Khao Lakin elinkeinoille. Elinkeinojen toipuminen vaihtelee eri alueiden välillä ja erityisesti Khao Lakissa elinkeinojen palauttaminen entiselleen on vielä kesken. Elinkeinojen toipuminen on ollut erityisen haastavaa Etelä-Thaimaan vähemmistöjen ja köyhien keskuudessa.

Thai-hallituksen tarjoama välitön tsunamiapu arvioitiin haastatteluissa useimmiten riittäväksi, mutta hallituksen pitempiaikaisen avun puute, tsunamiavun huono koordinointi sekä korruptio ovat estäneet elinkeinojen toipumista. Kansalaisjärjestöjen rooli arvioitiin tärkeäksi pitkäaikaisen avun tarjoamisessa sekä yhteisökeskeisessä kehityksessä.

Tutkielma painottaa pitkäaikaisen avun merkityksellisyyttä. Tärkeää on myös sitoutua elinkeinojen kestäväan rakentamiseen tsunamista kärsivien yhteisöjen keskuudessa. Myös muiden kuin turismiin liittyvien elinkeinomahdollisuuksien kehittämistä tulisi miettiä Phuketin ja Khao Lakin alueille. Sen myötä yhteisöjen haavoittuvuus voisi pienentyä ja elinkeinojen kestävyys lisääntyä Etelä-Thaimaassa.

Avainsanat: tsunami, Thaimaa, elinkeinot, kestävyys, turismi, toipuminen, riskit

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ETC	Ecotourism Training Center
IUCN	the World Conservation Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PTA	Phuket's Tourist Association
RTG	Royal Thai Government
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
The UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WTO	World Tourism Organization

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Tsunami... Has it really been here? It's all so quiet around here, so beautiful. How could I ever understand it? It feels so wrong to feel as if it was never here. It must be somewhere – it cannot just disappear in less than 2 years.” (Field diary, Phuket, 24.10.2006.)

There are basically two ways in which people think of the tsunami of 2004¹. People either want to forget it ever existed or they have lost something they cannot forget. I travelled to Thailand in October 2006 to study the tsunami effects in Phuket and Khao Lak. After the relief period tsunami-related reporting disappeared rather quickly. The reason I initially wanted to take a closer look at the tsunami in my master's thesis, was to find out if tsunami affected communities had recovered in such a speed that there was nothing to report about. In Phuket, it surely did not seem as if the tsunami had struck there less than two years ago. In Khao Lak, however, you could still see and feel the effects of the tsunami.

Tsunami hit the coasts of Phuket and Khao Lak – among several other coasts of the Indian Ocean – on December 26th, 2004. It has been estimated that 227,073 people were killed in 12 countries, of which 176,300 were recovered (Kudos (Tsunami) Limited Production 2006). Due to the large number of foreign tourists in the affected areas, the disaster raised the interest of the major players in the political sphere, such as the EU and the USA (Kelman 31.3.2005). In fact, more than half of the tsunami victims of Thailand were foreigners (Thanawood et al. 2006). For the Finns, the disaster was the most fatal one since the wars (Vanhanen 2005, 7). Finnish tsunami related news concentrated mostly on Thailand due to the significant number of Finnish people in the affected areas (Mörä 2005, 12–15).

One of tsunami's impacts was the loss of employment opportunities. According to Oxfam International, tsunami affected small scale businesses, fishing families, labourers and those engaged to tourism sector the most. Many people were displaced by the tsunami and unable to keep up their usual livelihood activities. (Oxfam International 12/2005.)

The main focus of my thesis is *sustainable livelihood recovery of tourism related livelihoods of Phuket and Khao Lak between December 26th, 2004 and November 2006*. I will also concentrate on revealing the underlying reasons for different recovery processes

¹ People use different concepts when talking about the tsunami of 2004 e.g. Asian tsunami and Indian Ocean tsunami. From now on, I will refer to the tsunami of 2004 simply by the term the “tsunami”.

among tsunami-affected communities. I consider livelihood recovery as an important question in post-tsunami context because there are numerous issues that are connected to livelihood, such as economic well-being. I will study livelihood recovery through four recovery aspects; reputational, economic, relation, and social recovery.

I decided to write my thesis on post-tsunami tourism recovery during spring 2006 but it was not until autumn 2006 that I made a choice to concentrate on livelihood recovery. At the time, I considered livelihood recovery relevant for Thailand even though some time had passed after the tsunami that struck in December, 2004. And in fact, according to Doocy et al. (2006), disaster-affected communities were still in the need of sustainable assistance for livelihood recovery as of September 2006.

Why to choose a tsunami recovery study to write one's master's thesis on? Besides my curiosity about the events of post-relief period in Thailand, I am interested in studying tourism and its effects on developing countries. Developing countries are the ones that suffer the most from natural disasters. I consider the subject of my thesis relevant since, according to Smith (2004), disasters are killing more people now than ever before. Natural disasters affect the lives of 250 million people a year. Population growth, climate change, urbanisation, and the neglect of reforestation increase the possibility of a disaster. Poverty and environmental problems make the effects of natural disasters even more severe. (Einola-Head et al. 2007, 3.) The changes in climate have destroyed mangroves and the climate change will increase natural disaster which the world's poorest nations will suffer the most from. Spread of material wealth, globalization and reliance on technology all play a part in increasing the disasters - people appreciate these things more than they value the state of economic and human development. (Smith 2004.)

Due to the increasing number of natural disasters, recovery processes and therefore recovery studies are needed all over the world. As a TV series that aired soon after Christmas 2006 proved, the recovery process of Thailand is still incomplete:

“Two years later 50,773 people are still missing, presumed deceased. It is estimated that one third of the victims were children. A tsunami early warning system is now being set up in Thailand. Thousands of survivors are still trying to rebuild their homes and their lives and this process will continue for many years to come.” (Kudos (Tsunami) Limited Production 2006.)

In the following chapter, I will introduce my theoretical standpoint and research problem. After that, I will consider tourism in Thailand and move on by taking a closer look at the tsunami in Phuket and Khao Lak with its devastating effects. In the fourth chapter, I will briefly introduce some relevant tsunami studies and after that, I will demonstrate my field work in Thailand as well as the method of the study. In the 6th chapter, I will analyze the data and move on to results in chapter 7. I will conclude my thesis in chapter 8 by introducing conclusions and recommendations of the thesis and considering the possibilities of future studies.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Tsunami is a natural hazard or a natural disaster depending from one's field of study and interest. I will take a look at the historical perspective and the variation of interest among hazard studies during the 20th century introduced by Keith Smith. I will also introduce and justify my own stand point at the wide field of hazard studies.

During the 1930s and 1940s people felt confident about science and demanded greater development both of natural resources and availability of capital for major public works. Geophysical extremes were seen as the cause of hazards and the use of physical control of natural events was seen as the best way to prevent hazards. This resulted in blaming the developing countries for behavioral faults. People believed that behavioral faults had resulted in natural hazards. (Smith 2004, 5.)

In the mid-1970s a radical or a structuralist approach appeared. This approach turned the focus from hazards to disasters and to the developing countries. Structuralist approach was developed by social scientists that had first-hand experience of the Third World. The question of a relationship between disasters and underdevelopment was raised. Economic dependency, marginalisation of poor people and colonial legacy were seen as an increase to the impact of disasters. The human exploitation was seen as a cause of disasters in opposite to technological processes. Disasters were also considered to be normal events in the developing countries; partly because people of the Third World were forced to overuse the land constantly in order to survive. The concept of human vulnerability came also into existence when talking about natural disasters. (Smith 2004, 4–6.)

What is the difference between hazards and disasters? Smith states that when using the term hazard, people usually mean a naturally occurring or human-induced process with the potential to create loss. It is a potential threat to humans and their welfare. Disasters, on the other hand, are the social meaning of hazards as the extent of disaster losses are revealed in post-disaster context. (Smith 2004, 12.) According to Brooks (2003, 3), disasters are the outcome of hazards since disasters concentrate on evaluating hazard effects to the people affected.

According to Smith, social scientists – such as anthropologists and sociologists – have been interested in the structuralist approach and disaster-based view on natural hazards. The concentration has been in the need to improve human responses to the emergency situation created by disasters. (Smith 2004, 6–7.) Schipper et al. warn, however, that if too many development actors believed in uncontrollable disasters it may result in not taking the appropriate actions before and after the tsunami. This could result in neglecting disaster and vulnerability reduction. Schipper et al. suggest that disasters should be viewed as outcomes of risk produced by years of vulnerability. They also emphasize risk reduction methods in relation to natural disasters. (Schipper et al. 2006, 25–26.)

I will also refer to tsunami as a natural disaster since my interest in the issue is not at the actual time that tsunami occurred, but the recovery phase that took over after the immediate threat. I think that by using the disaster-based approach I can also consider vulnerability and poverty which I think play an important part in the livelihood recovery. I will also notice, however, that according to Smith (2004, 7), there is a need for a compromise because environmental hazards and disasters are simply two sides of the same coin. I believe that recovery studies that consider both risk and vulnerability are especially relevant in today's world. I also think that Shipper's view on interconnectedness between people's own action and disasters is real. People should not only watch helplessly as the number of disasters increase. Climate change and natural disaster can, for instance, affect one another.

My theoretical framework will be based on recovery since it is the main focus of my study. I believe, however, that there are numerous issues related to recovery and relevant to the study. I will start by introducing my research problem and continue by taking a closer look at four different aspects of recovery; reputational, economic, relational and social recovery.

2.1. Defining the research problem

What is recovery? Recovery as a term is used to describe everything between the recoveries from a brain damage to the recovery of infrastructure. It holds several different meanings but my focus is in the *sustainable recovery of livelihoods connected to tourism in Phuket and Khao Lak*. I will use the term recovery in the context of my study to compare the situation of tourism livelihoods before and after the tsunami through interviews, observation and previous studies.

I will take a look at the process of livelihood recovery between December 26th, 2004 and November 2006. My arguments are based on the data I gathered during October and November 2006. The situation has most likely changed after that but I had no means to study that.

The objective of my study is to assess the impact of tsunami disaster to the livelihoods of the tourism industry and study the recovery process that resulted from it. My overall research question is: *Have the tourism related livelihoods of Phuket and Khao Lak recovered from the tsunami in a sustainable manner?* More closely, my research question includes a question on what has assisted or prevented Phuket's and Khao Lak's tourism and tourism related livelihoods to recover. I will also compare the recovery process of the disaster-affected communities and find out whether there are apparent reasons why the recovery process of tourist livelihoods has been much more rapid in Phuket than in Khao Lak.

According to Dwyer et al., an idealistic view on recovery holds an idea of a community or a person being able to revert to their economic and social state prior a natural disaster. In the best case people could recover from natural hazards by returning to their previous life. Natural disasters are, however, life changing experiences for most of the people affected. (Dwyer et al. 2004.)

Despite its idealistic nature, I will consider recovery through the ability of a community or an individual to live the life in a same manner as before the tsunami. Regarding livelihoods this means whether a person is capable of pursuing his previous tourism business. Regarding sustainability this means whether a person is capable of returning back to his

previous social and economic state after the relief period in a sustainable way. I think that a strong basic view of recovery will help me to reflect the recovery process better.

When considering the post-tsunami improvement and sustainability of livelihoods, reverting back to one's old economic and social state is not always enough. According to the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and Oxfam International, it is crucial to help the locals to rebuild livelihoods in a sustainable manner after the relief period. Sustainability could play a part in both preventing and reducing poverty among tsunami-affected communities. (IUCN 02/2005; Oxfam International 12/2005) According to the UN Thailand (2005a), "*Sustainable livelihood recovery is a long term challenge, not a quick fix.*" As the previous quote predicts, recovering livelihoods in a sustainable manner requires time. I wanted to consider the question of sustainability in my thesis however time consuming sustainable livelihood recovery may be. If the sustainability of livelihoods was to be improved, post-tsunami recovery may have had some positive impacts on the areas it hit. I will introduce definition of sustainability more closely in section 2.2.4. In the context of my thesis it basically measures whether livelihood recovery has considered the poor and the marginalized, environmental issues, vulnerability, and the present and future state of livelihoods.

In order for the tourism related livelihoods to operate, they need the tourist back. I do, however, think that there is more to the recovery process than the return of the tourists. Besides the official numbers of tourist arrivals, I want to study the recovery process of the tsunami-affected communities and find out whether the individual tourist workers have recovered from the tsunami e.g. in social terms. To be able to do that, I will take a closer look at livelihood recovery through four recovery aspects in order to study the reputational, economic, relational, and social factors affecting livelihood recovery as well. I formed these recovery aspects based on both theory and data. I searched for similarities in theory and data and noticed that these issues were the strongest ones in the data and supported by the theory as well.

1. Reputational recovery
2. Economic recovery
3. Relational recovery
4. Social recovery

I think that the success of tourism related livelihoods depend, to some extent, on the reputation each tourism destination succeeds to create. I also believe that it is impossible for the livelihoods to operate without a strong economic basis. The relation between locals and tourists, on the other hand, is an important aspect of livelihood recovery since it is an essential part of the image of a tourist destination. Relationship also determines, to some extent, which destinations tourists decide to travel to. Social aspect of a community defines how capable the community is to cope and rebuild the livelihoods after a disaster.

It is obvious that sustainable livelihood recovery may not be found because my study takes place approximately two years after the tsunami, and sometimes sustainable recovery takes much longer than that. Also many people have already recovered from the tsunami, but not in a sustainable way. Some of the tsunami-affected communities have not been able to revert back to their previous livelihood opportunities not to mention develop their livelihoods in a sustainable manner. Also many people have most likely found new livelihoods or they may have left Phuket and Khao Lak for good. I will, however, make an attempt to study sustainable livelihood recovery in a coherent way by considering livelihood recovery through different recovery aspects.

2.2. Livelihood recovery

Recovering from the tsunami is a long process and according to Smith, there are basically three phases that people go through after facing a disaster. The first phase is a *relief period* which takes place instantly after the disaster. It includes rescuing and saving people's lives, taking care of their basic needs, such as water supply, and making sure no further losses will take place. The *rehabilitation phase* lasts from a few weeks to several months where the hurt area is being helped to function again. This includes taking care of the infrastructure e.g. by rebuilding the roads. In the *reconstruction phase*, things are being turned back to normal which takes a lot of time. (Smith 2004, 49.) My main interest is in the reconstruction phase, as Smith defined it. Post-tsunami recovery covers also immediate recovery but tsunami proved the difficulty of fast livelihood recovery especially among the poor and vulnerable. However, I think that the first two phases have an effect on the third one and are important to consider as well. For instance, if the aid provided during the relief

period succeeded, it would be possible to concentrate on rebuilding the area not needing to meet the basic needs of the people anymore. In reality, I think that these stages overlap and cannot always be separated as precisely as in theory.

According to Coate et al. (2006) and Oxfam International (26.5.2005), in order to recover from the tsunami there is a need to involve the community at the grass-root level through local participation in decision-making. Coate et al. (2006) emphasize the importance of recovery efforts to acknowledge the norms and social patterns relevant in the society. Shaw (2006) thinks that the post-tsunami recovery process depends on social, political, administrative, economic and cultural context which results in the different coverage and time of recovery in different regions. It seems to me that there is no one way to recover since each society has its own ways of coping, culture and norms. What does recovery mean in post-tsunami Thailand?

According to Coate et al. the idea of “building better back” has taken over the recovery process of Thailand which argues that the tsunami is used as an opportunity to help the local communities to develop beyond what tsunami destroyed. This initiative includes partners from the UN based in Thailand, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). After the relief period, the UN, NGOs, and the RTG moved to long-term rehabilitation and recovery phase agreeing on four key areas; social protection, livelihood recovery, environmental rehabilitation, and disaster preparedness. (Coate et al. 2006.) The goals of this approach seem very good and equivalent to sustainable livelihood recovery. Whether the approach has been sufficient enough in meeting the needs of all affected by the tsunami is another question that I will take a closer look at in section 3.3 and chapter 4.

According to Lamberg (2005), the survivors have faced social, physical, economic, spiritual, and psychosocial needs following the tsunami. In many cases, tsunami has had an impact on the whole life of the survivors with interconnected impacts. I will analyze the recovery process of livelihoods in Khao Lak and Phuket through different recovery aspects because I believe that I will get a better picture on livelihood recovery by considering the reputational, economical, relational and social impacts and their recovery aspects in the societies as well. All of these four aspects have a strong connection to tourism livelihoods

recovery. I will introduce each aspect and their connection to livelihoods and recovery next.

2.2.1. Aspect of reputational recovery

International tourists tend to travel to destinations that are known of exceptional beauty, culture, and safety. Livelihood recovery of the tourism sector needs the tourists back. Hotels cannot operate without tourists, nor can they operate without local workers. Tsunami created a reputational crisis because tsunami scared people and I think that the reputational disaster is closely connected to the concept of risk. After the tsunami, people started to connect the word risk with Thailand. Tsunami created a feeling of insecurity among the tourists since tsunami killed tens of thousands of tourists. Tsunami killed also numerous Thais, especially tourist workers, which created fears among the Thai people as well. I will study the reputational recovery through the concept of risk and risk perception.

Risks – an obstacle for reputational recovery?

The word *risk* is relevant for developing countries since they are struggling against both human made and involuntary risks. Developing countries face challenges in terms of urbanisation and population growth, to mention only a few. According to Adams (2001, 311), the risks of developing world are in relation to modernity, poverty and livelihoods. I think that risk is exceptionally relevant concept when talking about a developing nation and a natural disaster – developing countries are the ones that suffer the most from natural disasters.

Natural disasters are not a new phenomenon - yet according to Dwyer et al (2004), understanding the risks natural disasters create is somewhat a new trend which is increasing constantly. The relationship between people and their environment has become more complex as the infrastructure and population have increased. Social conditions have also fluctuated. (Dwyer et al. 2004.)

What does risk mean in relation to natural disasters? According to Smith, the word *risk* implies that there is a chance that a particular hazard will occur in relation to natural disasters. The peoples of the developing countries are at a greater risk of natural disasters than Western peoples and that is why the word risk is important in relation to the Third World nations. Also the means to handle and recover from disasters are somewhat worse in the developing countries. (Smith 2004, 12.)

Risks related to natural disasters seem to be complex and include also humanitarian issues, such as vulnerability. That is why I would like to use a wider definition of risk than the one Smith provided as risk simply meaning a possibility of a natural hazard to occur. Dwyer et al. (2004) completed a study on *Quantifying Social Vulnerability: a methodology for identifying those at risk to natural hazards*. The Risk Research Group of the study used a model for defining *risk* in which they modelled it out as: “Risk = Hazard * Elements Exposed * Vulnerability”. (Dwyer et al 2004.)

A *natural hazard* here is equal to an event with a certain likelihood and magnitude to occur. All natural hazards are uncertain in hazard’s spatial extent, occurrence and magnitude. *Elements exposed*, on the other hand, refer to people, networks, buildings, environment, and economy exposed to natural hazards. *Vulnerability* is a capacity of e.g. a person or an economy to resist, cope, and recover from natural hazards. (Dwyer et al 2004.)

I think that Dwyer’s definition of risk has a strong connection to post-tsunami recovery. Different countries and areas suffered differentially from tsunami since the elements exposed were different. I consider Dwyer’s definition more relevant for my thesis also because vulnerability is a very important concept for the study. According to Brooks (2003, 6), when relating vulnerability to risk, one’s field of study concentrates on the outcome of hazards which is my main interest as well. Vulnerability has a direct connection to recovery process since it measures the capacity of a disaster-affected community to cope and recover.

I think that risks can, if considered too big, prevent tourists from travelling to areas hit by natural disasters. They can also prevent locals from wanting to work in the tsunami-

affected areas. In my opinion, risks related to disaster-affected areas can play an important part in reputational recovery.

Tsunami – an involuntary risk

According to Smith, there are basically two types of risks in the world. *Voluntary risks* involve intentional activity, such as in the case of smoking. Voluntary risks are the biggest group of risks, yet widely acceptable. Natural disasters belong to the group of *involuntary risks*, which take place without anyone's knowledge or willingness. These kinds of risks are uncontrollable and inevitable. (Smith 2004, 37–38.)

Being involuntary risks, natural disasters cannot be eliminated but there are things that can be done to reduce their effects, such as risk management and assessment. Managing disasters tries to lower the effects of known hazards and at the same time maximise benefits related to it. The reduction of risk is somewhat a power battle which indicates the difficulty of the matter. Many times people make judgments about disasters based on their own experiences which make risk reduction quite a subjective matter. (Smith 2004, 36.)

According to Dwyer et al., mitigation aims at reducing vulnerability and it will also decrease risks through e.g. education or infrastructure improvement. This is one type of a risk management. (Dwyer et al 2004.) In the case of the tsunami, telling people how the sea behaves before a tsunami could have helped people to escape it. Schipper et al. (2006, 20) suggest that in order to mitigate risks, one should actually focus on reducing vulnerability.

Despite the importance of disaster management, assessment and mitigation, my focus will be in perceived risks. My interest is mostly on the effects of the perceived risks on livelihood recovery. On the other hand, mitigation studies are very relevant in studying and improving livelihood recovery as well.

Risk perception

Do you think that speeding outweighs the benefits of arriving to work at time? Or does the pleasure of smoking a cigarette beat its negative influences on health? People consider risks on a daily basis. We make different judgements and decisions depending on our own perception of risks. Previous experiences, fears, emotional capacity, and education have an impact on the decision. (Dwyer et al. 2004.) It would be impossible to define risk and risk perception in a universal way because risk simply means different things for different actors. People's perception on risks will affect the way people react to risks. I think that risk perception affects the tourists in deciding which destination to travel to. After all, who would want to travel to a risky area?

According to Dwyer et al., risk perception is not always equal to the actual risk since risk perception is based on the person's own interpretation of the situation. Sometimes perceived risk may become a substitute for actual risk in situations where the actual risk is unknown, such as the risk from natural disasters. Perception of risks is an interesting field of study since the ways people perceive risks will also reveal something about their values. This kind of information will most likely be valid in determining whether people have recovered from the disaster or not. (Dwyer et al 2004.)

Smith states that not only do the personal experiences and personality have an effect on the way people view disasters, but community and religion play a significant role there, too. Group perceptions in disasters may become even stronger than personal ones. (Smith 2004, 46.) Tsunami affected whole families and communities, and I think that group perception could have played a significant role after the tsunami. According to Smith, there are things that tend to increase risk perception. Unfamiliarity of tsunami hazard, a huge number of deaths and uncontrollable hazard make it hard for people to understand tsunami. Also media attention, lack of beliefs in authority, involuntary impact, and the overall immediate impact has most likely increased risk perception among victims. (Smith 2004, 47.)

Ichinosawa states that institutional, cultural, social, and psychological processes are actually interconnected with one's risk behavior and perception of risks. Differences in risk perception result in different kinds of behavioral responses and secondary consequences.

These consequences include both economic and social aspects of the society. (Ichinosawa 2006.) I will consider economic aspect in section 2.2.2. and social aspect in section 2.2.4.

Tsunami was a different experience for all it touched which is why I think that there are many views on risks that have influenced the reputation of Phuket and Khao Lak. It is impossible to find out all the views in this study. I think that by taking a closer look at risk perception it could be possible to create an overall picture on the perceived risks and the damage they have caused to the reputation. I will briefly consider Buddhist risk perception next.

Risk perception and Buddhism

According to Smith, the way people react to a disaster depends also on the purpose they see behind it all. Some believe there is fate behind it; others think it is more about their own responsibility than fate. People vary in their ways in believing whether hazards depend on external or internal control. (Smith 2004, 46.)

Buddhism has affected the way Thai people see the tsunami disaster. Buddhism is a relevant aspect of Thai culture since most of the Thai people are Buddhists. I think that understanding the world-view of the Buddhists is crucial in understanding the risk perception among the Thai people. What is the Buddhist view of life like? How do they see a natural disaster?

According to Stern, the Buddhists aim at wisdom and self-awareness which requires many years of meditation and study. Even though all the Thais are not religious, Buddhism has affected their way of thinking. Buddhists believe in karma that is independent by nature and beyond divine control. Among the Buddhist thinking, it is appreciable to strive above all the suffering because they see no point in dwelling in the sorrow. (Stern 2007, 185.)

By *karma*, Buddhists usually mean that there is a cause for every action and all the actions that people do are interconnected. If you did something bad in your previous life, you may have to face it in this life. According to Surya Das, people are not only responsible for their own karma, but by behaving exceptionally an individual contributes also to the karma of

his family and community. But still you cannot think that there is a cause for each action. It is not as Westerners often feel that there should be someone to blame. According to Surya Das, “karma is simply a system of causation – if one knows nothing more about it, that’s fine.” But still, Surya Das thinks that people who are engaged to their religion are more prepared for a tragedy than those who are not religious. (Surya Das 2007, 186–188.)

According to Bhante Uparatana, tsunami took place because people influenced badly on the karma of the universe. By *people* he means all the other people but those who have reached Nirvana². Bhante Uparatana points out, however, that if you are kind and behave accordingly, you can still face a natural disaster since no one really knows how karma works. (Bhante Uparatana 2007, 189–190.) According to Thurman, it is important to concentrate on one’s present behaviour and consider the consequences of these actions to future karma. There is no need to question what caused the tsunami. (Thurman 2007, 200.) That could be one of the reasons why the Thai people do not consider it important to talk about the past.

Stern thinks that understanding the tsunami is easiest for the Buddhists because their world view includes inevitable pain and suffering. Surviving sufferings and challenges is the whole point in life. Good people suffer in a life and that is a natural part of life. (Stern 2007, 202.) Buddhist view of life differs from our world view and it is important to keep in mind when doing a research on Buddhist country. This will also help in understanding they ways in which Thai people reacted to the disaster and contribute to the understanding of post-tsunami recovery among the Thai nation.

Risks and risk perception have, overall, caused a reputational disaster to Phuket and Khao Lak after the tsunami. I think that tsunami recovery in reputational sense can be studied through risk perception that might reveal significant information regarding post-tsunami livelihood recovery in the tourism sector.

² Nirvana is a desirable state among the Buddhists in which an individual has reached freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

2.2.2. Aspect of economic recovery

Economic recovery is essential in order for the Thai people to continue their previous livelihoods or start a new one. The interconnectedness of economy and tourism in tourism areas is undeniable. Tourism has contributed to economic development as well as affected local economies in a negative way.

According to World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism is vulnerable to economic changes and political instability. Foreign ownership and financial leakages may take the profits out of the community which results in tourist revenues escaping the local markets. (WTO 2002, 11, 34.) Stable economy would require steady tourist incomes but tourism is a business of seasonality that creates challenges for the infrastructure as well. Increasing visitor stay requires more trained workers. The problem of employment, however, may become apparent in regions where during the summer a need for workers is high, but during the winter there may be no jobs available. (WTO 2002.)

Tourism can, however, provide opportunities for economic improvement. Tourists travel as consumers to the destination which provides opportunities for the locals to make profit in many ways. Tourists buy goods and are willing to pay in order to get to know the local traditions, nature, culture and landscapes. (WTO 2002, 10.) Tsunami affected the local economy of both Phuket and Khao Lak which created a need to recover in economic terms. But has the post-tsunami economic recovery succeeded in Phuket and Khao Lak?

Post-tsunami economic recovery

According to United Nations Environment Programme UNEP (2005, 53) tsunami hit the main economic sectors of Thailand including tourism, agriculture and fisheries causing a major setback economically speaking. Tourist workers who lost their equipments such as jet skies, boats, or offices need to recover in economic terms. It takes a lot of money to purchase all the lost equipment back. Even if the government or an independent aid organization had provided the equipment, many tourist workers were not capable of pursuing their livelihoods directly after the tsunami. Many lost a few months' salary, some

lost a lot more. Tourism can provide tourist workers with lots of benefits, but the tsunami revealed also the economic fragility of tourism.

Shaw, World Conservation Union (IUCN) and Oxfam International see livelihood losses as one of the most severe economic effects of the tsunami, especially among the poor. The poor suffer the most from disasters due to their vulnerability to natural disasters. (Shaw 2006; IUCN 02/2005; Oxfam International 25.6.2005.) Economic impact has been most devastating for the poor who have become even poorer after the tsunami (Shaw 2006). According to IUCN (02/2005), the poor face difficulties in finding the means to recover from a disaster. Ichinosawa (2006) states that the loss of several months' earnings can be very severe for the micro business owners and unskilled workers that work in tourism related businesses. According to IUCN (02/2005), tsunami's impact has been massive especially among those engaged to small-scale economic activities on the coasts, since their livelihoods are often based on ecosystems that were damaged by the tsunami.

What could be done in order to recover in economic terms? Shaw recognizes the need to consider the linkage between livelihoods and environment. Coastal livelihoods and coastal areas are in conflict and post-tsunami recovery should consider the future impacts this conflict may result in. (Shaw 2006.) According to Coate et al., the first priority for recovery efforts should include supporting local economy and ensuring its functionality. The well-being of the economy would also ensure economic support for livelihood rehabilitation. Livelihoods lost in the tsunami were often uninsured which has created challenges for livelihood recovery especially in the informal sector. According to Coate et al., NGOs play a significant role in economic recovery in including the local community in their attempts to rebuild livelihoods. They also argue that economic recovery will be successful if all the sectors in the society participated, including the vulnerable and marginalized communities as well. (Coate et al. 2006.) Schipper et al. (2006, 20) state that disaster risk reduction has often concentrated on specific areas and ignored vulnerability that derives from the global political economy.

Economic loss among tsunami-affected communities has been significant, especially among the poor. A lot needs to be done in order to recover in economic terms. The few proposals introduced earlier suggest that actions should be taken in relation to coastal planning, vulnerability reduction, local participation and livelihood security. I think all of

these matters are significant and vulnerability, in specific, is an important concept for the thesis that I will consider in section 2.2.4. Next I will take a closer look at post-tsunami relational recovery.

2.2.3. Aspect of relational recovery

Tourism has been an important field of study among sociologists especially since the 1970s. Sociology studies tourism in four main aspects: the tourists, relationship between tourists and hosts, the structure of tourism system, and tourism consequences. (Cohen 1984, 373–374, 376.) I will concentrate on studying the relationship between tourists and locals even though tourism consequences and tourism system are also referred to in the study. Tourism industry is an interactive one since the tourist workers are often selling more than a product; they are selling a service. During my trip to Thailand, it was evident that the tourists had interactions with the locals on a daily basis in the tourist areas. I believe that the tsunami affected the relationship between tourists and tourist workers to some extent. I will consider the nature of the relationship between tourists and locals next.

Relationship of a host and a guest

Nettekoven introduced an idea of a relationship of a host and a guest in 1979. According to him, intercultural relations between the tourists and indigenous people consist of encounters with tourists, professional hosts – such as the hotel personnel – and with the residents who are employed into tourism sector indirectly. There are also encounters with local people who have no professional connection with the tourism sector. (Nettekoven 1979, 135.) I think it is, however, essential to realize that being tourist areas, almost all the people of Phuket and Khao Lak do have some sort of a connection to tourism.

According to Nettekoven, there are three basic misunderstanding when talking about tourism. Tourists have usually less intensive encounters with the hosts than is thought. In the result of the first misconception, interaction with the tourists is one of the least important influences on the indigenous cultures among most of the developing countries of Asia and Africa. Tourists have also less desire for intense intercultural encounter than

usually thought. Tourism also tends to concentrate on a one specific area which is why the international relations are also limited to that area. And, in the end, only a small number of people are capable of interacting with the foreigners since tourists interact mainly with the tourist workers. There is also a language barrier between locals and the tourists. (Nettekoven 1979, 135–136.)

Nettekoven's ideas date back to 1979 and since the world has changed during the last few decades; there is also a need to consider the current interest of his ideas. I think that tourists have become interested in interactions with the locals as people speak English all over the world. Tourists may only interact with the tourist workers, but e.g. in Phuket almost everyone has a connection to tourism in some respect. So if you only interacted with tourist workers that would mean thousands and thousands of people. According to Reid (2003, 105), tourism indeed affects the local culture and is both affected by the local culture.

I do think, however, that Nettekoven's ideas are valid to the extent that tourism is concentrated on certain areas in Thailand. Thai people do not speak English or interact with the tourists in the rural areas. Language barrier makes it difficult to interact with the Thai people in tourist areas as well, since not many Thais speak good English.

What has changed since 1979? Globalization, for one, is a phenomenon that affects also tourism today. McLaren states that globalization can be seen as a positive or a negative aspect in relation to tourism. Globalization threatens local communities, cultural diversity and local economy as the Western values, technology and foreign capital have been imported to developing countries. (McLaren 2003.) According to Kauppinen, globalization has, on the other hand, increased the knowledge of different cultures. It is possible to get first-hand experience on different environments, values and cultures in today's world. One could think that due to globalization, people are able to understand each other better and solidarity has increased between cultures. Globalization has also increased the number of world travellers interested in cultural differences. (Kauppinen 13.9.2006.)

Globalization is, on the other hand, reaching only a small number of people in the world. Kantola (2000, 13) emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the fact that globalization has an effect on a small amount of people on the globe, since 80 percent of the world's people have no access to television, for instance. There are also many poor in Thailand that

have no relation to globalization or tourism. There are thousands and thousands of slums that people live in and we visited one in Pattaya:

“We went to visit this old paralyzed man to a slum quite close to the city center today. The place he lived in was around 2 x 2 meters and he lay on the ground on top of some sort of a blanket. The place smelled and it was full of flies, but still the man was smiling the whole time we were there. It’s quite amazing how there are glorious tourist hotels in one area and thousands of areas with poor people trying to stay alive just a few kilometres away.” (Field diary, Pattaya, 14.10.2006.)

How significant is globalization in relation to the relationship of a host and a guest? I think that in Thailand many Thais have a connection to globalization through tourists. Globalization is especially evident in the tourist areas, however limited these areas are, since tourists are a product of globalization to some extent. I think that the encounters with the tourists could have a greater influence on the culture of the locals than Nettekoven thought in 1979 in places such as Phuket and Khao Lak.

The different faces of tourism

Dean MacCannel has analyzed the nature of meetings between the locals and the tourists. He has used the ideas of Goffman of front and back regions to build his view on. According to MacCannel, the front stage is the meeting place of the hosts and the guests, such as the hotel lounges and restaurants. The back, however, is the place for “real life”³. The hosts rest and prepare for their performances in the back. The back region could be a boiler room or a kitchen, for instance. The hosts use architectural arrangements in order to support their performance. The division is, however, primarily a social one due to the social performances given in the front region and the social rules that apply there. (MacCannel 1999, 92.)

According to MacCannell’s (1999, 93) theory, there is a problem of authentication in the tourism sector and mystification has taken its place which results in a weakened sense of reality. The life in Phuket and Khao Lak is all about tourism. One of my interviewees described the cultural differences between tourist areas and non-tourist areas as: “*The*

³ See also Cohen, E. (1984): *The sociology of tourism: approaches, issues and findings*. Annual review of sociology 10 page 380.

culture in non-tourist areas in much more Thai (Interview 2, Joanna). So in that sense there could be a problem of authentication when it comes to tourism in Thailand.

On the other hand, if a guest was to discover a frightening aspect of the back region, the life of the hosts could become too real for them as the guests have been blinded by the front region (MacCannel 1999, 93). Maybe this could be one of the reasons why the tsunami was so surprising. Who could have thought that something bad was to happen in a paradise?

There are basically three roles in the play; those who perform, those who are performed to, and an outsider who neither performs nor observes the show. Guests willing to get to know the real life of the hosts are often disappointed since the tours claiming to show the real life of the locals are usually arranged and acted. According to this view, truth is intimate. (MacCannel 1999, 92–94.)

A 36-year-old professor lost her whole family in Khao Lak. She gave an interview to the local newspaper with a smile on her face, not looking as someone who just lost her husband and two children in the tsunami. According to Kinnunen-Riipinen, the professor had to show to everyone that she will survive – if others survive losing their loved ones, she must too. (Kinnunen-Riipinen 2005, 85.) It is very important not to lose one's face in Thai culture. I believe that MacCannel's thoughts apply well to Thai society.

Tourist-host encounters

According to de Kadt, there are basically three different contexts in which the tourist-host encounters occur. The first one is the context of purchasing a service or a good from the host. In the second context, the hosts and the tourists find themselves sharing the same physical space side by side. The third context includes the two parties coming face to face to exchange ideas or information. (de Kadt 1979, 50.)

When talking about the international understanding between different cultures that tourism increases, people usually mean the third context. According to de Kadt the first two contexts are, however, the most common ones. Most of the tourists do not mind to be

institutionalized as tourists with a predictable vacation. The tourists often want to escape the reality and the last thing they would want during their vacation, is to deal with something problematic. (de Kadt 1979, 50–51.) De Kadt's views have similarities to those of Nettekoven. According to Nettekoven (1979, 136) tourists often do not wish to acknowledge the problems of a developing county during their visits. Also according to Cohen, the relationship often lasts only for a few days, weeks or months and the hosts and the guests feel no obligation to consider the effects of their previous actions for the future. Also mutual trust cannot be created in such a limited time. (Cohen 1984, 379.) De Kadt stresses (1979, 51) that there are, however, a smaller number of explorer tourists who are interested in the development of tourism as well and the real life of the locals. Explorer tourists would most likely be interested in considering the effects of their action as well.

According to de Kadt's view, it seems to me that most of the tourists would be pleased with the division between the front and back regions and the artificial tourism created to meet the tourist fantasies. According to de Kadt (1979, 58), the encounter of a visitor and a host has been commercialized and there are often ulterior motives that lie behind the hospitality of the host. Are the motives really based on one's own interests, such as money? According to Reid (2003, 109–111) tourism represent employment opportunities for the hosts and for the visitors and for the tourists it represents a mean to escape the reality and experience something unique. Cohen (1984, 374–375) introduces also an idea of commercialized hospitality where the relationship between tourists and locals has been materialized.

Being a business, tourism is concentrated around economy and money which I think is important to consider when analyzing the relationship of a host and a guest. I think the danger lays in idealizing tourism as something very unique and beautiful culture sharing which might neglect the negative aspects of tourism. On the other hand, tourism should not be regarded as something that is all about money because tourism is also social and interactive of its nature. In relation to post-tsunami livelihood recovery, relational recovery is crucial in order for the tourists to return. It may even be essential to rebuild the stage, as defined by MacCannel, to maintain tourism satisfactory and create an illusion of a paradise.

2.2.4. Aspect of social recovery

Social well-being of the Thai people plays an important part in the tourist industry since the tourists travel to Thailand to experience its magic beauty (see picture 15) and friendly locals. Local community needs to be socially strong and recovered in order to maintain tourism. I believe that without social recovery it would be impossible to maintain the high level of tourism in the tourist areas. Previously introduced idea of relational recovery is also social of its nature, but I will now concentrate purely on the recovery of Thai communities and study it through the concept of social vulnerability. I will also consider the possibilities of sustainable development and sustainable tourism in strengthening the Thai community and reducing vulnerability.

According to Oxfam International, the speed of recovery varies between tsunami-affected areas because pre-existing social structures affect the recovery. Income levels and gender issues, for instance, can determinate one's entitlement to assistance. (Oxfam International 26.5.2005.) Rigg et al. also argue that social capital is an important part of the recovery process. There is a need to utilize prior or post-tsunami social networks in mobilizing access to resources. Different type of assistance determines community's recovery capacity to some extent, but the community's capability to utilize provided assistance is also vital for recovery. (Rigg et al. 2005.) Social vulnerability is also closely connected to social recovery as discussed next.

Social vulnerability

According to Smith, vulnerability has increased due to the population growth and poverty. Also natural disasters and risks increase the vulnerability of people. According to Smith, vulnerability includes both the high risk and the inability to cope once the risk has become real. (Smith 2004, 14.) According to Brooks, vulnerability can be viewed as damage caused by a hazard or as a state that exists in a society before the disaster. Vulnerability as a state is called social vulnerability that concentrates on studying vulnerability as a state that already exists within a system and is independent from natural disasters. Social vulnerability can be measured by factors such as inequality, marginalisation, poverty,

housing quality, and the resistance of social system to the impacts of natural disasters⁴. (Brooks 2003.) There are also other issues, such as socio-economic problems, that increase the vulnerability of developing countries as well (Smith 2004, 18). I will concentrate on vulnerability as a state because I consider the question of poor and marginalized essential for my thesis.

Tsunami victims went through different phases that also imply aspects of social vulnerability. The survivors faced psychosocial stress for the loss of their loved ones and homes and for the fear of a new tsunami (Thanawood et al. 2006). According to Onnetomuustutkintakeskus, there were a number of false tsunami alerts in the following days of December 26th, 2004 which increased the despair of the tsunami victims. Tsunami victims were often forced to switch their role to helpers, since there was no one else to help them. The hotel workers of Phuket, for instance, took care most of the evacuation and rescue missions right after the Tsunami hit. The Thai authorities were inefficient in organizing their actions right after the disaster which implies one aspect of social vulnerability. Locals, volunteers, representatives of tourism industry and tourists, however, were efficient in rescuing people (Onnetomuustutkintakeskus 2005, 65–67).

According to Smith, the difference between the poor and the rich at facing a disaster is that while the rich lose their money, the poor lose their lives. The disasters increase vulnerability that the poor are least capable to fight against. Also the developing nations do not have the resources to prepare for a disaster. (Smith 2004, 25, 28.) On the other hand, the poor people may actually be unaffected by the disaster since they have nothing to lose (Smith 2004, 17).

Social vulnerability is closely associated with the risks of natural disaster. According to Smith, there are four different levels in which natural hazards have an effect on social vulnerability. On *individual level* it relates to personal attributes. On *community level* it relates to how people interact with one another. On *regional* and *geographical level* it relates to how far people are from services and on *administrative* and *institutional level* it is related to mitigation studies and disaster funding. So in fact, there are different factors which contribute to social risks created by natural hazards. (Smith 2004)

⁴ See also Smith (2004): *Environmental hazards – assessing risk and reducing disaster*, page 14.

Thailand is a socially vulnerable country. Despite the glorious tourist areas of Thailand, a large number of its people are poor and there are pockets and certain regions of the society that are very vulnerable. According to Rigg et al. (2005) tourist resort workers, poor fisher folk and migrant workers were both hardest hit households and communities most ignored in assistance efforts, partly due to the fact that the government has no interest in documenting them. The UN Thailand expresses its concern on such people since they have no social protection, access to services or equality in income. Migrants and indigenous populations are especially vulnerable and were hit hard by the tsunami. The UN Thailand reviews post-tsunami relief efforts quite efficient, but recognizes the fact that the loss of livelihoods still continues to affect many people in Thailand. (UN Thailand 2006.)

The reason I wanted to consider social vulnerability in my study is to find out how the previous conditions had an effect on the way tourist workers survived the tsunami. Social recovery of Thai communities is crucial in order to fully recover from tsunami. Besides their previous economical state of tourist workers, inequality – for instance – could play a role when deciding who gets aid in rebuilding their business. I think social vulnerability and recovery have an effect on one another and will reveal both how people have recovered and the reasons for the current state of the tourist workers. Also Shaw (2006) sees the post-tsunami reconstruction process as a possibility to reduce vulnerability of communities, which would also increase human security of the tsunami-affected areas. I think that is of great significance.

According to Brooks et al., social vulnerability and risks have been two options of which to choose from when doing a study on natural hazards. They claim, however, that: “The integration of the risk-based and vulnerability-based approaches is desirable if we are to address the numerous threats that human systems will face in the future as a result of climate variability and change, and also from non-climate hazards.” According to them, integration of risk-based and vulnerability-based approaches would bring researchers closer to each other, as they realized how closely their studies are connected. (Brooks 2003, 10.) Schipper et al. (2006, 19) state also that there is a need for the different fields of study to cooperate and learn from each other in order to ensure more sustainable development. I agree with the idea of a more intense cooperation between different fields of study. I also think that both vulnerability and risks have had an effect on the recovery of livelihoods.

Sustainable development and tourism

The term *sustainable development* was introduced first in 1980 but it was not until the World Commission on Environment and Development report in 1987 that the idea of sustainable development reached the major public. Sustainable development was then conceptualized as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. (Markandya et al. 2002, 16.) According to Adams (2001, 2, 4) that is still the dominant definition and the concept of sustainable development secured its place in the development dialogue during 1990s. Markandya et al. state (2002, 24) that sustainable development is nowadays understood to include social, environmental and economic dimensions as well.

Social, environmental, and economic factors have an influence on the well-being of people and according to Markandya, they can be thought as capital stocks that can be used in a sustainable manner. Most often the sustainability of these matters is ignored by the decision-makers or the local people trying to increase their current situation at the expense of future generations. (Markandya 2001, 44.)

According to Reid, it is difficult to say exactly which actions should be taken in order to create sustainable development. The concept remains undefined to some extent, but one can be sure of some issues related to it; sustainability is about protecting environment, and social and economic aspects of the society. These levels are interconnected since poor people often misuse the environment in order to survive, for instance. (Reid 2003, 40–41.)

Adams (2001, 4) sees sustainable development also as a problematic concept because many kinds of different actors may pledge for sustainable development but in reality e.g. aim at improving their own funding. In practise this is illustrated in project planning which is often made in a rush. This may result in corruption, poor governance and ignoring sustainability. Adams emphasizes the importance of local participation also in the decision-making process. Adams also recognizes the risk of building sustainable livelihoods in the developing world because development planning has both socio-economic and environmental impacts to the society. (Adams 2001, 310, 332–335.) There is a need to consider sustainability in relation to tourism as well, since according to Reid (2003, 41),

tourists tend to use the nature in an unsustainable way. I will take a look at sustainable tourism and the possibilities it holds next.

Sustainable tourism

"Sustainable tourism can be one of the few development opportunities for the poor. Let us use it wisely and soon!" (WTO 2002.)

The ideal goal of tourism is that its' development would benefit all. Tourism can, indeed, benefit both the rich and the poor and alleviate poverty in the case of sustainable tourism. Tourism can also help to promote gender equality because tourism sector employs a lot of women. (WTO 2002, 9–10.)

Sustainable tourism includes the wise use of the natural resources meaning that while the natural resources would keep benefiting the people of today, people also started to conserve them for the future generations. Tourism should not ruin the environment nor create severe socio-cultural problems. The tourism related benefits should also reach the whole society and it would be important to sustain the tourism satisfactory as well. According to WTO, sustainable tourism can play a major part in the reduction of poverty. (WTO 2002, 20-21.) Sustainable tourism has a strong connection to sustainable development as they share the same goals in protecting the environment and securing people's livelihoods.

Tourism has made Thailand vulnerable to some extent. Tourism and fishery are also the biggest reasons why the mangrove and beach forests have been replaced by beach resorts and walkways. Also most of the fisher folks and other who make a living from tourist activities live in unplanned and poorly constructed settlements close to the shores. Thailand's shores have become vulnerable. On the other hand, the extensive areas of mangroves and other coastal forests mitigated the effects of the tsunami disaster. (Thanawood et al. 2006.)

Tourism's contribution to development is often recognized after tourism collapses. Ashley wonders interestingly, if the required post-tsunami development of tourism will be used as an opportunity to develop tourism in a more sustainable way, in ways that optimize

benefits for locals while minimizing the costs for their natural resources. Thai authorities planned to rebuild Phuket as a model for sustainable tourism. Ashley pledges for a pro-poor tourism strategies which include integrating the local voices to the tourism action plans and using the local materials and builders e.g. in rebuilding the hotels. The problem here lies in the urgent need for the livelihood recovery because building a model of a different, sustainable tourism requires time and effort. (Ashley 2005.)

Oxfam International emphasizes also the importance of pro-poor strategies. They consider the importance of social, economic and political structures that have caused the coastal communities to become vulnerable and marginalised. Changing existing structures is a challenge which requires both promoting pro-poor policy changes with governments and community development work. (Oxfam 12/2005) Reid (2003, 235–236) sees empowerment of the locals and bottom-up implementation crucial in increasing social and environmental protection and building sustainable tourism.

One of the most appealing things about Thailand is its nature which the tourists unfortunately often use in an unsustainable way. Even sustainable tourism and development can be used in a wrong way in promoting one's interests. I think that actors that promote sustainability should be evaluated in post-disaster context in order to reduce the possible negative use of sustainability. This is a challenge since disaster-affected communities often have no choice but to accept all the assistance provided. I do, however, consider sustainable development and sustainable tourism very important aspects of post-tsunami assistance when used wisely. I believe that sustainable tourism could provide people with long term livelihood opportunities and mitigate the vulnerability of Thai society both in environmental and social terms which. This could contribute to the economic state of tsunami-affected communities as well. I will take a closer look at Thailand's tourism, culture and impacts of the tsunami in the following chapter.

3. THE LAND OF SMILES

Comprehending post-tsunami recovery of Thailand requires understanding basic principles of the Thai society as well. In the previous section I introduced Thai religion and in this chapter, I will shortly demonstrate some other aspects of Thai society and tourism in general. I will also take a closer look at tourism in Phuket and Khao Lak and continue by introducing the tsunami in Phuket and Khao Lak and Thai government's response to the tsunami disaster.

Thailand is a middle-income country that has developed rapidly during the last twenty years. The poverty rate of Thailand has been reduced from 27 percent in 1990 to 9.8 percent in 2002. Thailand's Human Development Rating has increased and is currently 0.778. Economic growth of the country has also been remarkable. However, the progress has not benefited all the levels of the society equally and poverty still exists especially in the far north, the far south, and in the rural northeast. (UN Thailand 2006.)

One can say that the kindness of Thai people is unique. Thailand is known as a country of smiles and in most cases smile is a symbol of friendship or a way to greet one another. But Thais also smile when they are confused or facing a problem. The best way to get pass a difficult situation is to say "mai pen rai" which a local expression to say it does not matter. It is important to avoid insulting a Thai or causing him to lose his face. Thai people are quite positive and they are always looking for positive things in their life. (Suomen suurlähetystö Bangkok 2005.)

3.1 Nature of tourism

What is tourism? The World Tourism Organization, WTO, defines tourism as what "comprises the activities of personal travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (WTO 2002, 17). According to Reid (2003, 102–103), the definition of tourism varies depending on the actor and power relations which affect the way people see tourism.

There are numerous types of tourists in the world; international tourists and domestic tourists who are divided to mass tourists, pack packers and so on. Thailand has been one of Asia's top destinations concerning international tourism, but according to Ghimire, there has also been an increase in the sector of domestic tourism in Thailand during the 1990s. An increasing number of Thais are capable of travelling due to the economic growth of the country and increase of the middle class. The positive side of domestic tourism is that the tourist incomes stay in the areas whereas foreign currency often does not benefit the locals. Domestic tourism, on the other hand, lacks in governmental planning and is often mismanaged. (Ghimire 2001, 2, 109–110.)

The number of tourists in Thailand has risen from 5,299 in 1990 to 11,651 in 2004 (WTO 2005). Montgomery (2001, 191) describes the increase of Thailand's tourism phenomenal. Six percent of Thailand's gross domestic product consists of tourism (Shea, 11.11.2005). The value of exports of tourist services was 6 percent of international trade in 1995. According to WTO, tourism is one of the most remarkable phenomena of the last century due to its growth. In 1950, there were 25 million international arrivals in the world whereas in 2004, there were estimated to be 763 million arrivals. It is both economically and socially important phenomena. Tourism has grown especially in Asia. (WTO 3.8.2006.)

Tourists travelling to Thailand are often appealed by its beautiful nature and clean waters (see pictures 14 and 15). Tropical rain forests on the uplands, soft white sand beaches (see picture 13), beach forests and marine life attract tourists to southern Thailand and have made it one of Asia's top choice tourist destinations. Before the tsunami, agricultural industries, tourism and fisheries provided most of the livelihoods in the affected areas in Andaman Coast. (Thanawood et al. 2006). According to Rittichainuwat (2006), there are three underlying reasons for why people travel to Thailand: friendly people, beautiful nature and good value for money.

Tourism is vital also for Phuket and Khao Lak. Phuket started to draw mass tourism in 1980s (Miikkulainen 2005, 23). Phuket attracted 2.75 million tourists in 2004 bringing 2 billion dollars to the area (Shea, 11.11.2005). Phuket has the largest economy of the Andaman coast and it accounted for 34 percents of the total Gross Regional Products of the six tsunami hit provinces combined in 2000. It is also estimated that about 90 percent of the population of Phuket is directly or indirectly engaged in tourism sector and Ichinosawa

describes the dominance of tourism in Phuket as *tourism monoculture*. (Ichinosawa 2006.) Before the tsunami, tourism was the number one money earner for Khao Lak as well.

Tourism is like a fire, you can cook your meal with it, or it can burn your house down”
(WTO 2002, 22).

Tourism provides locals with material benefits but it also means more than just a way to make a living. It can provide tourist workers with a sense of ownership and control, cultural pride and the development of skills. (WTO 2002, 21.) Thailand’s tourism policy has been developed from top-down, but for a few decades now, the government has concentrated on support, regulation within the sector, and promotion with its agencies, such as Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and the Board of Investment. In the early 1990s, TAT has taken an objective to teach e.g. junior volunteers on tourism area conservation and protection and the importance on cultural heritage. (Ghimire 2001, 130–135.)

Tourism has also negative influences on the society. Tourism can harm the poor by taking over the resources, such as beaches, that the poor could otherwise benefit from (WTO 2002, 34). According to Montgomery, tourism has had negative influences to Thai society in terms of prostitution, AIDS and environmental damage. The image of sex tourism, and unfortunately also child prostitution, is closely associated with Thailand. (Montgomery 2001, 191–192.)

Ghimire states that Thailand has viewed tourism as an easy way to foreign exchange earnings. The Thai government has been eager to increase the tourist demand which has not necessarily served the long-term interests of the Thai society. Environmental protection, for instance, has often been neglected when the government has rather concentrated on marketing. This has resulted in damage to the ecologically sensitive surroundings and prevented the formulation of sustainable tourist attractions. The interest in ecotourism has increased but at the mismanagement of Thai government has resulted in environmental degradation. (Ghimire 2001, 110–111.)

Ghimire introduces ecotourism as an opportunity to address the conflict between environment and tourism development. Ecotourism has, in fact, raised its popularity in Thailand where the environment is one of the most important aspects of tourism.

According to Ghimire (2001, 125) *“ecotourism has been defined as a visit to any particular tourism area with the purpose to study, enjoy and appreciate the scenery – natural and social – as well as the lifestyle of the local people, based on knowledge about, and responsibility for, the ecological system in the area.”* (Ghimire 2001, 126.)

Thailand’s tourism was not, however, built on the model of ecotourism or sustainable tourism before the tsunami. Tsunami revealed the fragile nature of tourism industry in Thailand. Tourism industries were and are the most important livelihoods in Southern Thailand that were severely harmed in the tsunami. Also other industries that are interconnected with tourism, such as fisheries, suffered from the tsunami. I will take a look at the tsunami in more specific next.

3.2. As the waves lashed the coasts of Phuket and Khao Lak

On December 26th, 2004, between 9:40 and 10:30 a.m. local time, the tsunami lashed the Andaman coasts of the Southern Thailand. There had not been a tsunami in Southern Thailand in the living memory. Tsunami killed 5,395 people and 2,817 people were missing on the coastal provinces of Phang Nga, Krabi, Phuket, Ranong, Saturn and Trang. The level of devastation varied depending on the presence of natural barriers, coastal development and land-use, and slope. Khao Lak was one of the most vulnerable areas and the most severely affected area of tsunami. (Thanawood et al. 2006; UNEP 2005; UN Thailand 2005c.) According to Ichinosawa (2006), 8,457 people also injured themselves in the tsunami. He notes that the numbers derive from Thai government’s official statistics and they may not include the numerous hidden victims into account. Next there is a table illustrating tsunami losses in more specific numbers.

TABLE 1: Tsunami losses and tsunami aid provided by the Thai Government and the UN as of September 2005

Description	Figure
No. people killed	5 395
No. of people missing	2 817
No. of affected people	58 550
Lost livelihoods in fisheries	30 000
Fishing boats destroyed or damaged	7 500
Lost livelihoods in tourism	120 000+
Houses destroyed or badly damaged	4 806
Estimate value of damages (not incl. housing)	353.4 million USD
Thai Government assistance/compensation	1.06 billion USD *
Relief Fund for Disaster Victims	31.75 million USD
UN Emergency phase relief assistance	2.6 million USD
UN recovery programming (till mid 2006)	38.3 million USD

* Including budget contributions, Prime Minister's Office, bank credit

Source: UN Thailand 2005c⁵

As you can see from the table, the number of people killed was 5 395 and the number of affected people was high, 58 550. The number of livelihoods lost was an even bigger number; 30 000 in fisheries, and over 120 000 livelihoods in tourism. The economic damage was estimated to be around 354.3 million USD not including housing. Housing has most likely increased economic damage significantly as 4 806 houses were destroyed or

⁵ The table is modified by the author. The original table by UN Thailand is available at: <http://www.un.or.th/tsunamiinthailand/Tsunami2004anditsimpact.html>.

badly damaged. Thai Government assistance until the beginning of September 2005 was 1.06 billion US dollars including also budget contributions, Prime Minister’s Office, and bank credits. The relief fund for disaster victims was 31.75 million. United Nations assisted the emergency phase with 2.6 million USD concentrating significantly on recovery programming, where they had donated 38.3 million USD to be used by until mid 2006. (UN Thailand 2005c.) This table does not provide information on aid provided by organizations or independent donators.

In specific, 151 Thais, 111 foreigners, and 17 unknown people lost their lives in tsunami with 620 missing in Phuket. In Phang Nga province, where Khao Lak is located, tsunami killed 1266 Thais, 1633 foreigners, 1325 unknown with 1733 people missing. (Onnettomuustutkintakeskus 2005, 21.) Tsunami also damaged the healthy coral reefs, beach forests and sea grass beds. The destruction was massive as wells and ponds were contaminated with sear water and oil palm as well as coconut plantations were damaged as trees were uprooted. Also houses, fishing boats, tourist resorts and culture crops and ponds were damaged. (Thanawood 2006 et al.) Next there is a map of Southern Thailand with tsunami affected areas.



PICTURE 1: Tsunami-affected areas along the Andaman Coast; Saturn, Trang, Krabi, Phuket, Phang Nga, and Ranong

Source: UN Thailand Country Team April-July 2006⁶

The tsunami-affected areas are marked with yellow. Phuket is located right by the sea. Khao Lak is located in the Phang Nga province close to the border of Phang Nga and Ranong provinces. In relation to Phuket, Khao Lak is about 100 kilometres north of Phuket Island.

Tsunami affected tens of thousands of lives in Thailand. There was no awareness of the danger, or a warning system in Thailand which could have saved at least some lives. The communication system in Thailand is poor so the question remains on how much the warning system would have helped if it existed. According to Thanawood et al., it is hard to predict tsunami but it is possible to create tsunami management strategies which will help to cope if a new tsunami will occur. (Thanawood et al. 2006.) Next, I will consider the impacts that tsunami had on Phuket's and Khao Lak's tourism.

3.2.1. Tsunami's impact on tourism

Phuket and Khao Lak were hit hard by the tsunami: "Paradise lost: Tourists shun Phuket, international arrivals down 67 percent" (Sanchez 5.9.2005.) At the same time as Phuket and Khao Lak were struggling, some other Asian tsunami-hit areas were in the favor of tourists. The harm done to Thailand's tourism is not all directly due to the tsunami. The reputation of the Thais was in some sense ruined by the way the dive shop owners and hotel operators, for instance, behaved after the disaster – even though most of them were not Thais. They did not respect the loss of tourists but continued to advertise their products as people were looking for their loved ones and even threatened reporters for telling the truth. (Sanchez, 5.9.2005.)

Tsunami's immediate impact on tourism industry has been huge even though, according to Thailand's Tourist Office, 90 percent of Phuket remained intact. Ashley also reports that, at a meeting with the UK Travel and Tourism Industry at the Foreign Office on January 17th, 2005, the message from Thailand's government was "send the tourists back".

⁶ The picture by UN Thailand Country team is available at:
http://www.un.or.th/tsunamiinthailand/documents/BUILDINGBACKBETTERINTHAILANDTSUNAMIAFFECTEDAREAS-APRIL-JULY2006_000.pdf

Thailand indicated that it does not need any more overseas financial donations; it just needs the tourist dollars. When tourists stay away, it is impossible for the economy to recover. (Ashley 2005.) Next there are a few tables which illustrate the devastating effects the Asian tsunami had on Phuket's tourism.

TABLE 2: International Tourist Arrivals to Phuket between January and August 2004 and 2005

	2004	2005	% Change
January	160,029	12,459	-92.1
February	94,048	35,659	-64.9
March	82,034	49,839	-39.3
April	78,229	30,617	-53.4
May	73,082	28,161	-64.8
June	76,380	32,258	-45.7
July	100,588	46,432	-53.5
August	118,474	59,102	-63.5
8 months total	782,864	294,527	-62.4

Source: WTO 11/2005: Tourism Authority of Thailand⁷

International tourist arrivals went down massively after that tsunami. Compared to the statistics of 2004, international tourist arrivals went down by 92.1 percent in January 2005 continuing quite low in February with minus 62.1 percent. There was an up rise in March with only minus 39.3 percent but after that the figures continued to stay low as the comparative percent of arrivals remained quite steady between April and August 2004 and 2005 varying between minus 50 and minus 60 percent. The arrivals continued to stay low eight months after the tsunami which was a setback to the tourism of Phuket. Next there is a table which illustrates the national differences in the change of arrivals to Phuket accommodations in 2005 in opposite to 2004.

⁷ The table above is modified by the author. The original Table by Tourism Authority of Thailand is available at: <http://www.world-tourism.org/tsunami/reports/Final%20Reassessment%201.pdf>.

TABLE 3: Arrivals to Phuket Accommodations between January and June in 2004 and 2005

Rank	Country	2004	2005	% Change
1.	Thailand	487,113	394,483	-19
2.	United Kingdom	111,262	39,058	-64.9
3.	Germany	135,087	32,836	-75.7
4.	Sweden	67,496	31,481	-53.4
5.	Australia	78,238	27,537	-64.8
6.	Rep. of Korea	49,454	26,841	-45.7
7.	USA	52,216	24,276	-53.5
8.	Singapore	50,138	18,319	-63.5
9.	Japan	88,735	16,819	-81.1
10.	Hong Kong	38,255	13,848	-58.9
11.	France	53,440	13,458	-74.8
12.	Finland	21,666	13,122	-39.4
13.	Switzerland	69,445	12,817	-81.5
14.	China	56,933	12,347	-78.3
15.	Malaysia	33,145	12,107	-63.5
Total arrivals		2,033,527	807,624	-60.3

Source: WTO 11/2005: Tourism Authority of Thailand ⁸

The percentage of the Thai arrivals to Phuket accommodations went down only by 19 percent and interestingly, Finns were the second group. Finn's arrivals to accommodations went down by 39.4 percent from 2004 between January and June 2005 which was followed by the republic of Korea with minus 45.7 percent. Korea was followed by Sweden, USA, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, and Switzerland. The number of tourist arrivals of the Swiss tourists went down by 81.5 percent which was the largest drop of tourist arrivals. Compared to Asian tourists, the number of Scandinavian⁹ tourist arrivals continued quite high after the tsunami. However, it is quite interesting to compare the situation of the Republic of Korea and Japan; tourist arrivals from the Republic of Korea went down only with minus 45.7 percent but the number of Japanese, which was the largest group of Asians in 2004, dropped from 88 735 arrivals to 16 819 arrivals in 2005 with minus 81.1 percent. (WTO 11/2005.)

These tables give an idea of the difficult situation Phuket had to face in the following year of the tsunami. The situation concerning tourist arrivals to Khao Lak was very different as

⁸ The table above is modified by the author. The original table by Tourism Authority of Thailand is available at: <http://www.world-tourism.org/tsunami/reports/Final%20Reassessment%201.pdf>

⁹ By Scandinavian, I mean Finnish and Swedish tourists in this context.

the tourist arrivals stopped immediately after the disaster due to the large devastation of the area.

The tsunami affected Phuket and Khao Lak in many different ways. According to Smith, there are three levels in which environmental hazards have an effect on the society. At the *people level* hazards cause death, disease, injury and stress. At the *environmental level* hazards cause the loss of flora and fauna, amenity and pollution. *Hazards to goods* cause economic loss and damage of property. (Smith 2004, 11.) All of these levels are connected to tourism as tourism.

A number of Thais lost their jobs in relation to the tsunami which had a huge impact on the tourist sector. The decline in tourism sector affected also the related industries which resulted in even a larger number of people losing their livelihoods. There are basically no alternative industries in Phuket which is why a large number of people had to leave Phuket behind. (Ichinosawa 2006.) According to Coate et al. (2006), around 70 percent of the Thai population work in the informal sector which made the tsunami impacts on livelihoods even more severe. Coate et al. (2006) and Ichinosawa (2006) state that most of the informal sector employees are not entitled to livelihood security because most businesses are inadequately insured or are uninsured all together. They are also unprotected from unfair dismissal. Also losing a livelihood may mean losing a lot more in Thailand. Tourism is an integrated part of the society and it is not only a way to make one's living:

“The long working hours of the Thai people surprised me, since most of the Thai people I've met work all day long. There is a hair salon on our home street that seems to be always open – it opens in the morning and sometimes when we come home around 10 or 11 p.m., it's still open. They always had time right away if we asked for an appointment so I guess they want to keep the salon open all day long in case people wanted to go there.” (Field diary, Phuket, 27.10.2006.)

It seemed to me as if the life of the Thai people would be built around work. I think that losing a livelihood was a major setback both economically and socially speaking for the Thai people. How did the Thai people find ways to recover the tsunami?

3.2.2. Recovering from the tsunami

According to World Tourism Organization (WTO) report in November 2005, the atmosphere in post-tsunami Thailand was quite positive in 2005, as locals and tourists were starting to forget about the tsunami. According to WTO, the country has done its best at helping the tsunami victims and improving the safety and security of its coasts. Even though tourists were coming back to Thailand, the hotel capacity of tsunami affected areas remained 12 percent below pre-tsunami levels. Also air seat capacity in Phuket airport was lower than before the tsunami which has most likely affected to the decrease in international arrivals to Phuket on its part. The situation of Phuket was good compared to Khao Lak where reconstructions were just at the beginning in November, 2005. (WTO 11/2005.)

A lot has happened since 2005. Phuket has managed to recover quite fast from tsunami: *“Phuket – in better shape than ever before – is wide open for business:”* (PTA’s Tourism Recovery Center 6.8.2006). Thais were certainly optimistic concerning the recovery of Phuket’s tourism – for a reason. There was a belief among the authorities that Phuket’s tourism will recover the same as it used to be by late 2006 (CDNN 10.7.2005). According to Phuket Tourist Association, the arrivals of tourists are growing steadily and Phuket offers plenty of room for growth in tourism. Physical reconstruction is complete but the need for more jobs for the locals is essential as well as the need for more customers for locals businesses. (PTA’s Tourism Recovery Center 6.8.2006.) When I travelled to Phuket in October 2006, Phuket seemed to do very well. According to Ichinosawa, the reconstruction of Phuket area was quick despite the severe physical damage the tsunami caused to Phuket and to Patong Beach is specific. The beach resorts of Phuket Island started to operate rather quickly after the disaster. (Ichinosawa 2006.)

Khao Lak was the worst-hit area of Thailand resulting in Khao Lak not being able to welcome tourists immediately after the tsunami. Khao Lak was known as a very popular tourist destination before the tsunami. Tourists used to go to Khao Lak because of its waterfalls, beaches and beautiful inland parks. Tsunami, however, stopped the tourism industry at once. The reason Khao Lak’s extensive devastation was the flatness of the area – almost everything was flattened by the waves. This has resulted in delay in Khao Lak’s recovery compared to Phuket. (Jinks 3.11.2005.)

According to the UN Thailand, Thailand has rather stable political field and the number of displaced people by the tsunami was relatively low. This has given Thailand an advantage in the recovery process compared to some other tsunami-hit areas. Tsunami impacts were also mostly localized. (UN Thailand 2005b) These things have most likely assisted the recovery of livelihoods, yet it is important to realize that many people who were affected by the tsunami are still struggling to recover. Thailand was one of the worst hit countries by the tsunami (UN Thailand 2006 April-July). One of the main issues that have either contributed or prevented post-tsunami recovery is the way the government and aid organizations responded to the disaster. Was tsunami aid efficient in Thailand? I will consider that next.

3.3. Responding to the disaster

According to UNEP, the Thai Royal Thai Government (RTG) responded quickly to the humanitarian needs and did its best at a difficult situation. After the immediate needs had been met, the interest shifted towards disaster preparedness, care for vulnerable groups, livelihood restoration and environmental care. The RTG established a sub-committee on livelihoods and environmental rehabilitation. The government also formed three task forces on coastal habitats and coral reef, community livelihoods and geo-hazards. The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives have been leading the rehabilitation of livelihoods, especially regarding the fishing communities affected by the tsunami. The government did seek external support on community livelihood recovery, especially from UNEP. (UNEP 2005, 39–40.)

Also the UN Thailand considered RTG's response effective (UN Thailand 2005b). According to the UN Thailand (April-July 2006), the single most significant factor that has assisted the post-tsunami recovery has been the efforts of the Royal Thai Government. Janne Miikkulainen, a Finnish diving instructor who was one of the central rescue workers in Phuket, thinks that the Thai authorities, army, and volunteers worked well after the disaster. According to Miikkulainen, this view may be in opposite to a common belief of the bad disaster managing of the Thais on December 26th, 2004. (Miikkulainen et al. 2005, 77.)

According to Ichinosawa, the basic humanitarian needs had been met in the Southern Thailand to a considerable extent less than a year after the tsunami due to the efforts of the RTG, agencies, institutions and people involved. Emergency aid programs were completed successfully and people had been provided with medical care, housing and food. The reconstruction even in the worst-hit areas had been fast. However, as the emergency phase ended, locals were required to start their normal lives even while the means to rebuild the livelihoods may have been lost. Ichinosawa states that the Thai government agencies have concentrated on marketing Phuket as a safe place which has resulted in ignoring the need to reduce negative tsunami impacts, such as the lack of tourists, on the local people. (Ichinosawa 2006.)

Also according to Einola-Head et al. (2007, 4) many tsunami survivors felt a gap between the relief aid and the beginning of long-term assistance such as development projects. Considering the entity of tsunami, relief aid was well delivered and efficient. There were, however, problems of coordination. Presence of the media raised the interest of organizations to promote their actions. Some of them started to label all the possible aid supplies, such as water tanks, with the logos of the organization. Many aid organizations also left the disaster-affected areas after the relief period. Only a few organizations with previous experience on disaster recovery stayed in the areas for a longer period of time. (Einola Head et al 2007, 12.) Other tsunami related studies reveal also the lack of long-term commitment of the RTG. I will introduce recent tsunami recovery studies next.

4. RECENT TSUNAMI STUDIES

Recent tsunami related studies (Gupta et al. 2006, Ichinosawa 2006) reveal that the impact of the Asian tsunami hit productive sector – such as fishing and tourism - the hardest. One of the greatest challenges after the tsunami was to help the poor tourist workers, especially those in the informal service sector, to recover.

Different studies emphasize different indicators which to concentrate on in relation to post-tsunami recovery of a community or a nation. Gupta et al. completed a study on *Compounded loss: the post tsunami recovery experience in Indian island communities* in 2006. According to their study, the local coping capacities were not recognized among

Indian island communities. Their conclusion was that there is a need for the governance to acknowledge the role of the communities in post-tsunami recovery. Using social capital in enhancing communities' local coping capacities would result in recovery improvements among communities. Gupta et al. see the importance of participation in achieving recovery through grassroots level activities. (Gupta et al. 2006.)

Yamada et al. emphasize the term sustainable development in their study: *The Sri Lanka Tsunami Experience*. Their study has a connection to the study of Gupta et al. through similar emphasis of local participation and sustainability. According to Yamada et al, the good results in the relief and recovery period are quite meaningless if sustainable development is not attained to them. They see the advantage of sustainable development as providing survivors with skills which would help them to recover and return to their jobs. Through skills development attached to sustainable development, tsunami victims could also acquire new skills. (Yamada et al. 2006.)

Rodriquez and Wachterndorf (2006) highlighted the role of the early warning system in their study: *A snapshot of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami: societal impacts and consequences*. They think that the early warning system and coping strategies should be aimed at fostering sustainable recovery and building disaster resilient communities. Had there been adequate preparedness and mitigation efforts for the tsunami – or even knowledge of it – the recovery process would have been quicker and easier to handle. (Rodriquez et al. 2006.)

Gupta et al. and Rodriquez et al. argue also that the relief aid provided to the tsunami-affected areas by NGOs, armed forces, private sector, local governments, and local administration was sufficient during the relief period in most of the regions. However, there would have been need to develop a more formalized and systematic structural changes to support the sustainable recovery process as well. Recovery takes a lot of time because the social and economic impacts of the tsunami have been so wide. (Gupta et al. 2006; Rodriquez et al. 2006.)

Rodriquez et al. and Yamada et al. argue that tsunami highlighted the issues of vulnerability, poverty and inequality. Women and children were the most vulnerable groups to social disruptions resulting from the tsunami which is why it is important to

acknowledge that these issues are, indeed, related to tsunamis. (Rodriguez et al. 2006; Yamada et al. 2006.) Yamada et al. see that it is possible to reduce social vulnerability through improving disaster resiliency. This would require supporting the economic capacity of a tsunami affected community and paying attention to issues that tend to increase the vulnerability of the area, such as poverty and inequality. (Yamada et al. 2006.)

Ichinosawa (2006) completed a study on *Reputational disaster in Phuket: the secondary impact of the tsunami on inbound tourism* which is a quite relevant study concerning my master's thesis. I also consider reputational crises as one aspect of livelihood recovery. The purpose of Ichinosawa's study was to "provide a theoretical perspective and empirical understanding of decline in Phuket's tourism, the secondary impact of the 2004 tsunami." (Ichinosawa 2006.)

According to Ichinosawa, the secondary socio-economic effects of the tsunami disaster have been briefly examined. Most of the tsunami related research has concentrated on the community recovery, NGO activities, social/cultural efforts to reduce potential damage from future natural disasters etc. Ichinosawa states that the reason for lack of studies in the tourism sector is a belief that business sector can withstand tourism decline and business is able to help itself. According to Ichinosawa, it would be important to keep in mind that the tourism sector in Thailand consists also of small businesses and informally hired workers, not only of luxurious hotel chains. The tourism decline has been especially disastrous for the weak. (Ichinosawa 2006.)

According to Ichinosawa, there is a need for the government to develop a more detailed plan for protecting the livelihood of the weak. Ichinosawa combined social amplification of risk framework (SARF) and vulnerability in his study. He defined six different categories of vulnerability in Phuket. *Commodity character*, for one, highlights the vulnerability of tourism and food products because they are associated to people's health or safety. *Structure of international tourism business* is also weak since the foreign travel agencies sell trips to Phuket and have no hesitation to stop promoting Phuket if a case of emergency, which turned out to be true in relation to the tsunami disaster. *Also structure of regional economy* reveals that almost all the livelihoods are connected to tourism and Ichinosawa uses the term "tourism monoculture" to describe its dominance. *Small enterprises and the informal sector* reveal that most of the employees in the informal sector

are not protected against unfair dismissal. *Foreigners* own and operate many tourist enterprises but after the tsunami, Thai government showed no interest in providing financial support for the foreigners. There is also a *lack of support system or safety net* in Thailand and the insurance companies and local governments were unable to help all the tsunami victims. Therefore, tsunami losses ended up being one's self-responsibility. Authorities have seen marketing as a result for all the problems of tourism sector. But the issue that the authorities have failed to recognize is that small enterprises may not survive a few months loss of earnings on their own. (Ichinosawa 2006.)

Coate et al. completed a study on "*Taking care of people and communities: Rebuilding livelihoods through NGOs and the informal economy in Southern Thailand*" in 2006. The study concentrates on the informal sector of Thailand which employs a large number of Thais and emphasizes the role of the NGOs in rebuilding the livelihoods. NGOs have played a central role in the recovery process both through providing immediate aid and long-term aid. Coate et al. argue that the recovery strategies should involve community in order to secure long-term economic recovery in Thailand. This type of recovery should also provide long-term sustainability for local economy and communities, and build local resilience. (Coate et al. 2006.)

The interest of Oxfam International is to improve livelihoods rather than merely restore them. This is recognized as a long term process which includes activities such as providing people with new skills and equipment or forming community based groups to support one another. Improving livelihoods faces many challenges e.g. existing inequalities. Oxfam considers local participation in decision-making process crucial in livelihood improvement. Participation will also guarantee sustainability since people themselves are entitled to make decisions on their future. Improving people's livelihoods is, however, a long-term challenge. (Oxfam International 12/2005)

Lebel et al. completed a study on "*Tales from the margins: small fishers in post-tsunami Thailand*" researching how the post-tsunami recovery has affected the livelihoods among small fishing communities in Southern Thailand. According to their study, the devastation that tsunami caused created opportunities to reorganize the affected areas both socially and ecologically. These opportunities were, however, neglected as the powerful interest groups turned the focus away from the small fishermen. This resulted in problems of livelihood

recovery among the marginalized and vulnerable group of fishermen. Overall, recovery of the small fishing communities has been slow. (Lebel et al. 2006.)

In most of the tsunami studies, the locals felt that the tsunami aid provided by the government was not efficient. According to Lebel et al. (2006) most of the villagers they interviewed in the study were grateful for the assistance that the NGOs, private sector and individuals provided because government often did not often succeed in keeping its promises. Due to corruption and misuse of power, the money did not reach the ones in need. According to Lebel et al., the real intention of the state could have been to ignore the needs of the fishermen resulting in lost livelihoods that then could have been taken over by profitable and commercially large-scale tourism developments. To illustrate some challenges faced in recovery, next there is a table by Lebel et al. describing livelihood recovery challenges in small communities. (Lebel et al. 2006.)

TABLE 4: Problems with relief and compensation efforts to assist with livelihood recovery and how they were being addressed

Community	Major relief and compensation problems	How they were addressed by the community
Tap Lamu (Khao Lak)	Relief supplies distributed late and unfairly TAO and village head varied compensation levels without justification	Abundant supply from private and NGOs continue to help poor families. No monitoring or corrective action by authorities.
Had Laem Pom (Bang Mueng)	No relief supplies for those returning to disputed lands; good supply in Bang Mueng camp	Private and NGO supplies continue also help with construction of houses. Difficult to address land dispute because involve powerful company.
Koh Muk (Kantang)	Relief supplies arrived late and distributed unfairly Conflicts over compensation within village	Private and NGO assistance for boat repairs helpful.
Thung Wa (Kuek Kak)	Relief supplies from state late and limited.	Plentiful supply from private and NGOs which also help mediate negotiations with authorities

Source: Lebel et al. 2006¹⁰

This table illustrates some of negative sides of government aid. Relief supplies were often received late, if at all. The distribution of the supplies was also unfair. The role of the NGOs, however, was considered good or very good compared to government assistance. In

¹⁰ Table is modified by the author. The original table can be found on Disaster Prevention and Management vol. 15 no. 1 2006 from an article: *Tales from the margins: small fishers in post-tsunami Thailand* by Lebel et al.

Tap Lamu, which was a tsunami affected community in Khao Lak, there was a lack of monitoring actions and the relief supplies came late and were delivered unfairly.

Tsunami-related studies seem to be more critical in assessing the delivered tsunami aid and long-term assistance than UN Thailand and UNEP. The reason for this could be that both UN Thailand and UNEP work together with the RTG and they need to be also supportive in relation to the RTG. Similarities and differences can be found in tsunami recovery studies. Most studies emphasized the role of NGOs, sustainability, local participation, vulnerability and need to long-term commitment. The needs to improve livelihoods, increase sustainability and reduce vulnerability were also considered relevant in tsunami studies. The extent of each reference varied between studies. Also different ways in which to achieve these goals were introduced in the studies. But in the end, it seems as if tsunami recovery studies share the same basic values. In the following chapter, I will take a closer look at my research trip to Thailand and methods which I used in gathering the data. I will also consider the validity and ethics of the study.

5. STUDYING LIVELIHOOD RECOVERY

Post-tsunami livelihood recovery of Phuket and Khao Lak was a subject that I knew little of before my research journey to Thailand. I considered interviews as best possibility to gather information regarding the recovery process due to the interactive nature of interviews and possibility to ask and learn more about post-tsunami recovery. I collected the data for my thesis through five semi-structured theme interviews of which two were group interviews and three individual interviews (see appendix 1). I also used participant observation as a research method. I included pictures to my master's thesis as you can see in appendix two. There are pictures from Khao Lak and Phuket (see pictures 1–7 and 12–15), but I also included some pictures from Phi Phi Island (see pictures 8-11). The reason for this was to shortly illustrate how different post-tsunami recovery has been in different parts of Thailand.

I will introduce theme interview and participant observation next and move on to introducing content analysis which is the analysis method of the study. Whether I succeeded in completing a valid and a reliable study remains to be discussed in 5.5.

5.1. Theme interview

I chose a semi-structured theme interview as a method to collect data for the thesis in order to be able to talk quite freely with my interviewees. I also believed that organizing the interviews around themes would provide me with good information on the post-tsunami recovery of Thailand.

According to Eskola et al., theme interview is a method in which a researcher chooses themes to be discussed beforehand. The interview is spontaneous in the sense of not asking the same questions in the same order in each interview, but adjusting to each situation individually. It is important to refer to every theme in each interview, but extend of each reference may vary from interview to interview. (Eskola et al. 1998, 87.) Tuomi et al. (2002, 77) state that it is crucial to find meaningful answers regarding the research problem – which is why it is important to construct the interview around relevant themes.

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2001, 68) one does not born to be an interviewer, but must learn the skill of interviewing in practise. I was very nervous before my first interview and had difficulties in defining my role in the interview because I was not sure how much I should talk and how much the interviewees should guide the situation. I think I was lucky in terms of the first interview my interviewees were very informative and talkative. I think my first interview was the best one I actually had even though later on I think I succeeded better in the interview process.

Each interview was a unique one and I had no idea how difficult it would be to do the interviews. I had a list of questions with me in each interview but usually I ended up mostly listening to what the people were saying and adapting to the situation. I made sure, however, that each of the themes were discussed in some respect. It was actually quite amazing how much my interviewees talked about the issues I wanted to know about without me even asking. I found that it was actually good that the interviews did not go in the order I had planned – just as Esterberg (2002, 106) mentions: “but some of the most important insights come from the spontaneous parts of the interview.” Also according to Eskola et al (1998, 88), the advantage of theme interview is its openness and the ability of an interviewee to talk freely about the themes introduced in the interview.

According to Alasuutari, the problem with theme interview lays with the interviewee's desire to modify his answers to the direction that would please the interviewer. Interviewees try to find meaningful answers to the proposed questions and they often evaluate their answers which may result in unreliable information. (Alasuutari 2001, 149.) In that sense I think it was good to interview people that had no first-hand experience on livelihood recovery, especially in the Thai context where people usually put on their best face among strangers. But I still recognize that pleasing the interviewer and evaluating answers is a challenge since it is impossible for me to find out whether my interviewees told the truth or not. I will take a closer look at the interviews I did in Thailand next.

Interviewing people in Thailand

I decided to write my thesis on post-tsunami recovery of Thailand during spring 2006. All I knew was that I wanted to study tourism in some respect. I also knew that I wanted to do a qualitative study and interview people living in Thailand. The idea of writing my thesis on livelihood recovery formed step by step through reading tsunami recovery studies, interviewing and transcribing the interviews.

I travelled to Thailand in the beginning of October 2006 and returned back home in the end of November 2006. My aim was to travel around Thailand for the first month and concentrate on the research for the latter. Due to a number of factors, my research question is not the same as it was before the trip. I was supposed to find out the survival stories of the locals, yet I ended up interviewing foreigners. Thai people are not too willing to talk about their past since they do not see the point it that – you cannot change the past, why talk about it? They also feel that if you talked about a bad thing, it will happen. It is not likely to get real answers from the Thai people in such a limited time, if you want to talk about issues such as a possibility of a new tsunami.

“I don't know the culture and I don't know when it would be appropriate to talk about the tsunami. I decided not to interview any Thais after trying to talk to a few of them. They do talk, at least about something, but I think the language is a real problem as well as the different culture.”
(Field Diary, 10.11.2006, Phuket.)

During the trip, I specified my research problem to consider the sustainable recovery of tourism related livelihoods. After realizing the difficulty of finding Thai people to

interview, I decided to interview representatives of foreign aid organizations (see appendix 1).

I will use many quotes of the interviews in my thesis. To clarify the speaker, I made up fictional names for my interviewees. I chose Finnish names for my Finnish interviewees and English names for the Philippine interviewee and for the Americans. I will also include the number of the interview after each quote in order to clarify whether the interview in question is a group or an individual interview. I also estimated their ages that can be seen in appendix 1.

My first interview was with an American-Finnish couple Liisa and John. Liisa and John were involved in a development project that helped the tsunami-affected women of Khao Lak. The women they were working with were ex-tourist workers. The aim of the project was to teach new skills for the women at Khao Lak Occupational Center. During my trip to Thailand, they concentrated on teaching a group of women how to bake.

I also interviewed Joanna, an American teacher of Ecotourism Training Center (ETC) in Khao Lak. ETC is also aimed at helping ex-tourist workers in Khao Lak by training them to become dive masters as well as providing them with English and computer skills. Training lasts ten months and is very intensive, but rewarding. The annual number of students is around 20.

I had a chance to interview Melinda, an American representative of Tsunami Volunteer Center. The center organizes all kinds of projects in order to help the tsunami survivors in Khao Lak. Tsunami Volunteer Center was formed immediately after tsunami and its projects vary from building houses to teaching new skills for the affected people. As of late October 2006, there had been around 5 000 volunteers participating at the work.

My fourth interviewee was Daniel, a Philippine director of marketing of a hotel chain in Phuket. My fifth interview was a group interview in Finnish. I interviewed Satu, a Finnish woman who was teaching baking skills to women in Khao Lak Occupational Center. I also interviewed two Finnish missionaries, Meeri and Pekka, who were working with Finnish tourists in Phuket. They came to Phuket to help only a few days after the tsunami.

I chose my interviewees by a snowball method. I contacted John and Liisa, my first interviewees, with the help of my friends in Finland. John and Liisa gave a few tips where I could find interviewees so I contacted the Ecotourism Training Center (ETC) and Tsunami Volunteer Center through email and made appointments with Joanna and Melinda. I also felt that it would be important to be able to talk to someone who knew the recovery process of Phuket. I contacted one hotel in Phuket and, with good luck, reached Daniel for an interview. Finally, I reached Pekka, Meeri and Satu for an interview through friends I made in Thailand.

I collected the data from Khao Lak and Phuket. Beforehand I had the intention to write my thesis based on Phuket. But after studying the issue and talking to people in Thailand, I decided to include Khao Lak to the study as well. The most apparent reason for this was the state of recovery in Khao Lak. The recovery process of Khao Lak was still incomplete, where as in Phuket, the tourism industry was better off than before the tsunami. Khao Lak was also a familiar place for the Finns since almost all the Finns that passed away in the tsunami were staying in Khao Lak. I also thought that by studying both Phuket's and Khao Lak's recovery I could find reasons for different recovery processes. As a result, I am able to make comparisons and hopefully understand the big picture of Thailand's recovery a little better. I believe that had I concentrated only on Phuket's tourism recovery, would my picture of tsunami recovery in Thailand be incomplete. Where in Phuket tourism is back to normal and doing even better than before the tsunami, Khao Lak is a ghost town.

5.2. Group interviews

My initial idea was to do individual theme interviews and observe. In addition, I eventually did two group interviews. Both of the group interviews were surprises as my first interview took place at the home of John and Liisa and they were both at home at the time and wanted to take part in the interview. My second group interview turned out to be a group interview because Pekka, my interviewee, showed up with two other persons, Satu and Meeri. I had no time to prepare myself for a group interview, but I think both of the interviews went well. Groups formed naturally and people knew each other before hand and, in my opinion, they were able to talk about the issues concerning recovery very

openly. The basic structure of the individual and group interviews remained the same which assisted me in doing the group interviews.

According to Esterberg and Hirsjärvi et al., group interviews usually consist of less than ten people participating in the same interview. At their best, group interviews can be very informative in a short period of time. It is also possible to get a real conversation going on in a group interview because there are more opinions in a group. That is, however, only possible if the people of the group felt comfortable talking with other members of the group. (Esterberg 2002, 109–110; Hirsjärvi et al. 2001, 63.)

Eskola and Suoranta also introduce some advantages of a group interview. Besides being able to gather more information, it is also less likely that the interviewees forget to mention important facts or misinterpret the questions. (Eskola et al. 1998, 95–97.) According to Alasuutari, the advantage of a group interview is that the individual and subjective feelings are often left out in group discussions. Also the interaction that takes place in group interviews may hold relevant information regarding the research subject. In a conversation people also discuss the matter more deeply and provide more opinions. (Alasuutari 2001, 151–152, 155.) Eskola et al. (1998, 97) state that it is, however, possible that the interviewees talk about issues in a different manner than they would do in individual interviews.

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2001, 63) power relations create challenges for group interviews as often one or two persons dominate the interview. In both of my group interviews there was, indeed, a person that controlled the interview. That is why I played a more active role in group interviews than in individual interviews – I wanted to find out the opinions of the more quiet participants as well. I think the advantage of doing group interviews was that the more the people, the more the opinions and information. Both group interviews ended up being informative and good interviews or even conversations.

I think it was good that I did both individual and group interviews. I learned more as an interviewer. The information provided in both types of interviews was also relevant regarding to my research problem. According to Alasuutari (2001, 153), individual and group interviews provide different kind of data and the difference needs to be considered when analyzing the data. It was, indeed, a little different to transcribe and analyze a

conversation between many people than an interview between me and the interviewee. Another data analysis method of the thesis is participant observation as introduced next.

5.3. Participant observation

Besides the interviews, I also gathered data through participant observation. I made a conscious choice to observe tourism related industries, the interaction between tourist and tourist workers, Thai culture and the apparent recovery of tourism industry. I kept a diary during my trip and reflected issues I felt important at that time regarding to my research problem. I also wrote down my subjective experiences on what it feels like to be a tourist in Thailand for two months. I did not select a certain scene or time in which to observe but rather observed all the time on a daily basis. After making a decision to observe, it felt as if observing became a quite natural part of my entire trip.

Participant observation is both a challenge and an advantage. According to Esterberg (2002, 59), it is possible to get first-hand experience and a better understanding on the subject when the researcher participates. I think that was the advantage of using participation as a method as well. Also according to Tuomi et al., observation is a good method especially when used along with other methods, such as interviews. If used alone, observation can be quite challenging. When observation is combined with interviews, it may be possible to gather information from a wider angle. (Tuomi et al. 2002, 83.)

Researcher's emotions have an effect on the study but according to Esterberg (2002, 72), besides being subjective, emotions can actually give cues on what is happening on the field. By writing a diary it is easy to go back to the time in Thailand and remember the feelings I had back then. That was one of the main reasons I chose to include observation to my study as well – I did not want to forget what doing a research in Thailand felt like. According to Esterberg, people observe all the time but by paying attention, it is possible to realize and remember a lot more. When you look at a certain issues in a focused way, you may discover things that otherwise had gone unacknowledged. (Esterberg 2002, 57–58.)

Spradley introduces the difference between ordinary participant and participant observer through six arguments. The first difference is in the *purpose of observing*, not only participating to the social situation. The second difference is a *conscious choice*; participant observer has made a clear choice not only to participate, but to observe at the same time. Concerning the third difference, Spradley emphasizes *the need of explicit awareness* of the subject to be focused on. Fourthly, the researcher needs to use a *wide-angle lens* that helps him to take in more information. Fifthly, the researcher experiences being *an insider* and *outsider* at the same time and learning how to use him as an instrument is a clear sign of being a participant observant. Finally, participant observer takes notes on both *subjective feelings* and *objective observations*. (Spradley 1980, 54–58.)

I participated to the life of tourism industry in Thailand as a tourist. I would have done it anyways, but after concentrating on the issue I think I can understand Thailand as well as the people living there much better than before the trip. Participant observation and the interpretations researcher gains by doing it depends on the researcher since according to Esterberg, personal qualities play a major role in the participation process. If you get along with people and are outgoing, it's easier to participate (Esterberg 2002, 62.) Also according to Tuomi et al., social skills play an important part in participant observation where the researcher actively takes part in social interactions with his research subjects. In participant observation the researchers sometimes try to affect the situation they are observing but in a more traditional anthropological research the main focus is in observing the natural state. (Tuomi et al. 2002, 84.) My main focus was to observe, not to manipulate the situations. I do think, however, that it is important to acknowledge researcher's objectivity and the impact of personal qualities to the study. I will take a closer look at that in section 5.5 validity and ethics of the study.

I think observation contributed most to the overall picture I have of Thailand, its culture, tourism and way of life. Had I not visited Thailand, I do not think that I could have understood the recovery process to the extent I do now. My experience on Thailand is still very limited but through observing, I believe I can understand tsunami related studies and my data in a more comprehensive way.

After gathering the data, there was still a lot to do – the data needed to be analyzed. I decided to use content analysis as a method that would assist me in the analyzing process. I will introduce content analysis and the three processes it includes next.

5.4. Content analysis

According to Tuomi et al., the purpose of content analysis is to get an image of the research problem – by analyzing the data it is possible to get a general picture of the research problem in an intense form. In content analysis the researcher organizes the research data so that it is easier to draw conclusions from it. Content analysis is a form of text analysis in which the researcher tries to identify the meanings of the texts and create verbal and clear picture of the research problem. (Tuomi et al. 2002, 105–110.)

According to Tuomi et al., it is possible to increase the informative aspect of qualitative data by analyzing it. Data is often scattered and by analyzing it, it is possible to simplify the matter. It is based on logistic deduction and interpretation in which the data is first divided into pieces, then conceptualized and collected again in another way in a logistic entity. (Tuomi et al. 2002, 110.) In the beginning of the analysis process the data may seem uncontrollable with numerous details attached. Hirsjärvi et al. state that at this point, it is very important to read the data through several times. Depending how well you know the data the better you are able to analyze it (Hirsjärvi et al. 2001, 143.) At first, my data did seem very long and hard to control as I had 42 pages of interview data and 10 pages of diary data before me. I read the data through a number of times and got to know it better. But it felt a little difficult to comprehend the data in a holistic way.

Hirsjärvi et al. describe the analysis process as dividing the entity into pieces, classifying the data, and moving on to unifying the classes. After doing that, the researcher moves back to the entity and starts to interpret it and understand the research subject through theoretical concepts. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2001, 144.) According to Miles et al. (1994, 10) doing qualitative data analysis is a process that continues throughout the research.

I will use content analysis to describe my data verbally and from an inductive point of view. My aim is to use my research data as a starting point for the analysis. Miles and

Huberman created a three phased process of content analysis. First phase is *reduction of the data*, second phase is *data display*, and third phase is *conclusion drawing and verification* (Miles et al 1994, 10–11.) I will introduce these three phases next.

Reduction of the data

According to Miles et al., reducing the data means simplifying the information the data holds and ruling out irrelevant information from the data. It also refers to focusing, selecting and transforming the data. Researcher starts the process of data reduction in the beginning of the research when selecting the research question and concepts. It is a process that lasts from the beginning until the very end and it is a part of the analysis. Data reduction simplifies the information or divides it into pieces which make it easier to make conclusions based on the data. (Miles et al. 1994, 10–11.)

Eskola et al. think that through organizing the data under theme index, it is possible to split the data under different headings. This will help the researcher to interpret the data later on. Building a card file requires the researcher to take a look at each interview at a time and gather texts referring to each theme separately. (Eskola et al. 1998, 154–155.)

I reduced my data by transcribing the interviews and organizing them under theme index. I also translated my fifth interview into English from Finnish so that all of the data would be in English. According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2001, 185), the quality of the research is better if the researcher transcribes the data soon after the interviews. That is why I started to transcribe the interviews as soon as I returned to Finland. After transcribing, I started to get to know my interview data by writing down themes in the margins of the written interviews. Then I wrote down the themes into the computer and gathered relevant data under each theme title. By doing this, I began to see the similarity of opinions under some themes as well as the differences that appeared in the interviews. After that I divided the data under each theme into smaller units and labeled them. After organizing my interview material under theme index, I took a closer look at my diary. I divided my diary writings under theme index as well. I labeled all the interviews as well as diary material so that I could identify them later on. After doing this, I had very many headings and very much

material under the headings. I also started to recognize the predominant themes in building the theme index.

I had several titles such as media, providing aid, risks, family relations, local community, fear of the sea, fear of the ghosts, lost equipment... As I divided my 52-paged data under 50 different headings, I started to get a better picture what kind of information my data hold. But there was a need to combine the data in some way. I left some very irrelevant data out of theme index since sometimes the interviewees started to talk about irrelevant issues regarding the study, such as my education or the weather in Finland. My interview data and observational data were organized under several titles but it seemed still very confusing and something needed to be done.

Data display

The second phase of content analysis is data display in which the researcher organizes the data under groups and searches for differences and similarities in the data. Similarities are organized into classes and the information is transformed into a more intense form as separate factors are organized under general concepts. (Miles et al. 1994, 10; Tuomi et al. 2002, 112–113.)

I did this by looking into my theme index cards and organizing my data under ten predominant themes. Sometimes it was difficult to find a predominant theme to cover different kinds of matters, but I did my best at organizing the data under ten themes. Thematizing is, however, a subjective method in which the researcher selects the data and themes based on his views on the data. According to Hirsjärvi et al. people understand thematizing in different manners which depends on the way the researcher considers data qualities during the analysis process. Often the themes researcher identifies match with the structure of the theme interview but it is also natural for other themes to rise from the data. The researcher interpreters the data and divides it under themes based on his judgement. (Hirsjärvi 2001, 173.)

The more I studied my data, the easier it became to develop themes but it was a process that took 12 months to be completed. Some of the themes were similar to those of theme

interview and therefore formed in autumn 2006. Most of the themes, however, were combinations or modifications on themes that I used in the theme interviews. Most of the themes were formed in the beginning of 2007. But I still combined and modified some of the themes in autumn 2007 as the thesis started to reach its final form. No matter how objective I tried to be, different persons would have most likely formed different themes. I tried to reduce the subjectivity of thematizing by revising my themes regularly.

Conclusion drawing

After data display, it is crucial to separate valid information regarding the research question and construct theoretical concepts based by the selected information (Tuomi et al. 2002, 114). This takes place in conclusion drawing and verification. Patterns, explanations, causal flows and propositions noted during the research are transformed to conclusions. At this stage, it is important to be both open and skeptic with the ability to present steady conclusions. (Miles et al. 1994, 11.)

According to Tuomi et al., the stage of conclusion drawing includes data conceptualizing which will help the researcher to take a closer look at original information and its verbal expressions. This will guide the researcher to form theoretical conceptions and conclusions. By combining the groups and concepts it is possible to find results for the research problem. Content analysis is based on deduction and interpretation in which the researcher moves from empirical data towards conceptualization of the phenomenon. Theory and conclusions are being compared to empirical data in a way of organizing a new theory. Researcher aims at understanding his research persons in all the phases of the analysis. (Tuomi et al. 2002, 114–115.)

I draw conclusions based on the data and compared them to the theoretical framework as well. I paid attention to the connection of four recovery aspects and my themes, in specific. I will introduce my conclusions in chapter 7 and 8. During the thesis writing, I wrote suggestions, ideas and questions to be considered in conclusion which made it easier to reflect thoughts I had along the way. But still, being objective is a challenge that needs to be considered especially in relation to conclusion drawing.

5.5. Being objective?

According to Miles et al. (1994, 290), it is essential to question the relevance and worthiness of the study in the beginning of the research. I think this is a good advice since finding a research subject that is of significance for the researcher and for his studies may sometimes be challenging. I started to write my master's thesis on a very different subject during spring 2006 and realized soon that the subject did not interest me. After finding a meaningful field of study, writing a thesis was a lot more pleasant and easier. Tourism has a strong connection to sociology and I think that my research question is relevant for sociology as well. I have also studied development studies that contribute to studying post-tsunami recovery on a developing country. My research subject may not be the most common one in sociology but I think I succeeded in combining sociology and development studies with my own interests in international matters.

Validity and ethics of the study is an important question when doing a qualitative research. Qualitative research includes social intercommunication and interpretation and one's values and personality can have an impact on the results of the study. According to Esterberg (2002, 80), individuals have different understandings on social reality which results in different kind of behavior among researchers. According to Eskola et al. (1998, 88–89), the result of the interview depends both on the willingness of the interviewee to talk about current themes and the ability of the interviewer to adapt to the situation honestly.

The researcher has a significant role in doing an interview which is partly controlled by power relations. I set up the interviews and controlled their purposes. I also had the power to make a decision on what is valid and what is not and in that respect I had quite much power over the situation. The interviewees can, on the other hand, lie or exaggerate. (Esterberg 2002, 45–47.) I am sure I did a lot of mistakes. I tried not to lead people's opinions into a certain direction and I believe that in a way I succeeded, since many of the things I thought mattered, eventually did not. I do think, however, that it is good to write my thesis after a certain amount of time has passed after my journey to Thailand. I am able take a look at the recovery with a little distance now and hopefully consider the matter in a more objective way: *"It's little hard to place myself as a research person here. It feels as if*

I'm too close to the subject, it's very hard to build an objective view here, in the middle of it all." (Field diary, Phuket, 10.11.2006.)

According to Esterberg (2002, 45, 50), the confidentiality and the personal relationship of an interview might threaten the ethics of the research, because anonymity becomes impossible in a face to face interview. I considered the question of anonymity as well while doing the interviews. I told my interviewees that I would not use their real names in the thesis. Most of the interviewees worked with post-tsunami recovery efforts on a daily basis and I think they were not hesitant to talk to me. My research question was also not too personal for them since they had not lost anyone close in the tsunami.

One could say that the background and status of my interviewees differed a lot since their nationalities differed as well as their relation to tsunami. These differences could affect on the way they think about tourism recovery in Phuket and Khao Lak. But one thing that appeared in all the interviews was their willingness to help. Help the people of Khao Lak and Phuket to recover. Of course their opinions and interpretations are subjective but most of them have lived in Thailand for years. They know the Thai culture, they speak Thai, and they work with Thai people. My research would have been more valid if I had had the opportunity to interview Thai people in a manner that I was able to speak with my interviews. By no means am I claiming that my study was the most valid type of research that you could do about the recovery process of Thailand. But after spending two months in Thailand, I think these were the most valid interviewees I was able to find in such a limited time: *"I think it's much better that you interview foreigners, because I can say in a foreigner's view so I can level with you. I've lived here for 17 years."* (Interview 4, Daniel.)

I used participant observation as a method as well, and there is a problem of informed consents in this case (Esterberg 2002, 52). I observed without telling the Thai people that I was observing them. There would have not been a point in observing them if they had known what I was doing. I think observation is quite a subjective method because my own opinions have a great influence on what I decide to observe and how I interpreted the situation. Observation could be even more subjective than on the interviews where the interviewees also can make decisions on what issues to discuss.

The subject of my research is personal for people that have faced the tsunami. I am writing about their recovery process without interviewing them, so some might question the ethics of my research. I am, however, trying to make clear that my research is based on the views of foreigners living in Thailand and my own interpretations on situations. I am not saying that the opinions of my interviewees match with the opinions of Thais. But in the end, the reason I did my study on the recovery of the Thai people, is that I care about their recovery and I would want people to acknowledge that they still need help.

Challenges of objectivity do not end once the data has been gathered. Researcher has the power to interpret the data during the analysis process. There are two issues that Hirsjärvi et al. introduced that I considered especially relevant for my thesis. According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2001, 146), the problem with qualitative research is that the researcher may include too many details in the report trying to indicate all the issues that came up in the interviews. I faced difficulties when trying to decide which quotes I should include to the thesis. In the end, I could remember most of the quotes related to the research by heart and it felt difficult to leave any of them out. I made a decision to consciously leave some of the information out and ponder later on whether these should be included or not. I think that was a good method to process what should be included in the study and what should be left out.

Hirsjärvi et al. (2001, 146) also emphasize the importance of placing the research subject to time, context and culture because context information is important in understanding the wider picture and social significance of the research matter. Regarding my research subject it was evident that cultural context should be included. I studied tourism in Thailand, Thai culture and risk perception of the Buddhists in relation to natural disasters through literature, observation and interviews. It is impossible for me to understand and learn everything related to Thai culture or their way of thinking, but I think it was relevant to make an effort in trying to understand their world view. Based on the interviews and observation I formed ten themes introduced in the next chapter.

6. THEMES OF THE RESEARCH

After going systematically through research material it is important to recognize and select the most relevant themes for the research (Esterberg 2002, 159). I had already realized that my data could provide answers to the questions of the process of the tourism livelihood recovery in Thailand. I developed ten themes which could help me to look into the matter more deeply.

The first two themes, 1) *tourism in Phuket* and 2) *tourism in Khao Lak*, are introductory ones. Theme three: 3) *tsunami's impacts on livelihoods* introduces the tsunami effects. Theme four: 4) *after the relief period* considers the post-tsunami aid. Themes five, six, seven, eight and nine: 5) *vulnerability*, 6) *Thai mentality*, 7) *relationship of a host and a guest*, 8) *risks, fears and reputation* and 9) *providing skills to recover*, take a look at issues that affected the recovery process in a positive or a negative way. My final theme number ten is 10) *state of recovery*. In my tenth theme, my interviewees make statements about the present and future recovery. My observational data appears only in relation to themes 6, 7 and 10 being Thai mentality, relationship of a host and a guest, and state of recovery, since other themes were difficult to observe in such a limited time.

6.1. Tourism in Phuket

My first theme is called *tourism in Phuket*. This theme concentrates mostly on introducing the nature of tourism before the tsunami. I felt that this theme was a very important one for my thesis because by knowing what tourism was like before the tsunami, it would be easier to illustrate the change that took place after it. Tourism has, overall, been very important for Phuket as already described as it was the main source of livelihood there. Tourism sector has controlled almost all the livelihoods of Phuket as Daniel, one of my interviewees, described: *"I would say that more than 80 percent of the livelihoods in Phuket is based on tourism. Very few, like hospitals and schools, are remaining."* (Interview 4, Daniel.)

As a result, Phuket has been shaped by tourism Phuket and is not a traditional Thai area. According Joanna, there is almost nothing genuine about Phuket because: *"Phuket... It's a*

place designed for tourist” (Interview 2, Joanna). This is a rather strong statement. Joanna lived in Khao Lak and did not like Phuket at all, which might have affected this view. But it illustrates the fact that the tourism controls Phuket. Joanna felt that no one should make judgements about Thailand based on the experience of Phuket.

Phuket is very dependent on tourism since there are basically no other ways to make one’s living. The following quote describes the concern of one of my interviewees on Phuket’s dependency on tourism: *“Phuket lives on tourism. If the foreign currency was taken away from Phuket, what would be left? There is no other type of industry but girl industry.* (Interview 5, Pekka.) Pekka also pointed out that the “girl industry” he refers to, is mostly dependent on tourism. Patong Beach was the most tsunami-affected area in Phuket and girl industry is one of the livelihoods concentrated on Patong Beach. Pattaya is a tourist area that is, on many parts, concentrated on sex tourism. In Phuket, the sex tourism is mainly concentrated on one street in Patong Beach whereas in Pattaya, it is all over the place. According to Pekka: *Patong is a little Pattaya, there are only a few thousand girls here whereas in Pattaya, there are 50 000 girls*” (Interview 5, Pekka).

Phuket does not want to be labelled sex tourist destination and the government is also very interested in promoting Phuket as a good area: *“I think Phuket wants to – even the government and everything – was to present Phuket as more civilized destination. Here’s a larger number of families [than in Pattaya].”* (Interview 1, John.)

Before the tsunami, Phuket had a reputation of being more a family-oriented and safer tourist destination than e.g. Pattaya. Phuket was also an expensive area where the tourist services were of high quality. According to Daniel Phuket is rich as: *“Because people, who are from Phuket, are from a rich family. Phuket is a very rich area of Thailand. Especially the land ownership, they’re rich now. And before the steal mining was a hit. So if you are from Phuket, you either have a high position in a hotel not just as waiters or cooks – they come from other parts of Thailand.”* (Interview 4, Daniel.)

Daniel pointed out that good jobs such as being a waiter or a cook is not normal for people who originally come from Phuket. In Thailand people appreciate these kinds of jobs more than in the West, so I think it was quite surprising that people of Phuket really are that rich. But there are poor people in Phuket as well, and I think my interviewee just wanted to

point out the uniqueness of Phuket, not say that everyone who comes from Phuket is very rich.

In short, tourism has been a very important money earner for Phuket and it also had a significant status in Thailand. Phuket has tried to protect its image against sex tourism because it is a high class tourism area that is of significance for the government as well.

6.2. Tourism in Khao Lak

My second theme is called *tourism in Khao Lak*. I decided to take a look at the state of tourism in Phuket and Khao Lak separately so it would be easier to realize the differences of Phuket and Khao Lak before the tsunami. These differences have most likely affected the livelihood recovery as well. Tourism has been the main source of livelihoods in Khao Lak same as Phuket. People did not have many livelihoods to choose from in Khao Lak either: “No... *They don't really have a choice [but tourism]. It's just different.*” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

By “it's just different” Joanna meant the difference of a right to make a choice in Thailand and in the West. We are entitled to make decisions about our life – which school we want to go to, which job we would like to do. Thais, on the other hand, often have to do whatever it takes to survive.

Khao Lak used to have a very good reputation as a tourist destination. It was a perfect place for families. John, an interviewee of mine, felt very bad for losing such a beautiful place for tsunami. He also felt bad for Khao Lak because even if the beach used to be better than the ones in Phuket, it did not seem to help Khao Lak that much (see pictures 2, 3 and 6):

“It was a luxurious beach, very family oriented. It was a more luxurious and expensive beach than Phuket. It's a long, beautiful beach, fantastic beach, probably one of the nicest beaches in Thailand, clean water and all.” (Interview 1, John.)

Besides families, Khao Lak was also popular among the divers because of its' beautiful waters: “*In terms of diving that has been one of the major leads of tourism to Thailand and to Khao Lak*” (Interview 2, Joanna). Melinda pointed out the importance of diving to Khao

Lak as well. *“Cause it was a dive kinda community before. That’s how it was created.”* (Interview 3, Melinda) There are very good diving possibilities in many parts of Thailand (see picture 14). Diving was especially important for Khao Lak because it was created around diving.

My interviewees talked very positively about Khao Lak before the tsunami – it seemed to be one of the nicest places in Thailand for family oriented tourists, divers and honeymooners because of its peacefulness and beauty. Most of the interviewees described Khao Lak as more luxurious, quiet, family-oriented and cleaner than Phuket. But what happened after the tsunami?

6.3. Tsunami’s impacts on livelihoods

My third theme *tsunami’s impacts on livelihoods* introduce the effects that the tsunami had on the livelihoods of Phuket and Khao Lak directly or indirectly. Before the tsunami, there were a lot of tourists in both Phuket and Khao Lak but the tsunami surprised all: *“Life can change as we speak”* (Interview 5, Meeri).

I think that the previous quote says it all. Tsunami really changed the lives of tens of thousands of people living or visiting Thailand in just a few minutes. First of all, tsunami killed a lot of people, especially in Khao Lak. No one could escape the devastation and social stress that tsunami caused in such a small town. You could say that the tsunami touched the livelihoods of almost everyone living in Khao Lak to some respect and many livelihoods were lost: *“All of our [Khao Lak] students last year were affected by the tsunami – some more than others. Many lost family members; many lost just their jobs, their livelihood.”* (Interview 2, Joanna.)

I think the sentence *“many lost just their jobs, their livelihoods”* tells quite a lot about the impact of the tsunami. So many people lost their relatives and a place to live that one can only describe losing a livelihood with the word *“just”*. In the long run, however, livelihoods are the ones that matter quite a lot.

People working at the beach were very affected by the tsunami both in Phuket and Khao Lak. Many of them lost their equipment located on the beach, and sometimes this loss could mean losing a fortune. John described the economic loss that tsunami created for people selling food in the beach:

“Yeah I think those were the ones who got hurt the most. They had gotten themselves some equipment, some pots and they’d go to the beach cooking food and selling it and they lost everything. And raw material cause there might have been 30 to 50 000 bath worth of equipment that was lost.” (Interview 1, John.)

30 000 bath is around 615 euro, 50 000 bath equals to 1020 euro. This might not seem like a lot, but in Thailand that is a huge amount of money. There is no way that the poor could continue their original livelihood without any support. People had to make adjustments to the new situation. Tsunami caused damage to people and to goods and also had an effect on the environment which created a challenge of maintaining one’s livelihood: *“Also the problem was that the sea changed. They had to start finding the new places. The bottom of the sea somehow changed”*. (Interview 1, Saara.) By “they” she meant the fishermen. Tsunami affected the sea and forced the fishermen to adapt to these changes. The fishermen had to find new fishing waters because of the changes the tsunami created. Tsunami killed also many tourist workers in Khao Lak which resulted in losing the people with English skills:

“There’s also English class which teaches more formal English or adults, which is really important because the people who were working in the restaurants along the beach were the primary English speakers so many English speaking people were unfortunately killed by the tsunami. So there is a real need for English speaking Thai people to run shops.” (Interview 3, Melinda.)

In Phuket, the physical damage was not as severe as in Khao Lak. The damage was concentrated on the Patong Beach which was, however, the most popular beach in Phuket. Despite the smaller damage, the tourism industry of Phuket’s beaches shut down immediately after the tsunami as well: *“At the time everything just stopped, but still some stayed here, not everyone left [Phuket]”* (Interview 5, Pekka).

By “not everyone left” Pekka meant that not all the Thai tourist workers left Phuket after the tsunami but they stayed and tried to manage. Most tourists, however, disappeared after the tsunami. Livelihoods that were based on tourism could not operate without the tourists which resulted in high number of unemployed people. Daniel described the big drop in hotel industry that resulted from the tsunami:

“But December 24-25 we are running 99 percent – December 27 after the tsunami we are down to 3 percent. So from 99 to 3 percent. It’s a big drop. People either were taken by tour operators to another destination like Pattaya, Chiang Mai or whatever or the people decided to stay in Phuket town where the hotels were full at that time.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

Phuket town is located in a safe area on a hill far away from the beach. Pattaya is located by the sea, but far away from the tsunami-hit areas up north, and Chiang Mai is located even further in the northern Thailand. People seemed to escape the risk of a new tsunami to the safer areas which seems quite natural since no one knew whether a new wave would strike or not. Daniel talked about a very successful hotel in Phuket that he worked at in the previous quote. Their hotel was not affected by the tsunami that much even though it was located at the beach, but not in Patong. The hotel was back to business in three days but without the tourists, it was hard to operate.

Many tourist workers left Phuket after the tsunami because they lost their job and became unemployed. A surprising turn took place in 2005 as tourists started to come back to Phuket creating another problem concerning the tourist industry – Phuket hotels were short of staff:

“I mean 2005 we did have a problem about staffing. Many of our staff resigned and moved back to their home provinces. Because normally people who work in Phuket are not from Phuket. So aa... when tsunami came there people just disappeared.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

Tsunami impacted livelihoods by killing many tourist workers which resulted in losing the people with appropriate skills considering tourism, e.g. English skills. Tsunami washed away equipments worth tens of thousands of baths which prevented people from continuing their previous livelihoods. Many people lost their jobs and had to leave Phuket and Khao Lak behind. But as the tourists were starting to return to Phuket, a problem of staffing emerged. Tsunami created challenges in term of economy, lost equipment, unemployment, and staffing. How were these needs met? I will take a look at this in the next theme.

6.4. After the relief period

My fourth theme, *after the relief* period, is mostly based on evaluating the tsunami aid provided to Phuket and Khao Lak after the immediate outreach. Many organizations and the Royal Thai Government did provide some help during the relief period, but what happened after the relief period ended? It seems as if in Phuket, tsunami aid was quite efficient:

“During 2005 the government did help, especially the social security department they did give, it’s not that much, but they were providing unemployed people, especially with children and family, just to feed them. Plus it’s not only the government that is helping, there are a lot of institutions – Christian institutions that come here to help out, you know. There’s a lot of all over the world, rich people who sent money directly to Phuket.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

In most interviews, the role of Christian organizations in providing aid was significant. Also the government did provide some aid. The situation in Phuket was quite good after the relief period and some of the hotels were even able to secure their worker’s income in Phuket:

“Some hotels have given an option to the staff by asking them for a paid leave. But the pay is 50 percent so they’d be on a holiday, but would be paid 50 percent. For us, we decided not to force staff on leave but they had to make a decision. If you want to be on the leave, the hotel will pay 70 percent, so just 30 percent but it was up to them, nobody was forced to do that. If they still want a 100 percent salary, they would stay at work even without the guests.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

This was an example of a high class hotel in Phuket that had the money to do that. Not everyone had an opportunity like that in Phuket, let alone Khao Lak. Many people had to struggle alone since e.g. fishermen do not often have a safety net as they have purchased all the equipment themselves and work alone. According to Pekka, there were many things that happened behind the curtain in post-tsunami Phuket:

”This is far away from a land of smiles. One can be rich while others don’t have any bread to eat. There are many things that people cover from the public eye. Even the money for tsunami victims somehow disappeared.” (Interview 5, Pekka.)

The aid in Phuket was considered somewhat efficient in the interviews. On the other hand, the poorest and the migrants were not in good position either in Phuket or in Khao Lak, as I will illustrate in the next theme. There was a common pattern in the interviews that claimed that many actors forgot Khao Lak after the relief period was over. The tsunami damage in Khao Lak was much more severe than in Phuket, and the people needed

assistance to rebuild their livelihoods. In November, 2006, the Tsunami Volunteer Center of Khao Lak was short of staff since people started to forget about the tsunami:

“And then, I was saying that when we started out, there was an immediate outreach, this is like the worst hit area and people were providing shelters and building permanent housing... We have 35 volunteers. It’s off season now, so it’s always a bit quieter at this time. The number has dropped because the immediate stuff has been done... So far there have been around 5000 volunteers.” (Interview 3, Melinda.)

Melinda was concerned for the future of the Tsunami Volunteer Center if people did not come to help anymore. Several actors were interested in helping in the post-tsunami context. As the time passed by, people started to lose interest towards Thailand’s post-tsunami recovery. Also the Ecotourism Training Centre (ETC) was struggling with the question of very few staff members and very many people who wanted to go to the school: *“Finding people to sponsor have been extremely difficult because the relief period is over now. We would like to take more people in but we don’t have the staff or the money.”* (Interview 2, Joanna.)

There were people in Khao Lak willing to help but they could only help a small number of people because the lack of money. Government assistance did not always succeed to improve the conditions in Phuket, not to mention in Khao Lak. Also many organizations provided relief aid to tsunami-affected-areas without coordinating their actions together, which resulted in uneven distribution of aid and created following problems:

“I think the group that got most help was fishermen. They got a lot of boats. In fact, heh, the story is that they ended up with too many boats. Everyone was asking for a boat. Even if they didn’t use to have a boat. And in the end they had more boats than they ever had and there were and more fishermen than there ever was, and next the problem was too many fishermen, not enough fish. Traditional fishermen lost their livelihoods. Because they cannot get enough fish to support themselves.” (Interview 1, John.)

The previous quote illustrates an attempt to help everyone which might result in causing more trouble in livelihood recovery. Next there’s a quote of a conversation that took place in my first group interview between John and Saara. This quote indicates that the aid provided by the government and organizations was sometimes quite uneven and confusing:

“No I don’t think they get any help anymore [from the government]. The first year, the first half a year, they got maybe food support from organizations, independent organizations that came to deliver a package every few days.” (Interview 1, John.)

“Someone said that they got 3000 bath cash” (Interview 1, Saara).

“I don’t know cause it’s hard to say what they got and what they claim they did not get. Because everyone’s saying that they didn’t get enough. But at the same time you see that they did get some, they got a house, some families got two houses and others got no house. Well the people who rented the house they didn’t get any support since they didn’t have any papers to show that they were the residents of that place. And there is a lot of... maybe call it jealousy or envy... which is important to understand – because some people got a little tiny room with nothing in it and some got a new refrigerator and a television just depending on the organization.” (Interview 1, John.)

This conversation illustrates the fact that no one knows in reality what each organization or government had provided. It is quite understandable that different kinds of aid packages and materials created some sort of envy among the tsunami survivors. John and Saara wanted to emphasize, however, that the atmosphere has been very helpful towards one another. But it is natural human nature to feel envy if you lived in a house where you only have one small room with no facilities and your neighbor would get a bigger house with a brand new fridge and a TV. But it is hard to truly know how efficient the aid has been and what kind of motives there exist behind aid distributions, because: *“Of course, the people are not happy. It was such a huge crisis. People are saying that blah blah blah the government is terrible but whether their complaints are really valid or not, there’s no way to verify it.” (Interview 1, John.)*

Even though the government aid had stopped in Phuket and Khao Lak, there were still basic needs that had not been met in Khao Lak, in particular. If you lived in a rented house, the government would not assist you which have resulted in new housing projects starting nearly two years after the tsunami: *“There are reconstruction projects still going on for people that lived in rented houses and the government wouldn’t help them” (Interview 3, Melinda).*

Based on the interviews, I would say that the government did not provide aid efficiently enough to Khao Lak after the relief period and did not succeed in restoring the livelihoods of Khao Lak. Government has made efforts to support the livelihoods, but it has not been efficient. The organizations of Khao Lak are fighting for funding and trying to help the people the government did not help. Whether these attempts are reaching all the pockets of tsunami-affected communities remains uncertain. In Phuket, however, governmental interest and less severe damage assisted the post-tsunami recovery. Still, it remains unclear whether the tsunami aid reached the people in need efficiently enough in Phuket when considering the minorities, for instance. I will take a closer look at the situation of minorities in the following theme.

6.5. Social vulnerability

The fifth theme of my thesis is called *social vulnerability* which indicates the vulnerability as a state in the society. The tsunami revealed the social vulnerability of Thailand. The minorities and the poor were considered as the most vulnerable groups of Thailand in most of the interviews. The Burmese and the Sea gypsies were especially vulnerable since they often work at the beach as fishermen or constructions workers. They are marginalized, they do not have a legal status in Thailand and their housing conditions are vulnerable. According to an interviewee of mine: *“Well, the group that suffered the most were the Burmese migrant workers cause they lived by the construction places, right by the sea”* (Interview 1, Saara).

There are a number of Burmese migrants in Thailand but even though they were very affected by the tsunami, they were not entitled to government assistance: *“There are actually a lot of Burmese in Thailand. They are one group here that got very affected by the tsunami. They don’t receive very much aid, they’ve come as refugees to Thailand and they don’t get government aid.”* (Interview 2, Joanna.) During the interview, we were sitting in a cafeteria and a Burmese man served us our meals. Joanna was very concerned about the situation of the Burmese people because if the Thai government did not care for them, who would? Apparently, no one actually knows how many Burmese there are in Thailand because the government would rather not know the exact number:

“Thai people have told me that the government has closed it up, they don’t want to tell how many Burmese died, so no one knows how many Burmese died, cause no one wants to know how many Burmese are here” (Interview 1, John).

John revealed the difficult power battle there is behind this problem. Burmese were a vulnerable group before the tsunami, but tsunami revealed the extent of their difficult situation in Thailand – the government simply made a decision not to help them. There was also another minority that appeared in most of the interviews, the Sea Gypsies;

“The Sea Gypsies are a problem... They’ve been here... Their history is unknown but they’ve been here for so, so long but they are not Thai citizens. They don’t have the same cultural background with Thai people. But if you don’t make them Thai citizens, then they cannot get any aid, education, go to a hospital or or anything that they need so... It’s quite a sticky situation.” (Interview 3, Melinda.)

“Of course, the...the Sea Gypsies is another group living by the sea in a very simple houses, some of them they suffered and lost their houses” (Interview 1, John).

The Sea Gypsies are a socially vulnerable group and they do not have many rights in Thailand. They do not even have access to basic services. And because they are not Thai citizens, they did not receive tsunami aid either. The situation of the Sea Gypsies is similar to those of the Burmese besides one thing; at least some of them knew what to do when the tsunami came:

“There was one group here in Phuket, of the sea gypsies, interesting cause... They said that they had a tradition in their... their... when the water draws out like that, run to the hills. So no one was hurt. Because when the water went down before the tsunami, so they all run up to the hill. So their boats were damaged, their houses were damaged, but no one died.”
(Interview 1, John.)

Quite the opposite than the Burmese; *“They said that the Burmese were extremely eager to out to catch the fish, cause when the sea went out like that; there were a lot of fish on the dry land. Catching the fish.”* (Interview 1, Saara.)

Based on the interviews, one aspect that made Phuket and Khao Lak vulnerable was that no one knew about the tsunami. People were amazed by the way that the sea acted minutes before the tsunami. As the story of the Sea Gypsies running to the hills expresses, it would have been possible to save at least some people if people realized to run and had access to an escape route. However, the population of Khao Lak remains vulnerable because the area is very flat and the escape route is far away: *“The buildings protected Phuket from the water but the devastation in Khao Lak was more severe because it is a flatter area”* (Interview 5, Satu).

According to the interviews, the poor and the minorities were vulnerable before the tsunami because they lived in simple houses by the sea without access to services. Tsunami did, however, make the situation even worse by proving the fact that the RTG ignored the needs of the marginalized people. Consequences of natural disaster are most devastating for the socially vulnerable groups of the poor and migrants with limited rights. These people have no access to government support and livelihood restoration funds and their only hope lays in NGOs. Even though many of the migrants or the poor were not entitled to tsunami assistance, their ability to start out new seems amazing as discussed in the next theme.

6.6. Thai mentality

Theme six introduces *Thai mentality* which is an important aspect of post-tsunami recovery. Thai mentality and community orientation could be regarded as factors that reduce social vulnerability of the Thai people. Joanna considered Thai mentality as an incredible aspect of the Thai society: *“But the resilience of Thai people is unmistakably amazing. I cannot imagine any other country surviving such a disaster with such a positive outlooks that are attached. Their ability to through is amazing.”* (Interview 2, Joanna.)

Many people lost their livelihoods in tsunami but despite that, they were eager to start all over again. Melinda described the dedication of the Thai people and ability to start over:

“A lot of them are rebuilding. Just kinda picked up and started up again. I mean, a lot of people had to leave and stay with a relative for a while but I think that a lot of people returned back home. A lot of people just started building at the same sights, whether they were suitable sites or not.” (Interview 3, Melinda.)

Daniel pointed out that there were also other reasons for the persistence of the Thai people than the ability to start over. Many Thai people were forced to rebuild and recover quickly to secure their livelihoods because they would not have had any other way to survive: *“And... the Thai mentality of trying to fix the place as soon as they can because their livelihood is at stake”* (Interview 4, Daniel). Thai people need the tourist dollars: *“You don’t get money if you look sad. That’s why the tsunami was forgotten so soon.”*(Interview 5, Pekka.)

Another aspect of the Thai mentality is their unwillingness to talk about the past. They live at present, not in the past. I would have liked to learn tsunami stories from the local people but I found it extremely difficult. Joanna explained me a little about the Thai way of life:

“They’re very shy about the past. And what’s past, is past... They do not want to get upset. They don’t want you to get upset. They feel that if they’re somehow making you sad. They’re reluctant to share their stories. It took me 6 months to get the stories out of some of our students last year. And there has to be a very big trust.” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

During my trip, I found this to be very true. Thai culture is a special one. It is not in their culture to talk about the past. It is also good to avoid talking about negative or bad things:

“Of course that is the Thai culture... If you speak about bad things, they will happen. It’s a very strong thing in Thai culture. For example, if you talk about seeing a snake, you will see a snake. So they talk about happy things.” (Interview 1, John.)

In that sense it would be impossible to ask straight questions on e.g. the possibility of a new tsunami. Although it is difficult to do a research about the tsunami among a nation that is not too willing to talk about bad things or the past, it seems to be one of aspect that has helped the recovery. Thai people’s willingness to start out new, even though they may have lost everything, seems unbelievable. I remember that I was so surprised during my trip when I did not hear any complains about the tsunami from the locals:

“It is quite amazing that I have not heard anyone complaining about the tsunami or blaming it for someone. No one I’ve seen, it trying to get sympathies on the basis of tsunami, even though it would be justified. It seems as if the people here accept it as a part of nature – it happened, so what can you do about it?” (Field diary, Phuket, 20.11.2006.)

Have the Thai people forgotten the tsunami? According to Pekka, Thai people have moved past the tsunami which is the reason why the effects of the tsunami are not visible in Phuket:

“Thai people have forgotten the tsunami. They may cry and rejoice within a half an hour. Thai people do not concentrate on what has happened; they just try to get enough food for today. Thai people have a different kind of way of thinking than us.” (Interview 5, Pekka.)

This can be very true to some extent, but I think it is also the Thai custom to avoid talking about a bad thing. According to John, it is important to understand that the Thai people do not necessarily show their real emotions or tell how they truly feel:

“If you ask them, if they’re afraid of a new tsunami, that’s fine, but I don’t know what their answers will be like. If they’re honest, they’ll say yeas. And who knows what their real feeling is? If they’re saying it out of hope that it will never happen again, or...” (Interview 1, John.)

I think that Thai culture has some qualities that indicate that the Thai people are not able to face the disaster. If they keep ignoring the tsunami alerts, they just might succeed in ignoring the whole disaster:

“I’ve been here for three tsunami warnings now. And the reaction from Thai people... Some are very calm and others leave immediately... Everyone in the program who had seen the tsunami didn’t leave – they were like...nothing. It was almost as if they couldn’t face that. But that was unique. There are other survivors here who don’t live the affected area and for the rest of us here, I think we’ve almost gotten used to it. You can no longer, for sanity’s sake, attach yourself to everything.” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

Based on the interviews and observation I would say that the Thai mentality has mainly assisted the recovery process of livelihoods. But I also think that avoiding the subject of tsunami might create problems in the future. In the sense of ignoring the need for long-term assistance in some tsunami hit areas, it has already created severe problems. But in terms of relationship recovery Thai mentality and friendliness have been the key factors which I will consider in the following theme. Thai mentality has also contributed to reputational, social, and economic recovery.

6.7. Relationship of a host and a guest

My seventh theme is called *relationship of a host and a guest*. Based on the interviews and observation I will try to find answers to questions on the nature of the typical relationship between tourists and Thais, and whether it is possible to create a personal relationship between locals and tourists.

Thai people are usually friendly and smiling, but a smile does not necessarily mean the same thing for Thais than to Westerners: *“You know what’s interesting about that... It’s real but there’s more behind it, it’s not all there. They smile because they want you to be at ease and they rather pretend that something didn’t happen”*. (Interview 2, Joanna.)

I felt it difficult, especially in the beginning of my trip, to study the real emotions of the Thai people since e.g. a smile is often just a way to pass difficult situation. Thais are, however, quite genuine people.

“In a way Thailand is a paradise, people are always friendly and smiling. But sometimes I feel as if the Thai people smile and say yes, even though they do not seem to understand what I am saying. It gets quite frustrating sometimes because you never know if they understand you or just pretend to. But I guess it’s just a cultural difference and you really have to pay attention trying to figure out what they really feel, understand, or think.” (Field diary, Pattaya, 15.10.2006.)

I think cultural differences between the Thai people and the Westerners are very important to understand. It is rather easy to get along with Thai people by being friendly. But whether the relationship between tourists and locals can form into a very personal one, is another question. According to John, the relationship between tourists and locals is true to some extent, but the tourists often do not see the real conditions in which the locals live in:

“Of course, if you say, do we see their real life, I mean we have the people who are serving you at the hotels, they might live a very simple life compared to the luxury hotel they work at. There are many people living in a small room in poor conditions. So in that sense, we don’t get to see their real life, but their character is quite true.” (Interview 1, John.)

Creating personal relationships, however, is quite challenging which might depend on several issues. During the trip I felt that it was difficult to get to know Thai people even though in time, I was able to understand their culture and habits a little better:

“After spending a month and a half in Thailand I’ve started to realize how difficult it is to create a personal relationship with Thai people as a tourist, since they always expect you to pay for a product and think of you as a customer. Which is quite natural I think, cause we don’t even share the same language – Thais really don’t speak that good English. I don’t think they even think of foreigners as possible friends. It seems quite easy though for foreign guys to get familiar with Thai ladies, but there are other motives behind that...” (Field diary, Phuket, 19.11.2006.)

Language barriers, cultural differences and the fact that tourists represent livelihoods for the Thai people have an effect on the relationship. Livelihoods of the Thais depend on the good relationship with the tourists and it is often easiest to keep a little distance between the workers and the tourists. Daniel also told me about a hotel policy that is quite usual in Thailand and may apply to some other tourist livelihoods as well:

“Actually, the hotel has a policy not to do that as much as they can also if it involves money and relationship. But if, for example if only just as friends... It’s actually quite open question. But sometime we did have a problem when some hotel workers took them around and asked for a payment because it looks bad on the hotel, we provide service.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

The hotel had a policy that the workers should avoid spending their free time with the tourists. Daniel thought that it would be a lot easier if the relationship between tourists and the locals remained professional since that would spare the hotel from misinterpretations. After all, sex tourism is quite usual in Thailand and protecting a hotel image is considered extremely important. Tourists also represent money for the Thai people and the interactions between tourists and locals are often based on e.g. buying a product. During my two month trip this felt little hard sometimes:

“I’m getting so tired of bargaining ten times a day, it’s impossible to do anything without having a conversation about the money... Phuket being a higher class and rich place they also expect the tourists to pay so much more than in Bangkok, for instance. You could travel around Bangkok by a taxi for an hour with 2 Euros whereas in Phuket, you have to pay 2 Euros to get to the beach that is 2 kilometers away. In Finland 2 Euros is basically nothing but here you can eat a good meal at a restaurant with that.” (Field diary, Phuket, 3.11.2006.)

If it was not for the tourists, most of the Thai people would not have been on the beach. Still, Thais have no hard feelings for the tourists because tsunami was a disaster that the Thai people and tourists shared together: *“Because so many tourists died that they shared it. It wasn’t like that the tourists were able to escape and the Thais died... they all died together.”* (Interview 1, Saara.) Thai people expressed their friendliness and willingness to help after the tsunami. According to Meeri, the Thai people reacted to tsunami very unselfishly:

“The people here are really good... When tsunami struck, very few Finns would have opened their homes and given their shows and clothes to a person they don’t even know. Thai people shared unselfishly which was unbelievable. They worked over time. When we were helping at the hospital, even there they offered us food.” (Interview 5, Meeri.)

This kind of helping created a bond between tourists and the locals, and one of my interviewees felt that the relationship between Scandinavian tourists and Thais was and still is especially strong:

“I think it [=tsunami] brought people closer – I mean for me, personally, it gave me a respect for Scandinavian people, in some level. I respected them before, but I respect them even more for what happened because I see they really want to help.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

Based on the interviews, Thai people are very thankful for the foreigners that have helped them after the tsunami: *“And the Thai people’s feelings about the foreigners that have helped with the reconstruction are very positive”* (Interview 1, Saara). It seems that the tsunami affected the relationship between tourist workers and tourists in a positive way. They experienced the tsunami together and at the time of the tsunami, it did not matter whether you were a Thai or a foreigner. But after the disaster had passed, creating personal relationships became difficult once again and the subject that had once united the tourists and the locals became a subject that the Thai people, as well as the tourists, wanted to forget. But still, the risks and fears of a tsunami are still influencing Thais and tourists all over the world, as considered in the following theme.

6.8. Risks, fears and reputational crises

Theme eight discusses the impacts of *risks, fears, and reputational crises* to the recovery of livelihoods. These were one of the issues that my interviewees associated closely with the post-tsunami livelihood recovery of Thailand. Fear of the water and fear of the ghosts were increased after the tsunami among the Thai people:

“Thai people are more scared of Khao Lak than the tourists because of the ghosts”
(Interview 1, John).

“There has been... getting over fear of the water. I think they’re not encouraged to learn how to swim. We teach them to swim... It’s something you wouldn’t expect to be teaching at the age of 23 to these girls but there has been a fear of the water before and the tsunami just added it up. Just paranoia fear. Not that much that there’s gonna be another tsunami but they think that the ocean is unpredictable and you know what – it is.” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

The Thai people do not think of the beach and the water the same way we do. We like to sunbathe; Thai do not like to do that. We like to play in the water; Thais are not interested in that. According to Joanna, tsunami increased the existing fear of the water among the Thai people. Thai people are also very spirit conscious. Satu pointed out that the fear of the water has had a direct influence on livelihoods as well:

“They are so scared of the water. If I go to the beach for a walk, Thai people won’t come with me. Foreigners aren’t scared of the water, but Thai people are afraid that the tsunami will strike again. That’s why they want a job where you don’t need to be on the beach.”
(Interview 5, Satu.)

Satu told me that a fear of a new tsunami actually prevents people from working at the beach. She also hoped that the Thai people had another chance to make a living than work in the beach. But it is not just Thai people that are scared: *“I think there were a lot of Chinese and Asian tourists here before the tsunami and because of their cultural backgrounds, they’re now afraid to come back. Ghosts are a very real thing for them.”*
(Interview 2, Joanna.)

Fear among the Thai people and Asian tourists created challenges for tourism. Several people were killed in Khao Lak which is why Khao Lak was the place to avoid. Tourism can be easily affected by these kinds of fears that are attached to images. Daniel had a strong opinion on promoting tourism, but still he could see the risks behind it:

“It is... tourism is always risky. First of all, it’s not a necessity. It’s not food and water, you know? It’s not like clothes, education or car or fuel or whatever. Tourism is on the sideline, you know. Okay, if I work too much, I will go to a holiday. But if like, I have to pay a lot of bills, the last thing on my mind is a holiday; I have to pay bills that’s more important.”
(Interview 4, Daniel.)

People are aware of the vulnerability of Khao Lak as tsunami proved its fatal consequences. Knowledge of that has also impacted the reputation of Khao Lak:

“The other part of Khao Lak is flattery and so water destroyed a lot up to 2 kilometers inside and also the reconstruction is concentrated on the hill because the tourists are afraid to stay in a place where the escape route is further 2 or 3 kilometers away.” (Interview 1, John.)

Reputation of Phuket and Khao Lak suffered among the Thai people as well because Thai people are afraid to go to places where lots of people have died; *“Thai people remember places by accidents, where people died... Whether it be car accidents or drowning... It’s a spirit issue.”* (Interview 1, Saara.) That is why the reputational disaster is so difficult to recover from, especially in Khao Lak where thousands of people were killed. Besides Thai people, reputation plays a significant role among the international tourists as well. Today tourists have several tourism destinations to choose from when planning a vacation:

“Tourism is always affected by because we are selling a service, not a product. So they can put us away at any time. If they can’t afford it, they can put it away and it won’t affect them at all. There are a lot of places in the world; they can just go somewhere else. And we were hit by bird flu, sars, Iraq war, bombs in Bali, Indonesia... Phuket was hit many times but never, ever, as bad as after the tsunami. Tsunami is the worst disaster that happened to us.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

In result of all the fears and risks that Thai people and tourists attach to Khao Lak, the rebuilding has concentrated on creating a safer environment; *“I think a lot of things were on the beach before, but now people are building further back.”* (Interview 3, Melinda.) What should be done to fully recover from reputational disaster? Daniel thought that securing a good image for Phuket is crucial in the future:

“That’s one thing that we need to maintain for Scandinavians, a family oriented place or a honeymoon place. Not only a place for sex. It’s an image and we’re trying to protect that. Especially for Scandinavians, because honeymooners, old couples and families come here. Maybe in Pattaya they don’t mind, but in Phuket we’re trying to maintain that.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

Thailand has invested in tsunami warning horns and tsunami escape routes. According to Tourism Authority of Thailand (7.8.2006), Thais have taken actions in improving their actions if such a destructive catastrophe would occur again and on June 26th, 2006, 79 warning towers were installed in Thai provinces which border the Andaman Sea, 19 of them to Phuket area. My interviewees saw the importance of tsunami warning towers primarily as creating a safer image for the locals and the tourists:

“Yeah, they have some warning horns and then they have these signs about escape routes... little blue signs, if you’ve noticed even in Phuket in Patong, there will be little blue signs where is a picture of a big wave that says evacuation route that has an arrow. If you keep following that arrow, you’ll get to some hill some place.” (Interview 1, John.) (See picture 5)

According to Daniel, the investments in security have not been efficient in Khao Lak. He believed that creating a feeling or even an illusion on safety to Khao Lak would help tourism to recover:

“The thing with Khao Lak is – focus more on security. Invest more on security – you know. Even install like watch towers something. Or install like blanks something. I don’t know. But invest so that people would feel that they are really protected. If they see the protection...”
(Interview 4, Daniel.)

Phuket, on the other hand, was ready for the increase of tourist arrivals and more prepared for a new tsunami. Still, Thai authorities were careful in creating and maintaining Phuket as a safe place:

“And Phuket, right now, is more ready than ever because we have installed tsunami towers so it will start a siren automatically if tsunami comes. And the tsunami evacuation routes is ready. And there’s a drill, normally they do it every month but it scared the tourists if they do it every month because it is a loud noise and people start to run. So they decided not to do it every month but we’ve done it before so now people know about the tsunami, now people know.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

Based on the interviews, there indeed seemed to be a reputational disaster in both Phuket and Khao Lak. Phuket had managed to get pass the reputational disaster but the reputation of Khao Lak had not recovered as of November 2006. Different reasons for reputational disaster emerged in the interviews such as vulnerability of the area, spirits issues and different kinds of fears. Fears were especially relevant in Khao Lak – if the Thais were scared of Khao Lak, should not the foreigners be as well?

A common pattern emerged in the interviews on importance of an image. Reputation is one of the best marketing methods concerning tourism and a central matter that tourism-oriented areas concentrate, and should concentrate on. All of the interviewees thought that one of the central issues preventing Khao Lak’s recovery is its lack of reputational recovery. Phuket, however, has managed to create an illusion of tourism paradise once again.

6.9. Providing skills for recovery

My ninth theme *providing skills for recovery* concentrates on post-tsunami skills development. Several Thais were not able to continue their previous livelihoods because they may have lost the equipment, the market, or the customers. During November 2006, international NGOs were providing skills development to tsunami victims especially in Khao Lak, where it is harder to continue one’s old livelihood without assistance. When providing new skills for the Thai people, the Thai culture and the local’s own needs and

hopes need to be considered. Joanna gave me an example on how things are run in Thailand and what their starting point for the project has been:

“Here if you want to find an electrician, you start to wonder down the road asking people where you could find one; if one was an electrician, if he was to know an electrician, if his uncle was an electrician. And then... They might come. Or they might not. So that’s where we’re starting from which is why it’s important to keep the goals realistic.” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

She admitted having high hopes before coming to Thailand. After a while she realized the importance of doing skills development in a way that suits Thailand. The education level is not the same in Thailand as in the Western countries. The aim of the Ecotourism Training Center was to teach new skills for people who had to switch jobs and who did have previous occasional education. As a result was, they started the work with people who knew little but ended up learning a whole lot during a ten month intensive dive master training:

“Some students didn’t know what the alphabet was. And Nue, the one I introduced you, he had no idea what diving was. And now, he’s in our staff working as a dive instructor. So it’s amazing what their learning potential is.” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

Skills development will provide people with skills, new opportunities and a livelihood. The students themselves were very grateful for this kind of opportunity. Joanna, a teacher at the ETC, recognized the importance of considering English and computer skills in the training as well:

“Most of the people were affected in this area. Many of our students don’t have education. And you know, their future was just like that... And here... we’re giving them skills, so it’s like “I can do this, I can speak English!” It’s really changing their lives, because they had no access to that kind of thing before. That is why diving is main thing here, but they’re all equally important and integrated. They cannot work as dive masters without knowing English. And the computer skills are an important part of today’s world, so just to be part of what’s going on in the world.” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

This kind of skills development differs from relief aid and according to my interviewees, it is very important to acknowledge. Joanna recognized the importance of providing people with equipment and housing, but she wanted to emphasize the difference between short-term and long-term aid:

“Initially I came to build houses. What we are doing here is to provide a sustainable income. If you train somebody, they may have a job and be okay for the rest of their lives. When you build someone a house... Well, it’s different.” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

People of Phuket and Khao Lak are very dependent on tourism and all the interviewees expressed their concern on sustainability of the livelihoods. Sustainability would require long-term aid and commitment from both the helper and the ones that need help. Creating sustainable tourism seems to be a very important issue for the people who are working in recovery projects in Khao Lak. All interviewees emphasized the need for sustainability in development projects:

“We don’t go there and tell them that this is what we’re gonna do, take it or leave it. It’s really about the community... Now that it’s 2 years after, we kinda shifted from the immediate efforts to long term sustainability.” (Interview 3, Melinda.)

Local community, sustainable tourism and environmental issues seemed relevant for Khao Lak in each interview. The recovery of Khao Lak was incomplete and people have more opinions about how the Thai people should be helped. Local participation in the development projects was one of the issues that were considered important:

“So like I said before, it’s about working with the community and building relationships with them. We always ask the people what they would want before going ahead with anything because... The projects are for them... All our projects have, like I said that our construction projects require that at least one member of the family should participate.” (Interview 3, Melinda.)

Melinda thought that projects that involve the locals would be also more sustainable. The Tsunami Volunteer Center and the ETC wanted to emphasize the input of the locals whether in terms on diving or a Tsunami Craft Centre (see picture 7):

“When you think about it, you’re travelling to a foreign country so who would you want as a guide actually? Another foreigner or would you like someone who said, oh this is where I grew up... It’s giving them confidence to do that. I think confidence is a big thing for them to learn.” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

“A lot of community development projects that are trying to get people involved, so we do things as starting out businesses... There is also this craft shop that is also Thai-led, all the money goes back to people that make the crafts. We have stepped back from that project now and we have nothing to do with it anymore. We still sell some things”. (Interview 3, Melinda.)

Teaching new skills for the Thai people creates new opportunities for them. Also new livelihood opportunities e.g. ecotourism were considered very important for Thailand. The ETC was especially concentrated on promoting ecotourism. Creating sustainable tourism would provide the locals with steady income that does not depend on reputation or seasonality. Sustainability was the issues my interviewees mainly wanted to address:

"I want to do this so that the Thai people have an education and they can make a choice. Knowledge is power, no matter how you look at it. I hope that they will, eventually, reach out of these areas and will be able to start something on their own." (Interview 2, Joanna.)

Besides developing tourism to a more sustainable direction, most of the interviewees considered promoting other livelihood opportunities as well. Due to the risky nature of tourism, most of my interviewees felt that the Thai people should have the possibility to practise a livelihood that is not connected to tourism:

"I think the best way to help people is to provide them with other opportunities but tourism. A wise man once said "don't give a fish, give a hook and line" meaning that you should give a chance." (Interview 5, Pekka.)

Skills development is challenging, especially if it is run by foreign educators. Participation of the locals is essential in successful skills development in order to modify skills development suitable for the local community. Another challenge with learning a new livelihood is that they first need to learn a new skill before they can support themselves with it:

"Students are only practicing at home now, they cannot support themselves by baking yet. Some of them are unemployed, one of the students has a café and now as the high season started, she had to quit the course and go to work in a café. And one student has a store and she doesn't attend to the class regularly. I guess husbands support the unemployed people." (Interview 5, Satu.)

In the long run learning a new skill could provide people with new employment opportunities and improve their social status, for instance. Skills development was considered very important in the interviews. Long-term commitment in development and sustainable tourism were in the common interest of all, especially people working with the people of Khao Lak. But has this kind of development taken place in post-tsunami Thailand?

6.10 State of livelihood recovery

The *state of recovery* is my final theme and it takes a closer look at the present state of livelihood recovery in Phuket and Khao Lak as of November 2006. The recovery of livelihoods has been very different in Phuket and in Khao Lak. In November 2006, it was evident that the recovery process of Khao Lak was still incomplete. In Phuket, however, there were more tourists than before the tsunami, so to that extent the tourism sector of Phuket has recovered. According to Pekka, the number of tourists is very high in Phuket:

"A few years was very quiet here but now there are more than ten planes coming here a week. Over ten direct flights a week [from Finland]. More Finns are coming here now than ever before, it's a record. Overall, more tourists are coming to Phuket now than prior the tsunami. Maybe this wouldn't even have gotten the publicity without tsunami. Setback that tourism caused has turned out to be a victory for this place. Prices are getting higher here, you can see it everywhere." (Interview 5, Pekka.)

Finnish tourists have returned and the prices have gone up in Phuket. According to previous interviewee, many people who otherwise would not have known of Phuket know about it now. According to Daniel, tsunami has also influenced Phuket in a positive way:

"Tsunami in another way, has affected the island of Phuket in a positive way. First of all, it has cleaned the whole thing. It just cleaned the beaches, the sand is much finer these new corals that appeared out of nowhere. And the water, the visibility is clearer. So we have a lot of divers coming all over the world to enjoy the corals and the fishes." (Interview 4, Daniel.)

There are more tourists in Phuket now than before the tsunami but some changes have taken place concerning the nationalities of tourists. Some nations still prefer to travel to other destinations rather than Phuket:

"So even now, in November 2006, almost 2 years after the tsunami, they [Italians] are still hesitant to come here. A lot of Scandinavians still come. A lot of people from Australia and New Zealand. And Germany come, Switzerland come... So now you can see that it's back to normal." (Interview 4, Daniel.)

"Asian people... Very slow, they're the slowest [to come back]. Because Asians are these... supernatural, superstitious. They think of ghosts. They think of dead people. It's different than our culture. So they think 'oh, someone died and the spirits will be all around. There's one market that is still particularly slow is Taiwan. Hong Kong arrived already. China is starting to come but Taiwan is very slow. Before they were the biggest in Phuket and because what happened they're very slow. But the Europeans made up for it. If Taiwan didn't come, then they [the Europeans] are filling the hotels now." (Interview 4, Daniel.)

Also some Thais left Phuket and are still hesitant to return: *We are back to normal in case of staffing even though some Thais still prefer to stay away but they're coming back* (Interview 4, Daniel.).

The tourists have become more conscious of a possible danger and some tourists still made judgments about their accommodation based on the tsunami. This has resulted in different kinds of requests than before the tsunami, especially among the Asian nationalities:

"People who book, sometimes, they want second floor up, they don't want the ground floor. That's the one thing that I've seen that has changed. And the Asians, they say 'is your hotel on the beach?' Quite the opposite of the Europeans, because they want a hotel on the beach where the Asians want the hotel to be off the beach. That's the trend, but in a minor way, not in a major way. I would say that one out of ten would request that." (Interview 4, Daniel.)

According to Daniel, tourism changed in a minor way after the tsunami in Phuket but it might not have long-lasting effects on the tourism industry overall. On individual level, however, tsunami may still have major influences. I would say that the tsunami may still have an effect on many livelihoods of Phuket even though it may not be apparent. And in Khao Lak, you could see that Khao Lak was not recovered as the shops and the beaches of Khao Lak remained empty:

“We spent the day in Khao Lak today and it was a weird day. There are plenty of shops and restaurants on the main road, but they are all empty. I saw less than 10 tourists in 3 hours whereas in Phuket, you cannot go to a single shop without seeing at least 10 tourists there”. (Field diary, Khao Lak, 28.10.2006.) (See picture 6.)

We did not see anyone at the beach at the time of our visit there (see pictures 2 and 3) which was even more surprising. Satu emphasized the role of travel agencies in promoting tourism in Khao Lak:

“When I came to Khao Lak for the first time [late summer 2006] there was not a single tourist there. Last week there was maybe five so maybe the amount will increase now when the tourist season really hits off. But there is only one hotel operating now. Finnmatkat will start to bring tourist there now. Travel agencies have, of course, their own role in tourist arrivals. It hasn't recovered as fast as Phuket.” (Interview 5, Satu.)

I think the travel agencies play an important role in tourist arrivals since much depends on how they market a certain place. Without marketing, it is also difficult for the tourism to recover. The slow recovery of Khao Lak's tourism has had a direct influence on the livelihoods and the problem of unemployment was very relevant in November 2006:

“Because of the slow recovery of the tourist industry the rate of unemployment is still very high because a large amount of the people living in that area were employed by training, cooking, driving services and all the other things that come along with the tourists industry and also the other industries, the support industries, suffered even it is so much as being the fish industry – not so much the fish industry in itself but the selling the fish, the marketing because the hotels ha a huge demand.” (Interview 1, John.)

How are people surviving in Khao Lak? No one seems to know exactly. Some say that the relatives are probably supporting the ones that have suffered or they have found some sort of a job that is enough to survive: *“The number of customers is still so low, like I don't know how they're surviving. They're barely surviving, hoping to survive; some of them haven't been able to survive.”* (Interview 1, John.)

The rate of unemployment of Khao Lak was still very high in November 2006 and the dependency on tourism industry was apparent, also among the skills development

programs: *“Of course well, a lot of it is still focused on the hope that tourism industry will survive, for instance the baking industry...”* (Interview 1, John.) People are hoping the return of the tourists; *“From our scope here, the tourism industry is slowly being rebuilt. The jobs are starting to come back but how fast, that’s the problem.”* (Interview 2, Joanna.)

Phuket was back to normal in November 2006 (see picture 13) with minor changes; some nationalities preferred to stay away, some Thais kept avoiding Phuket, and the tourists were more conscious of the safety of their vacation. In terms of livelihoods, the absence of certain nationalities did not matter in Phuket since the number of Europeans had increased after the tsunami. There were enough customers which is one of the most important things when considering the recovery of tourism related livelihoods. That is not, however, the only aspect that one needs to be considered in the recovery of livelihoods which I will take a closer look at in conclusion.

Khao Lak had not recovered as of November 2006 because many nationalities were still avoiding it, Thai people did not want to work there, and there was no market for tourism at that time. Tourism connected livelihoods had no customers and even the indirectly connected livelihoods such as fisheries were barely surviving.

7. RECOVERING FROM THE TSUNAMI

After organizing my data under themes I started to get a better picture on what kind of information my data holds concerning post-tsunami livelihood recovery of Phuket and Khao Lak. There was still, however, a need to connect the ten themes based on my data with the previously introduced recovery aspects; reputational, economic, relational, and social. I will illustrate the connection between these in the following table.

Table 5: The connection between the four recovery aspects (reputational, economic, relational and social) and the ten themes introduced in the previous chapter

Themes connected to the recovery aspects	
Reputational Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme 1: Tourism in Phuket - Theme 2: Tourism in Khao Lak - Theme 3: Tsunami’s impact on livelihoods - Theme 4: After the relief period - Theme 5: Vulnerability - Theme 6: Thai mentality - Theme 8: Risks, fears and reputation
Economic recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme 1: Tourism in Phuket - Theme 2: Tourism in Khao Lak - Theme 3: Tsunami’s impact on livelihoods - Theme 4: After the relief period - Theme 6: Thai mentality - Theme 9: Providing skills for recovery
Relational recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme 1: Tourism in Phuket - Theme 2: Tourism in Khao Lak - Theme 3: Tsunami’s impact on livelihoods - Theme 4: After the relief period - Theme 5: Thai mentality - Theme 7: Relationship of a host and a guest
Social recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme 1: Tourism in Phuket - Theme 2: Tourism in Khao Lak - Theme 3: Tsunami’s impact on livelihoods - Theme 4: After the relief period - Theme 5: Vulnerability - Theme 6: Thai mentality - Theme 9: Providing skills for recovery

In the table you can see which data themes have most influence on each aspect of recovery. The themes that have been bolded have the most influence on certain type of recovery. I will explain the connection in relation to each recovery aspect in more specific in sections 7.1.–7.4 and only list out the most relevant themes here. The state of tourism as described

in first and second themes – *tourism in Phuket* and *tourism in Khao Lak* – is interconnected with all the recovery aspects since they indicate the previous state of tourism in both towns. Theme three *tsunami's impact on livelihoods* also holds information regarding all four recovery aspects indicating what kind of influence tsunami had on these. Theme ten, *state of recovery*, is also in connection to all the recovery aspects indicating the present and future state of each recovery. I will now introduce shortly all the other connections through the four recovery aspects.

Theme six *Thai mentality* and theme eight *risks, fears and reputation* have the strongest connection to reputational recovery. Thai people's helpful nature and friendliness played a significant role in reputational recovery as did risks and fears.

Economic recovery is affected by numerous issues. I think the most relevant themes in my study concerning economic recovery are theme four, six and nine: *after the relief period*, *Thai mentality* and *providing skills for recovery*. Economic aid provided during the relief period pointed out a direction where the livelihoods were able to recover. Also Thai people's persistence and skills development have contributed to economic recovery.

Theme seven, *relationship of a host and a guest*, has the strongest connection to relational recovery. This theme illustrates the nature of the relationship before, during and after the tsunami. *Thai mentality*, once again, played a central role in relational recovery promoting the good relationship between tourists and locals.

Theme four, five, six and nine have all had a great influence on social recovery. *After the relief period* illustrates how the societies were supported during and after the relief period. *Social vulnerability* introduces the connection between social recovery and vulnerability. *Thai mentality* describes the nature of Thai people and their coping capacity. *Providing skills for recovery* supports social recovery in providing people with new skills.

Each of the themes basically introduced a positive or a negative aspect of tourism and its recovery in Phuket and Khao Lak. I will take a closer look at what information these themes hold in relation to reputational, economic, relational, and social recovery in more specific next.

7.1. Reputational recovery

The recovery of reputation has been very different in Phuket and Khao Lak. Phuket was back to normal very fast whereas in Khao Lak, the reputational recovery is still impartial. Two of my themes: *Thai mentality* and *risks, fears and reputational crises* give an idea of the few underlying reasons for the state of reputation. In my thesis, I have and will consider reputational recovery through risks, reputational crises and Thai mentality.

Issues that have prevented reputational recovery are most likely numerous, but I will consider the ones here that my interviewees and I felt the most relevant for reputation. When considering the effects of risk perception, I think that the risk of new tsunami has played a negative part in the recovery process in some cases where the risk of a new tsunami is considered too big. Group perception plays also an important role in Thailand where families and relatives are still a strong unit. If a group was to consider the risk of a new tsunami too big, it might have resulted in everyone in the community viewing tsunami as too risky to handle.

It is hard to know what the Thais are most scared of, the ghosts, the water or a new tsunami. Based on the interviews, Thais often do not want to discuss the possibility of a new tsunami but they admit being very scared of the water. I believe that it is possible that a perceived risk has become a substitute for actual risks, at least in some cases, because risk of a tsunami is harder to handle. For instance people are afraid of the water and the beach, but not the tsunami directly: *“Tsunami impacts come out in very odd ways since they are not discussed”* (Interview 2, Joanna). Sometimes, when the risk is perceived too large, people might not even see the point in escaping it.

Are people overestimating the risk of a new tsunami? The Indian Ocean has many seismic resources, so it is possible for a new tsunami to strike. Thanawood mentions that according to Norwegian Geotechnical Institute, the possibility of a new tsunami wave is likely again within 50-100 years. (Thanawood et al. 2006.) Fear of a new tsunami is actually very justified and understandable since the previous tsunami expressed the vulnerability of Phuket and especially Khao Lak.

Tsunami attracted the media and most of the Western people attach tsunami with Phuket and Khao Lak. Due to the information technology, it is easy to Google for information nowadays which has also prevented relational recovery to some extent – people know that Phuket and Khao Lak can be affected. I also believe that the absence of advertising of travel agencies has prevented people from booking trips to Khao Lak. It is rather difficult to find a meaningful way to market a place after a disaster such as tsunami.

There are, on the other hand, other issues that have contributed to the recovery of reputation. Thais have also gotten very good publicity during and after the tsunami because of their willingness to help and amazing ability to continue their lives in a positive manner. I believe that is one aspect of Thai society that has helped reputational recovery, especially of Phuket, because there are more tourist arrivals now than before the tsunami. Also post-tsunami mitigation studies and tsunami evacuation routes have increased the feeling of safety among Thais and tourists.

Phuket's reputation is good among most of the world's nationalities. Some Asian nationalities still might attach the word "risk" with Phuket mostly because of the Asian culture and belief that the spirits of the dead people are around. However the culture and the beauty of Phuket have outweighed these things among most of the people. But there are still some tourists and Thais that are afraid of Phuket. Even a larger number of people are scared of Khao Lak and its reputation has not recovered to the same extent as Phuket's reputation. Based on my data, I would consider nine issues most crucial to the recovery of reputation as introduced in this chapter. These nine issues are illustrated in the following figure.



FIGURE 1: Issues that have affected reputational recovery

Risk perception including fear of the sea, ghosts, and a new tsunami has prevented the reputational recovery through increasing the insecurity of people. Tsunami revealed the vulnerability of Phuket and Khao Lak, in particular. The knowledge that Phuket and Khao Lak can be affected has reached the major public due to the improvement of information technology. Also the role of the travel agencies in promoting Phuket and Khao Lak after the tsunami has been significant and has often resulted in marketing other places that had not suffered from a natural disaster. Thai mentality and friendliness, on the other hand, have assisted the reputational recovery tsunami related news reported on the amazing willingness of the Thai people to help. Also mitigation efforts including tsunami evacuation routes have assisted the recovery through increasing the feeling of safety. Exceptional beauty of the country has also, in some cases, outweighed the image of tsunami through re-creating the image of a paradise, at least in Phuket.

7.2. Economic recovery

The tourism sector of Phuket has recovered in economic terms. The number of tourist arrivals is higher than before the tsunami and tourism business is doing well. On the contrary, this does not mean that all of the tourist workers are capable of pursuing their business in the same manner as before the tsunami. The question on who is the beneficiary of the post-tsunami tourism development and who is not remains uncertain. To really be able to answer this question one should interview a number of Thai tourist workers and find out about the workers who left Phuket after the tsunami as well. I had no opportunity to do that.

The economic recovery of Khao Lak is a different matter, since there were basically no tourists in November 2006. Shops and restaurants were functional but the customers were missing (see picture 6). It is quite difficult to recover economically when the tourists are not coming back. Despite the lack of tourists, people of Khao Lak keep on rebuilding and hoping that the tourists will come back.

Besides the lack of tourists, also the economic dependency on tourism has made tsunami impacts on economy severe in Phuket and Khao Lak. It has also resulted in unemployment especially among the poor who were most affected by the tsunami. Also the amount of lost equipment has determined one's economic state and recovery to some extent. The people who lost everything had no opportunity to continue their livelihoods.

How were the challenges of unemployment and lost equipment met? I think there are basically three things that have assisted economic recovery of Phuket and Khao Lak; economic and material aid provided by the government and NGOs, skills development and the persistence of Thai people to try even though there seems to be no hope left.

Aid provided by the RTG was not always sufficient enough and the social status seems to have determinate the amount of tsunami assistance, at least to some extent. RTG aid, or the lack of it, showed the direction of economic recovery since re-purchasing equipment worth of tens of thousands of baths has been impossible without assistance, in most cases. Lack of aid for the most vulnerable groups has prevented the economic recovery among the poor and vulnerable.

The NGOs seem to have taken the helping role where the RTG aid has been mismanaged. The advantage of NGO assistance is that they include local community in livelihood rehabilitation and assist the most vulnerable, in this case the minorities and the poor. Skills development that the NGOs and government have done especially in Khao Lak has provided people with opportunities to start a new business or learn new skills. However, it is important to notice that the skills development programs are reaching only a certain number of people and a lot of people are still unemployed in Khao Lak. Acquiring new skills does not help much if the new skills have a connection to the tourism industry and the tourists are staying away.

Despite the difficult situation, Thai people have showed outstanding capability to cope and rebuild their livelihoods without losing interest in life. Thai people’s persistence and ability to start out new have influenced positively on economic recovery. Skills development has given people new opportunities to survive economically in a sustainable manner. In the following figure you can see nine main issues that have affected the economic recovery.

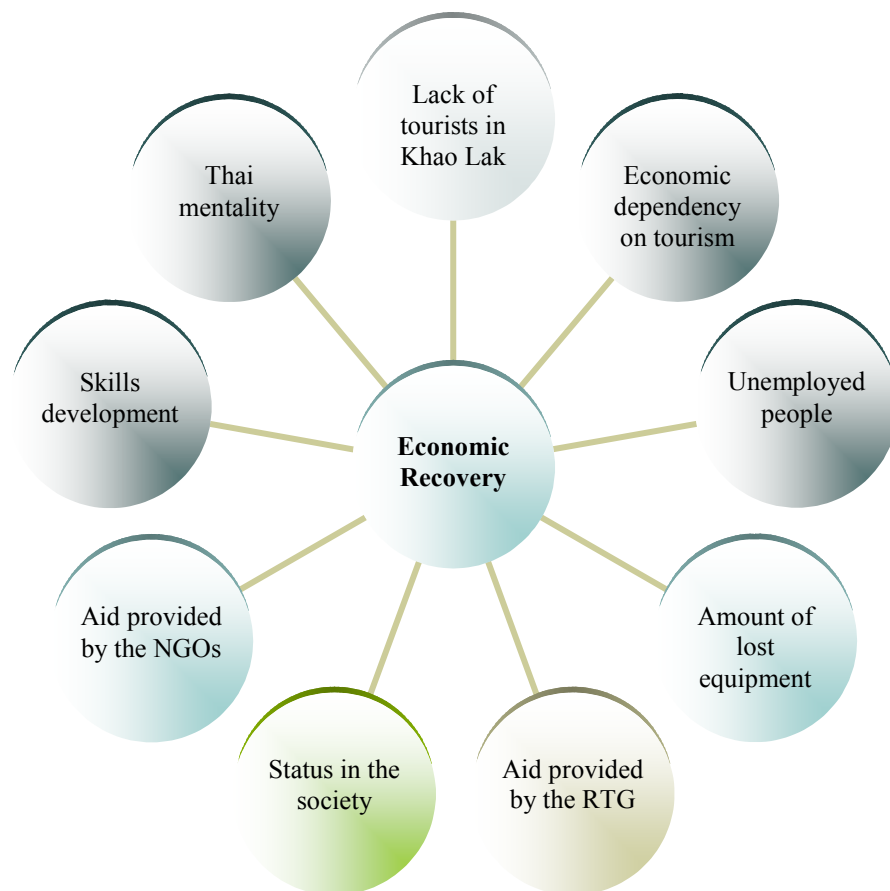


FIGURE 2: Issues that have affected economic recovery

Problems with economic recovery are several, such as lack of tourist, economic dependency on tourism, unemployment and lost equipment. I think that the most relevant ones concerning my thesis are uneven distribution of aid and tourism-related economy. These issues affect all the other aspects as well.

Aid provided by the RTG was connected to societal status that determined what kind of assistance you were entitled to. In many cases, people were not entitled to get assistance equivalent to their lost equipment. Aid and skills development provided by the RTG and NGOs affected the possibilities of economic recovery – if people acquired new skills or received their lost equipment back it was a lot easier to recover in economic terms. If those actors did not help, it was very hard to recover economically. The most evident reason for a setback in Khao Lak's economic recovery seems to be the lack of tourists. But when you take a closer look at the issue, economic dependency on tourism is the one that makes tourist areas very vulnerable to economic changes caused by e.g. natural disasters. Economic recovery of tsunami-affected communities needs sustainable assistance.

7.3. Relational Recovery

Recovery of relation between tourists and locals has also been different in Phuket and Khao Lak. In Phuket, the relationship was back to normal as of November 2006 whereas in Khao Lak, the recovery was not so evident.

When I travelled to Khao Lak in late October 2006, the locals were very friendly and served us tourists in a suitable way. So to that extent I would say that the relation has recovered. But I think it was the guilt that made it a different experience to visit Khao Lak, since there were basically no tourists around. The locals put their hopes on the few tourists in the area:

“I understand the tourists not wanting to come back to Khao Lak even though I hope they would return. It's so much easier to be a tourist in Phuket, where everyone is smiling and you don't have to face the tsunami at all if you don't want to. In Khao Lak, you can't escape it. Every shop you go to, you feel like you have to buy something even though the prices are a lot higher than in Phuket. You kinda feel guilty for being a tourist cause you know that they expect so much from you. Their livelihoods depend on tourism and you represent that.”
(Field diary, Khao Lak, 29.10.2006)

I think it is harder to face a tsunami-hit area where the tourists have not returned to, because then you know that something is wrong. The memory of tsunami was also very real in Khao Lak. According to an interviewee of mine, Khao Lak has not had the same capacity to create an illusion of a tourist paradise as Phuket:

“I don’t know in Phuket area, but in Khao Lak, you can’t avoid it. Maybe in Phuket here, they’re trying to create a pretty happy picture and say that everything’s normal now, but in Khao Lak they can’t avoid talking about it, cause it’s everywhere.” (Interview 1, John.)

I had a lot of conversations with tourist workers about tsunami and other things, but positive things truly outweighed the negative ones. It might be that the Thai people do not trust the foreigners enough to express their negative feelings. Trust is a difficult issue since I think Finns take it for granted, and I did not actually question trust in the beginning of the trip at all. But Thailand has a different type of culture, history and morality than Finland and the west in general and people take care of things in a different manner. Trust is something you cannot take for granted in Thailand. *“I’ve lived here for 14 years and I still don’t know who to trust”* (Interview 1, John). I think that trust issues have also prevented the relationship of Thais and tourists to form into a personal one.

Phuket, on the other hand, has managed to rebuild tourism industry very quickly. I think this due to the fast recovery of the stage defined by MacCannel, the Thai mentality and mutual experience of tsunami between locals and tourists. MacCannel¹¹ (1999, 92–94) argues that the interactions between the locals and the tourists take place in the front region, which is shaped especially for the tourists. It is not authentic, yet usually the tourists accept it. I think Phuket is a good example of such a place since it is so tourist oriented that almost everyone working there is somehow connected to the tourist sector. Waiters in a fancy restaurant might live in a simple place but who would know what their real life is like in the back region? And do tourists even want to know? Tourists seem to be rather satisfied with the stage.

Based on the interviews and observation, I would say that the tourist-host encounters take place mostly in the first and second context of de-Kadt’s¹² (1979, 50–58) theory, which includes purchasing the service or a good and sharing physical space. Tourists represent money for the locals – the more you pay, the bigger smile you get. I think that the

¹¹See also page 26 of the thesis.

¹² See also page 27-28 of the thesis.

relationship has been commercialized to some extent. But on the contrary I do also think that tourists have had an influence on Phuket and Khao Lak where there are intercultural encounters on a daily basis. These interactions are, however, concentrated on specific areas but they are a way of learning from one another. I think that a relationship that was not too personal to begin with, was easier to recover after the tsunami.

The third context of de-Kadt is a context where tourists and hosts exchange ideas and information face to face. Tsunami was a mutual experience for the foreigners as well as for the locals. Tsunami has an important meaning when talking about the relationship between the Thai people and the tourists – tsunami brought them closer to each other. Based on my experience, I do think it is quite difficult for the tourist to find such a genuine situation where the host is not talking to you in order to get money or marketing or just wanting to keep up the good image of their country. But I believe that sharing tsunami together enabled people to move past the stage and help others with the best intention on their mind. In illustrated the most important issues that have affected relational recovery of Phuket and Khao Lak in the following figure.

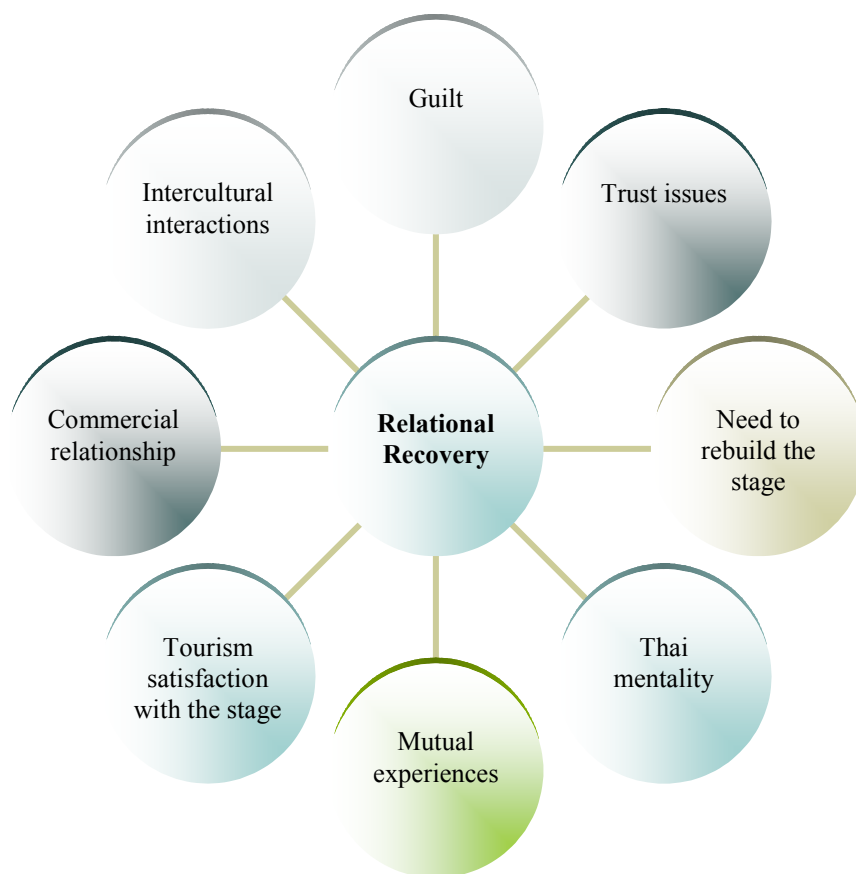


FIGURE 3: Issues that have affected relational recovery

I think that the relationship between tourists and local people is back to normal in Phuket as the time has passed by. There was a need to market Phuket as a safe place and create an image of magic quickly after the tsunami. In Khao Lak, however, the relationship is still shaping as everyone travelling there can see that things are not back to normal. My personal experience on travelling to Khao Lak is that in somehow as a tourist you feel guilty for being responsible for their well-being. As a single tourist you cannot do much. Also the question of trust has made it difficult for the relationship to recover.

Relational recovery was rather fast in Phuket where there was a need to rebuild the stage as quickly as possible in order to start operating their businesses. The Thai mentality of positivity contributed to relational recovery as well. Mutual experience on tsunami created a bond between tourists and locals but soon after the tsunami trust issues, tourists satisfactory with the stage and commerciality of the relationship enabled the relation return to its previous stage. I think that the intercultural interactions will, however, affect both the tourists and locals in present and in the future.

Relational recovery needs the tourists back. Tourists tend to be more at ease when they are surrounded by other tourists. Also the relational recovery of Khao Lak will most likely be fast as the tourists return to the area.

7.4. Social recovery

I will take a look at social recovery through tsunami aid, Thai mentality, social vulnerability and skills development. Tsunami aid had an effect on the social recovery of both Thai communities and minorities. Besides economic aid, receiving tsunami aid was also a matter of expressing one's place in the society. The minorities were considered unimportant by the government, which was a rather strong judgment and has most likely influenced their social and livelihood recovery.

Themes two and three *tsunami losses* and *the relief period* illustrate the social vulnerability of Thailand. I think that especially the poor and vulnerable have not fully recovered from the tsunami when speaking about social recovery. The question of the Burmese and the Sea Gypsies is especially worrying. Many of them worked by the beach and earned their

livelihood mostly through fisheries. Their status in Thailand is weak and it illustrates one very important aspect of social vulnerability of Thailand. People are not in the same position there; it even seems as if towns are not in the same position as the government has shown more interest towards Phuket than Khao Lak.

The RTG played a significant role in tsunami aid. The aid was, however, often distributed unevenly which resulted in certain areas of families receiving aid while others got no assistance. Some even received aid they were not entitled to which resulted in livelihood mismanagement. Social vulnerability of Thailand became visible after the tsunami as lack of tsunami plans, tsunami information and the unfamiliarity of tsunami disaster were revealed.

Phuket seems to have recovered quite well socially speaking as well. At least if you considered social recovery through the absence of tsunami effects. There were a few tsunami memory stones (see picture 12) in Phuket and shops were selling tsunami DVDs among other movies. Other than that, you could not have realized that tsunami hit Phuket a few years ago compared to e.g. Koh Phi Phi¹³ (see pictures 8-11.)

“After Phuket, it was overwhelming to see Phi Phi Island. There were many rebuilding projects going on, and there was this memory park that had picture of the victims. It was very touching. I’m still surprised that things like that aren’t on display in Phuket, but maybe they just don’t want to remind the tourists of the disaster. It just feels as if they’d prefer to forget all about the tsunami in Phuket.” (Field diary, Koh Phi Phi, 26.10.2006.)

I think this is partly due to the natural Thai mentality of living in presence and forgetting the past. This quality has contributed to the social recovery as well. I do think, however, that one thing that has helped the Thai people cope is the belief that you have to adapt to what happens. They do not have the mind of blaming someone for the disaster; they take life as it is.

The resilience and coping capacity of the Thai community is one of the most important aspects reducing the social vulnerability of Thailand. I think that the four different levels connected to social vulnerability introduced on page 30 by Smith (2004) – individual, community, regional/geographical and administrative/institutional – all can be discussed in relation to post-tsunami recovery of Thailand. Thai mentality plays a significant part on the individual and community level. I think that the levels of regional/geographical and

¹³ Koh Phi Phi means Phi Phi Island.

administrative/institutional are the most vulnerable because people often live far away from the services and not everyone is even entitled to have basic services, and they live in vulnerable areas. Administrative level is somewhat vulnerable in Thailand because of the selective disaster funding and lack of information and mitigation studies before the tsunami. I think, however, that Thailand has made adequate efforts in trying to reduce its vulnerability. Still, it seems as if the poorest and the minorities are groups that the government would most likely forget.

The attempts to do community based development especially in terms of environmental recovery are of value. When people themselves participate in environmental protection they may realize what a significant asset environment is for tourism industry and for future generations. According to Check (2005), community based programs are time consuming and harder to execute, but involving local people is the only thing that really makes sense. According to UNEP, there was a risk of too quick process of rebuilding. Clean-up projects started directly after the tsunami in most of the tsunami affected areas to support tourism recovery. The risk of quick rebuilding is that they are built in the same manner as before ignoring the post-tsunami attempts to reduce human vulnerability to natural disasters. (UNEP 2005, 53.)

Were locals included in the recovery process and environmental initiatives in Thailand? At least the NGOs seem to include locals in decision-making process and pledge for sustainable recovery attempts. NGOs also understand the importance of the environment in relation to livelihoods in Phuket and Khao Lak. Environment is especially important for tourism in Phuket and Khao Lak where many people travel to experience Southern Thailand's pure waters and beautiful landscapes. In the following figure you can see the main issues that have affected social recovery of Phuket and Khao Lak.

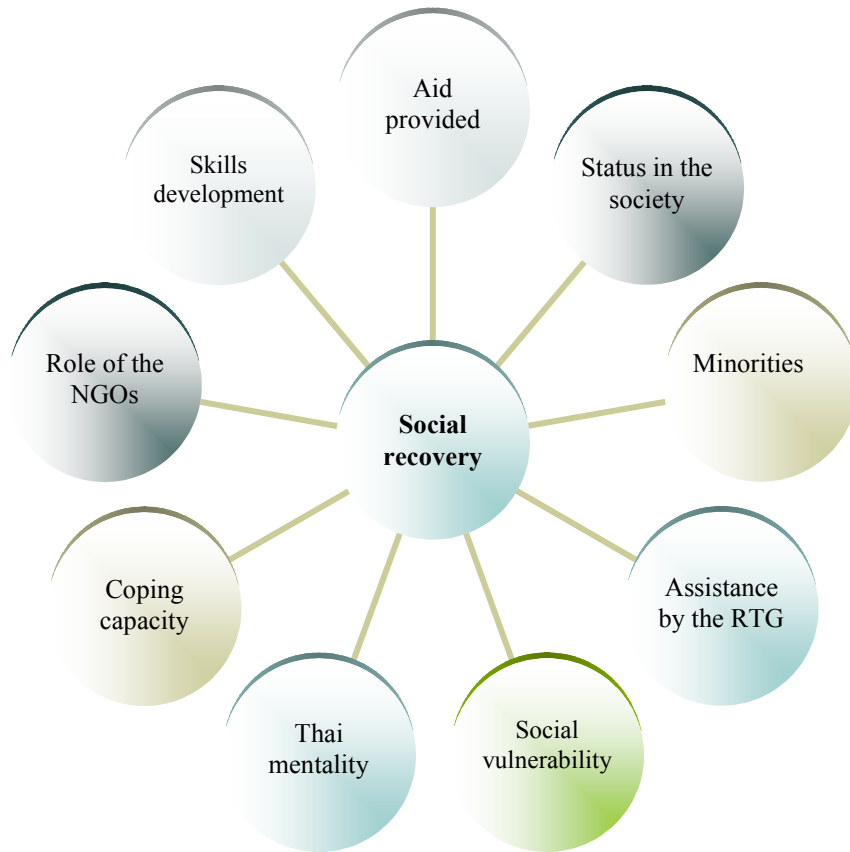


FIGURE 4: Issues that have affected social recovery

Aid provided dependent on one’s status in the society which is an uneven model of assistance. Social recovery of a community would be better if all the members of the society were treated equally including minorities as well. RTG did not succeed in delivering aid to all those affected by the tsunami which is one aspect of social vulnerability of Thailand. Thai mentality and coping capacities were an aspect that increased social recovery as well as the aid provided by the NGOs. Skills development, in particular, contributed to social recovery in terms of providing people with skills and confidence. The social recovery of Khao Lak needs long-term assistance. Creating sustainable way of life would benefit the future generations as well.

7.5. The interconnected process of livelihood recovery

I consider all the four recovery aspects – reputational, economic, relational and social – to have contributed to livelihood recovery. These aspects are also interconnected of their nature. Issues I divided under recovery aspects tend to overlap and sometimes it was difficult to decide under which recovery aspect to label a certain issue.

The main idea behind taking a closer look at livelihood recovery through different recovery aspects was to illustrate the amount of issues affecting livelihood recovery in post-tsunami context. I wanted to emphasize the fact that you cannot consider tsunami related livelihood recovery by counting merely tourist arrivals or tourism economy. In order to create an overall picture on the livelihood recovery, one must understand how previously introduced power relations and cultural contexts, just to mention a few, can have a significant influence on livelihood restoration and improvement. In the following figure I will illustrate the interconnectedness of the four recovery aspects and livelihood recovery.

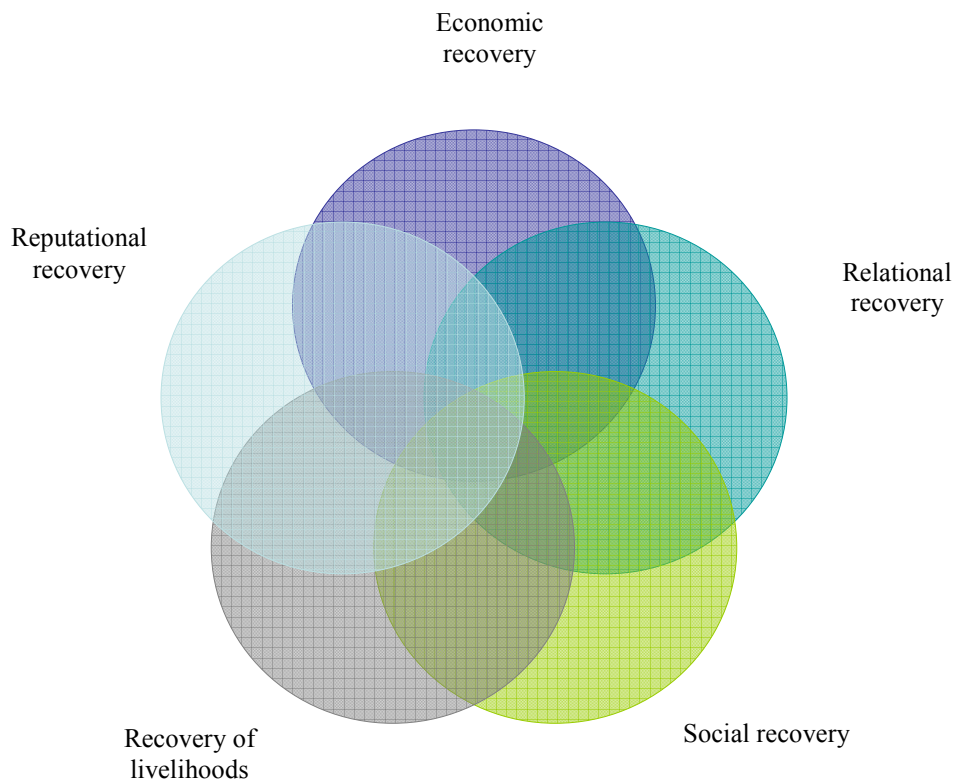


FIGURE 5: Interconnectedness of reputational, economic, relational and social recovery with the recovery of livelihoods

The recovery aspects and livelihood recovery are connected in many ways but I will give an example on one. Reputational recovery affects the tourists and Thai people in deciding which destination to travel to or work at. This contributes also to the economic recovery since it is difficult to recover without the local tourist workers or the tourists in general. The lack of tourists also prevents relational recovery as the atmosphere of tourist destinations is shaped by the absence of tourists. Social recovery is difficult in such an atmosphere and without economic and reputational well-being. Livelihood recovery is a challenge if the tourists stay away, economy suffers, communities are being tested and the relationship cannot meet the standards of an illusion of a paradise.

7.6. Differences in recovery between Phuket and Khao Lak

The recovery aspects are interconnected, as stated earlier. Differences can, however, be found between the post-tsunami recovery of Phuket and Khao Lak. To illustrate the difference of overall livelihood recovery between Phuket and Khao Lak I draw a table that describes the main issues influencing the different recovery process of both towns.

Table 6: Issues that have assisted and prevented the recovery process of Phuket and Khao Lak

	Phuket	Khao Lak
Things that have assisted the recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency aid - Governmental interests - Thai mentality - Solidarity - The need to rebuild the stage - Rapid comeback of the tourists (especially Scandinavians) - Little damage - Close escape route - Warning towers - Publicity of the disaster - Diving - Natural beauty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency aid - NGO assistance (skills development, housing) - Thai mentality, persistence - Publicity - Solidarity - Warning towers - Diving
Things that have prevented the recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reputational disaster (mostly passed) - Reluctance of Asian tourists and Thai people to return - Reluctance of Thai people to work at the beach - Fear of a new tsunami - Low air seat capacity after the tsunami - Group perception on risks - Lack of aid to the most vulnerable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reputational disaster: lack of tourists - Severe damage - Vulnerability of the area - Reluctance of tourists to return - Reluctance of Thais to work at the beach - Fear of the ghost - Fear of the sea and a new tsunami - Group perception on risks - Lack of long-term aid - High prices - Narrow markets - Unemployment - Lack of advertising by travel agencies

In the table, you can see the most relevant issues which have assisted or prevented post-tsunami recovery of Phuket and Khao Lak. The main issues that have contributed to Phuket's recovery are efficient emergency aid due to Phuket's significance for the whole country and publicity of the disaster resulting in governmental interests concerning the Phuket area. Thai people's persistence and solidarity towards one another has also assisted the recovery. There was also a need to rebuild the tourism stage in order for the tourists to return which resulted, in fact, in rapid comeback of the tourists, Scandinavians in specific. Minor damage, close escape route and tsunami warning towers have also contributed to the feeling of safety concerning Phuket. Natural beauty of the area along with diving possibilities has also succeeded in persuading the tourists to return.

In Khao Lak, tsunami aid has also assisted the post-tsunami recovery among those entitled to tsunami assistance. The NGOs have provided people with skills development and housing projects among other types of assistance as well. The NGO assistance remained much more remarkable in the interviews than aid provided by the RTG. Thai mentality and solidarity have also played a role in livelihood recovery. Thai people are willing to try and some of them have attended to skills development which has created new livelihood opportunities for them. They have also installed tsunami warning towers and tsunami evacuation routes that have increased the feeling of safety among the locals and tourists, at least to some extent. Publicity of the disaster has resulted in people emphasizing with Khao Lak and has made it possible for international post-tsunami recovery funding. Diving has also been Khao Lak's attraction for years and continues to attract at least some tourists.

In terms of livelihood recovery prevention, Phuket suffered from reputational disaster after the tsunami both among tourists and locals which made it difficult for the tourism related livelihoods to recover. Reputational disaster has mostly passed, but some Asian tourists and Thai workers are still reluctant to come to Phuket. Some people are still afraid of a new tsunami. Also after the tsunami, low air seat capacity prevented tourists to return to Phuket and the lack of tourists was a challenge for the livelihoods. Group perception has prevented livelihood recovery in terms of Thais not wanting to work at the beach and tourists not wanting to travel to Phuket anymore.

Khao Lak suffered also from reputational damage which is still a relevant concern for Khao Lak. It had severe damage; it is a vulnerable area which has resulted in tourists

avoiding Khao Lak. Also the Thai people are avoiding Khao Lak because they are scared of the water and a new tsunami and also ghosts. Group perceptions on risks which include fear of the ghosts and fear of the sea and a new tsunami have resulted in Thai people either leaving the area or refusing to work on the beach. Also the travel agencies have not marketed Khao Lak. Lack of long term aid, post-tsunami high prices and narrow markets have made it difficult for the tourism related livelihoods to recover which has resulted in unemployment.

As a result, Phuket has had the benefit of getting publicity and sympathy after the tsunami disaster whereas people think of Khao Lak as more of a vulnerable area where lots and lots of tourists died. People attach ghosts and the possibility of a new tsunami to Khao Lak more often than Phuket.

7.7. Will it ever be the same?

Post-tsunami tourism livelihood recovery was impartial in Khao Lak as of November 2006. Phuket, however, was recovered. There were pessimistic, realistic and skeptic views on post-tsunami recovery among the interviewees of mine but the overall trend is illustrated in the following table.

Table 7 Present and future state of livelihood recovery in Phuket and Khao Lak

	Phuket	Khao Lak
Recovery of tourism livelihoods	Rapid Number of tourist arrivals is higher than before the tsunami.	Incomplete Tourists stay away.
Future of tourism livelihoods	Good, optimistic. Belief that tourism will continue to increase.	Future unknown; Will it ever be the same? Hope of the recovery.

Recovery of tourism related livelihoods has been rapid in Phuket. This is mainly due to the higher number of tourist arrivals than before the tsunami. Concerning the future of livelihoods, my interviewees were optimistic and believed that the tourism will increase in Phuket:

“All the parts of Phuket are back to normal. They’re actually even better, because we have new hotels, new facilities, new routes. The level now is the same as in 2004 which throughout the history is the highest number of tourist arrivals to Phuket. The number of rooms in Phuket is now 25 000 in Phuket so it’s back – no, it’s more than it used to be. It increased about 2000 rooms.” (Interview 4, Daniel.)

In Khao Lak, however, the recovery process is incomplete and there is a need for recovery in order to get the tourists back. The future of Khao Lak is not as clear as the future of Phuket. There are different ways in which the interviewees talk about the future recovery of Khao Lak. An optimistic view believes that during the high season¹⁴ of 2007, tourists will start to come:

“I think that diving will keep the tourists coming. It’s something that’s unique. You know, as long as we keep our resources and the environment clean, another important thing.” (Interview 2, Joanna.)

“This year should be better and the year after that better than that and so on. But we’re actually talking that it’s gonna be a bigger spot, so could almost say that tsunami put it on the map. People wouldn’t even ha known about it or heard about it before the tsunami. I think once it recovers, it will go beyond the point it used to be. That’s just an idea.” (Interview 3, Melinda.)

Realistic way of talking is more cautious about the recovery: *“Well, I don’t know, they had big hopes for this season but it doesn’t look like it. The southern part of the beach, maybe in 2 years.”* (Interview 1, Saara.)

The other interviewee of my first group interview had a more skeptic point of view: *“I don’t know as far for the rest of the beach how much, I don’t think it; I don’t believe that it will ever be like it was”* (Interview 1, John).

There was also fourth type of speech, which was pessimistic. This one did not appear in the speech of the interviewees, but it came up in the examples of conversations that my interviewees have had with Thai people: *“He was so pessimistic about everything, the beach will never be the same, it will never come back, the water has changed... It will never come back.”* (Interview 1, John.)

¹⁴ High season is the peak tourist season between November and March.

It is difficult to say in which direction livelihood recovery will turn and whether the tourists will ever come to Khao Lak like they used to come before the tsunami. It is a matter of opinion but there are also actions that can be taken in order to support the livelihood recovery of Khao Lak. I will consider the possibilities of livelihood recovery and improvement in Phuket and Khao Lak next.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Studying sustainable livelihood recovery of Phuket and Khao Lak is a challenge in the sense of several components influencing the recovery process as discussed in detail in chapters six and seven. The goal of the thesis is to provide information on post-tsunami recovery and find out some of the main reasons for delays in recovery in tsunami-affected areas. I also wanted to emphasize the importance of long-term commitment in post-tsunami recovery.

Tsunami effects on tourism related livelihoods were both immediate and long-term and they require attention for many years to come. It is evident that the resources to meet the needs of all those affected were not sufficient. Reverting back to one's previous livelihood may have become impossible and there is a need to acquire new skills. In order to develop sustainable livelihoods which include all the pockets of the society, there is a need for a change.

The results of the thesis have many similarities to those of other tsunami related studies. I got to know most of the tsunami studies after I gathered my data. It surprised me how relevant the issues of other tsunami studies felt after gathering the data. My thesis differs in the sense of studying sustainable livelihood recovery of tourism industry. Also the viewpoint differs as I studied livelihood recovery through reputational, economic, relational and social aspects. The tsunami studies I referred to had different kinds of interests even though livelihood recovery was mentioned in most of them. Similarities can be seen in e.g. vulnerability reduction, and sustainability of livelihoods and tourism.

What could be the contribution of the thesis? I think that the thesis could play a part in preparing for future disasters. I think that the poor and the marginalized are often forgotten

in natural disasters, not just in relation to the post-tsunami recovery of Thailand. Most actors acknowledge the need to help the poor but the level and time of engagement are often not sufficient enough. I believe that in post-disaster contexts, there is a genuine interest in helping people but the means are not always equivalent to the needs of disaster-affected communities. I also think that the Thai government has done its best at helping the tsunami survivors but sometimes other interest such as promoting the image of the country, may have outweighed the needs of the locals. Through disaster studies, it is possible to reveal the faults in disaster management and disaster assistance and promote e.g. sustainability and equality in post-disaster aid.

Has sustainable livelihood recovery taken place in post-tsunami Phuket and Khao Lak? I think creating sustainable livelihoods is a challenge both in Phuket and Khao Lak, even though tourism related livelihoods recovered rather quickly in Phuket. Tourism related livelihoods are, overall, quite vulnerable in Thailand. What could be done in order to increase the sustainability of livelihoods?

8.1. Recommendations

I argue that there is still a need to study the needs of tsunami-affected communities and help them to recover. Tsunami was a disaster which touched entire families and communities. Families were displaced after the tsunami and some were not able to return to their previous living areas. Communities were torn up artificially. The communities need sustainable help. Post-tsunami development has made attempts to create eco-friendly model of tourism but I do not think that it has succeeded very well. But there are attempts to do that, especially among the NGOs. Even the government wishes to build a sustainable model of tourism to Thailand which should be supported. The possibilities of ecotourism should be considered, critically as well, as a model of tourism in Thailand.

Tourist areas in Thailand are, however, concentrated on tourism as the dominant livelihood opportunity. This has resulted in dependency on tourist arrivals. Tourism is vulnerable to changes be it economic, political or a natural disaster, which is why I think that new employment opportunities should be promoted in Thailand. People of Thailand need to acquire new skills and employment opportunities to reduce their dependency on tourism.

New opportunities should be sustainable both economically and environmentally. People who are still unemployed should be either helped to continue their previous livelihood or taught new skills.

Providing sustainable possibilities of livelihoods and skills development could provide people with new opportunities. Promoting other livelihood opportunities could also reduce Thailand's vulnerability to natural disasters. NGO work in post-tsunami Thailand has been outstanding, in most cases, since their focus have been the most vulnerable ones and community-based development. The NGO work should be promoted and continued in the affected areas.

Tsunami revealed the vulnerability of minorities and the poor in general another disaster to illustrate the same matter once again should not be waited passively. Once the tsunami revealed the intensity of the problem, I think that the Thai government should acknowledge minorities and the poor and start considering solutions for their well-being. Another aspect of vulnerability should also be considered: Thailand should be prepared for another disaster. Disaster mitigation studies and disaster education are needed in Thailand as well. Schools could play an important part in educating the children on tsunami. Universities could contribute to tsunami mitigation studies.

I think these recommendations could be considered good objectives. Tsunami is a natural disaster that no one can ever be fully prepared to but based on the data, these recommendations seemed like the most valid ones. After all, as a taxi boat driver in Krabi described to me, even all the possible aid and support may never replace what tsunami had taken away: *“Tsunami... Okay. But for some people, never okay.”*

8.2. Future studies

There are many aspects of livelihood recovery still to be studied. First of all, my study dates back to November 2006. The state of Khao Lak's livelihoods, in particular, has most likely changed quite much after that as the number of tourist arrivals has risen. My research problem was quite a large one to study and could be divided into pieces in order to get more relevant information on livelihood recovery. Possible fields of study could be

the present state of Khao Lak's tourism as well as the economic, social, reputational and relational state of Khao Lak. There are also many other fields of study. The most important one, from my perspective, would be to interview local tourist workers and find out their survival stories. Based on these interviews one could draw conclusions on how many people did actually change their livelihood after the tsunami. It would be interesting to learn the experiences of people who also left Phuket and Khao Lak after the tsunami.

I completed a qualitative study that was based on a few interviews and observation and there would be a need to do a more comprehensive study. I think that statistics of livelihood recovery would be essential in analyzing the recovery process and there would be a need for quantitative livelihood recovery study as well. It would also be crucial to develop provide methods in which to achieve the objectives mentioned earlier. Sustainable tourism, for instance, is a good objective. But in order to take place, one should develop realistic ways in which to reach that goal in Thailand context. The danger in doing a qualitative study on post-tsunami recovery lays in proposing idealistic goals without providing the means to reach those goals.

I believe my thesis could contribute to the tsunami recovery studies in providing people with knowledge of the most relevant issues to be considered in livelihood recovery in the context of Thailand. Based on this thesis, five issues can be separated as most relevant one in post-tsunami context: long-term commitment in tsunami assistance, livelihood improvement, livelihood opportunities, community-based development and sustainable tourism. If tsunami assistance was long-term, community-based, committed to improve the livelihoods, and it provided people with other livelihood opportunities but tourism, it may be possible to create sustainable tourism to Thailand. This could mean improving the safety of Thailand in relation to natural disasters and reducing the vulnerability of the entire Thailand, not only of tsunami-affected communities.

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APPENDIX 1: List of Interviews

- 1.) Group interview, 2 persons, October 22nd, 2006.
 - John¹⁵, 53¹⁶, employee of Fida International
 - Saara 55, employee of Fida International

John and Saara participated in implementing a development project called Restoring Tsunami Affected Communities in Khao Lak. The project lasts from 2005–2010 and it concentrates on providing vocational training for tsunami survivors at Khao Lak vocational training center.

- 2.) Joanna, age 35, an American teacher at the Ecotourism Training Center of Khao Lak. Time of the interview: October 29th, 2006.
- 3.) Melinda, age 27, an American volunteer at the Tsunami Volunteer Center of Khao Lak. Time of the interview: October 29th, 2006.
- 4.) Daniel, age 44, a Philippine director of marketing of a successful Phuket hotel. Time of the interview: November 10th, 2006.
- 5.) Group interview, 3 persons, November 14th, 2006
 - Pekka, age 60, a Finnish missionary
 - Meeri, age 58, a Finnish missionary
 - Satu, age 22, a Finnish baking instructor of Khao Lak Vocational Training Center.

¹⁵ All of the names of the interviews are fictional.

¹⁶ All the ages of the interviewees are estimates and their real age might differ a little.

APPENDIX 2: Pictures



PICTURE 2: Empty tsunami-affected beach of Khao Lak



PICTURE 3: The beach of Khao Lak was both empty and untidy



PICTURE 4: View by the beach of Khao Lak



PICTURE 5: Tsunami evacuation route. These blue signs guide the way to higher land from the beach of Khao Lak in case of a tsunami.



PICTURE 6: A typical Thai shop by the main road of Khao Lak. Only the customers were missing.



PICTURE 7: A Tsunami Craft Centre. Thai people who lost their livelihoods in the tsunami make crafts in order to survive.



PICTURE 8: There was still a lot on junk from the tsunami lying on the grounds of Koh Phi Phi on October, 2006.



PICTURE 9: Among the junk, there was a sign "tsunami aid" which proved that those pieces of wood had laid there for almost two years.



PICTURE 10: "This garden is dedicated to all those who lost their lives in the tsunami that struck Koh Phi Phi on December 26th, 2004."



PICTURE 11: The garden designed to honor the victims of the tsunami victims of Koh Phi Phi.



PICTURE 12: Tsunami killed all the workers of the supermarket we used to go to everyday in Phuket. Here is a memory stone in honor of those who lost their lives in the tsunami.



PICTURE 13: Patong Beach suffered the most from the tsunami in Phuket. It was back to normal at the time of my trip, November 2006.



PICTURE 14: Cristal pure green waters, corals, and marine life attract tourists to try snorkeling and diving.



PICTURE 15: The magic beauty of Thailand