

Women fish border traders in Cambodia:
Life course analysis under changing access to
resources and economic opportunities

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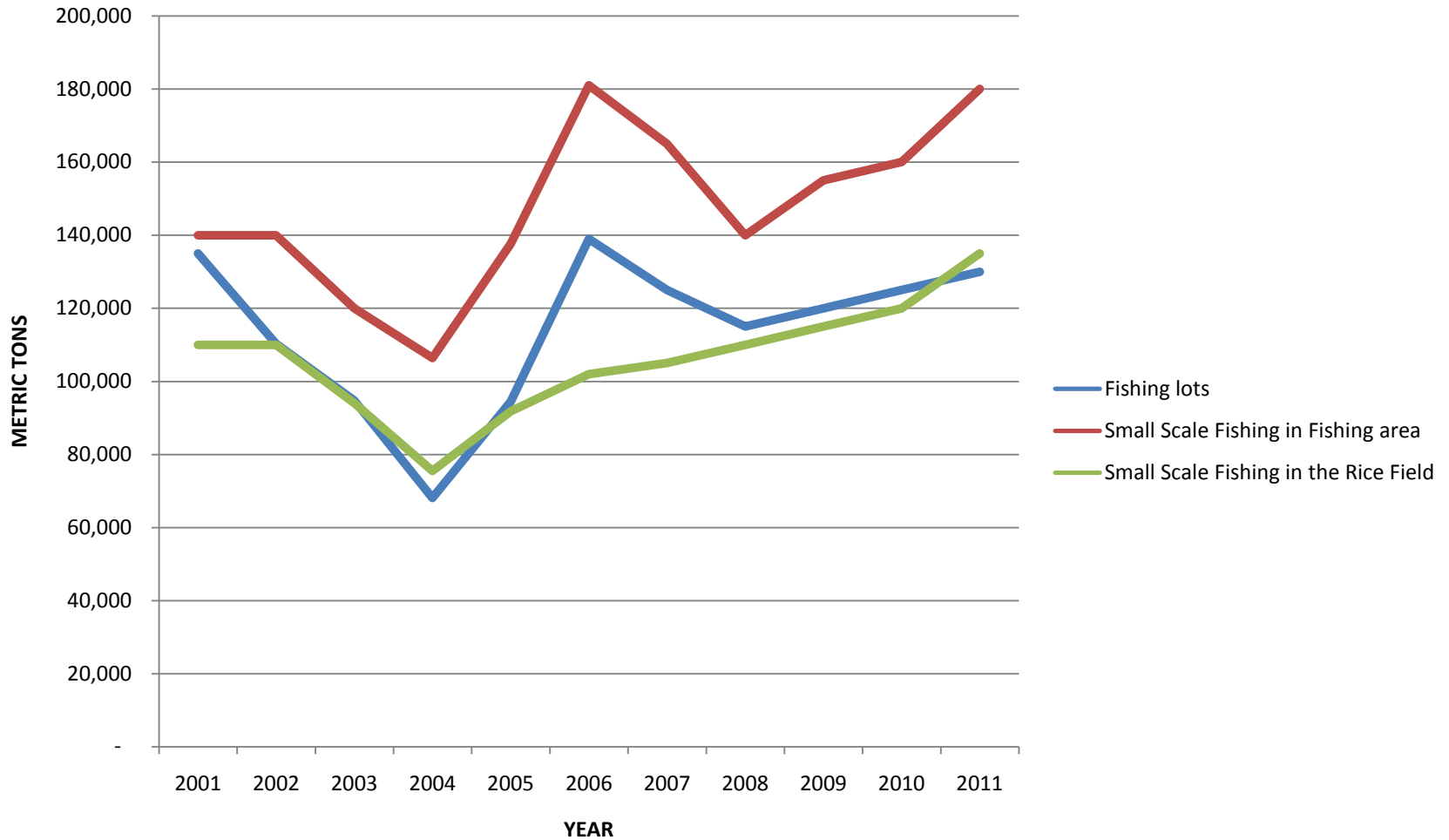
Outline of presentation

- Changes in fish production and export in Tonle Sap Lake
- Changes in value chain of Tonle Sap fish
(gender analysis of life course and value chain)
- Challenges to our understanding of women's business
- Conclusion

Recent changes surrounding fish border trade

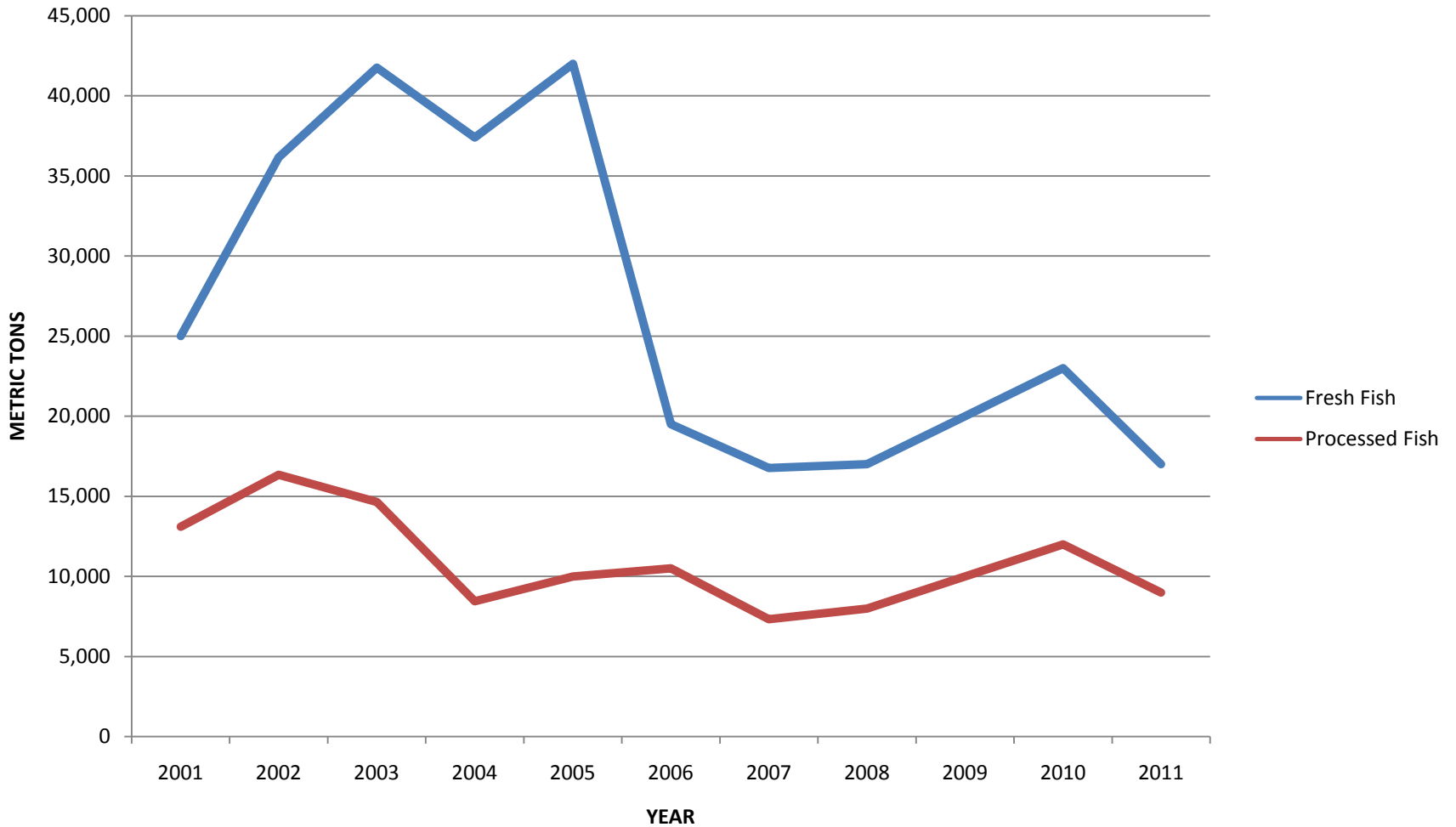
- Formalization of border trade
- Intermittent closure of border crossings
- Availability of Tonle Sap fish
- Labor migration (domestic, cross-border)
- New economic opportunities

Fish production



Source: Department of fisheries

Fish export



Source: Department of Fisheries

Objective of the study

- To explore the changes experienced by former/ current fish traders in the past eight years in terms of their business and in the household / community, and analyze the factors that contributed to the change through analyzing their life course
 - growth in other livelihoods + family responsibility as reasons for continuing/ quitting business perpetuating women small traders' marginalized position. (women's business as extension of their reproductive role)

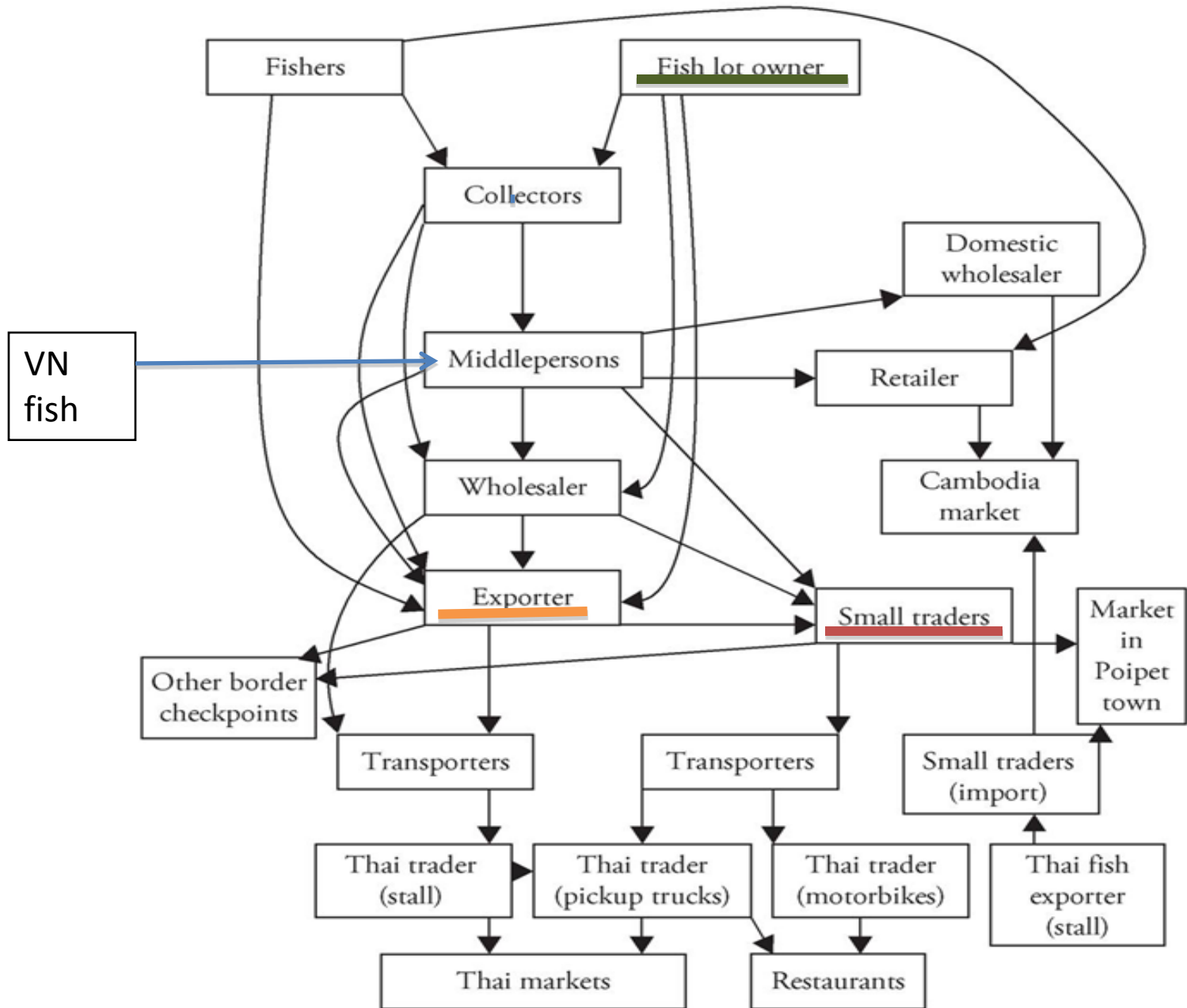


Figure 1
Market route of fish between Cambodia and Thailand

Changes in women traders' business history

1. Small fish traders growing up to become large exporters then moving out to another business
2. Small fish traders to large exporter then bankrupt
3. Maintaining medium size fish business (plus import fish from Vietnam and Thailand)
4. Maintaining small size fish business :
Intermittent traders
5. New comers

This lead us to challenge.....

- Women's domination of fish trade because it is "suitable" for women??
 - Balancing productive/reproductive work??
 - "small" business as extension of their reproductive role??
- Fish trade as strenuous and risky business
 - How to explain their domination in fish trade? (previous arguments on informal trade cannot explain the phenomenon)
 - Gender as performance (McDowell 1997)
- Women are in marginalized position in value chain because of weak bargaining power (reflecting gender relations)??

Conclusion

- Gender analysis of life course and value chain
 - Linking macro level economic and ecological changes to individual experiences in business.
 - Fixation in mobility within value chain.
 - Options in business that women have differ in their life course and in period (see also Hapke and Ayyanketil 2004)
 - The effect of women's reproductive work differ by time period.
 - Timing of mobility affects their options (decisions on why and when to move is guided by gender practices and norms)
 - These in turn differentiate economic position of women traders.
 - No political power (and limited mobility in value chain) because of fragmented nature and vertical relations in value chain.