

## Discourses of Development in Laos

What does it mean to be one of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world? This status, created by the United Nations (UN) in 1971, counts within its members the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which has intended to depart from LDC status since 1996 (the new exit target is by 2030). Meeting the objectives of the UN Millennium Development Goals is a preoccupation of the Lao authorities and an often-repeated statement across the country in official discourse. To whom is this rhetoric addressed? Moreover, how to fulfill these objectives and at the same time meet the goals of other public or private institutions (ASEAN, Foreign Direct Investment from China, Vietnam and Thailand) in which Laos is similarly engaged?

Laos has been “under an Aid Regime”<sup>1</sup> for numerous years, yet the LDC status also carries with it certain advantages such as receiving help for international trade, for debt reduction, and public assistance for development. Therefore, what does “development” mean for the actors of change (Lao State, officials, NGO and international cooperation members, funders, beneficiaries, etc.)? What does it produce in terms of legitimacy, national identity and policies?

This panel takes these broad themes as its starting point, exploring what is meant by development and modernity in Laos, agendas of development from different points of view, who the various actors and agents of change are, the uniqueness (or not) of the context, and the implications and consequences of development programs and initiatives within and beyond Laos.

### Convenors:

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<sup>1</sup> Lavigne Delville, « Pour une socio-anthropologie de l'action publique dans les pays 'sous régime d'aide' », *Anthropologie & développement* [En ligne], 45 | 2017