

Stagnation of Community Forest Management: A Case Study of Nam Kian Sub-District, Phupiang District, Nan Province

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Abstract

Community forest has been one of the social actions for sustainable utilization of forest ecology in line with production and advocated for policy change during the past decades. However, such advocacy and mobilization, at the present, appear not quite effective and several active managements of community forest become passive. This study, therefore, attempts to explain the stagnation of community forest applying holistic-interdisciplinary approach to capture the complexity and dynamism of community forest that has been affected by the rapid economic change using Nam Kian Sub-District, Phupiang District, Nan Province as a case study.

The study found out that the community forest management has been developing continuously and has the correlation and modification together with the complex factors; 1) forest ecology 2) expansion of land use on the forest 3) market economy 4) intensification of commercial production 5) community collective effort 6) community forest usage and 7) community forest management. It has been shown that the change of the first five factors affect the later two factors which have moved through a dynamic change in time dimension at each period. In the current situation changes of the five factors, as mentioned above, affected the relationship between the community and its usage and management of community forests. Villagers' priority on the economic dimension and commercial production has reduced the community forest utilization of management. Stagnation of community forest is, therefore, evident, accordingly.

Thus, the stagnation of community forest management in this study is explained well and poses a different explanation from the political ecology theory because it does not come from state power mainly. Also it is not an ongoing increment of community forest management that depends on wisdom or cultural vitality of the community.

Rather, it is a combination of complex factors, especially the approach of the full market economic system, the intensive commercial production, land use, labor and inputs. They affect the ecosystems and decline of biodiversity and reduce the community collective effort. Therefore, the potential of forest management is reduced. This is the phenomenon to describing the stagnation of community forest management in the real situation.

Keywords: Stagnation, Community Forest Management, Dynamism, Complexity

1. Introduction

The community forest management in the past two decades revealed important issues which created a connection between the community in the forest area and the state agency. The interaction is both the cooperation and disagreement in perspectives towards the natural resource management under different standpoints. Looking back on the first era of forest concessions, there would be many communities in the areas which had awareness and became more aggressive in the development of forest protection and conservation. This could be seen from the community movement which constrained the concession, which caused the cancellation of the community. In the north, there were more than 15 communities which had been affected and the opposition group asked for justice from the natural resource management of the state [1].

By 1990 the community movements for forest management had been developed by the empowered cooperation from scholars who had a great role to be the main actors [1]. These scholars gave many benefits towards the society which reflected the discoveries and enhanced the understanding toward the long-term forest management. It led to wide claims in terms of the empowerment of the community culture. The knowledge, which had been developed, was to be a

sharp issue on policy to push community forest legislation through. It was the way towards a positive lifestyle of the community embracing the ecosystem.

There was a push for the draft of the legislation to go through. It was the first draft bill for the rights of the community in the context of natural resources management. The draft bill was written from the information gathered from the field research. These concepts and ideas were used by scholars, NGOs, and local leaders in the village which participated in the body of knowledge development. The thought of the scholars were carefully screened and being supported by academic work to support them [2], especially the research of "the community forest in Thailand and development guidelines" by Sanae and Yos [3]. In the end, the considerations of the legislation draft had not been considered by the Senate Commissioner. As a result it caused stagnation in the legal and policy drive.

However, there were doubts about the influential political power. The power of the knowledge and the facts from the academic research could be a part to weaken its sovereignty. It did not happen this way. It could have been a problem about "the body of knowledge" in the explanation [see 4, 5].

It could also have been that the community forest management was more complex and more dynamic than "the body of knowledge" which was originally thought. It turned out to be a weak point that the sovereignty of the state refused to accept. The foundation of thoughts and paradigms were hidden behind this and needed to be reviewed and rechecked.

Descriptions from scholars have concluded that the thinking of the majority of communities had paid a mutual respect and support for living together with nature. The communities which took care of the forest were on plains, upland, or the community which has a semi-commercial economy or full commercial economy, or any other ethnic groups which shared and conserved the resources vigorously. They have a strong sense of community in sharing the ideological beliefs and have a complementary relationship for mutual benefits. They have natural resources that can be operational. They have community leaders or organization leaders, vigorous rules, wisdom and traditions of resource management which belong to the community. The

community has established two components; they are 1) the population and social system management in the same community and 2) the staple of the resource usage [3]. The conclusion has been challenging to examine because the actual phenomenon is highly dynamic and changeable.

The current condition of the community has the characteristics that scholars expected more or less [see 6, 7]. The previous description could not be explained to the community forest management clearly as it should have. Therefore, it would be better if they find a new description to review and examine the new processes in order to find a new explanation which has a higher degree of relevance when several community forests have undergone through importance and describing in management [8].

Based on the author's research, the community forest management at Nam Kian sub-district, Phupiang district, Nan province, Thailand since the beginning to the present time is taken into light so as to study and analyze the forest community management which is dynamic and highly complex.

2. Research Objectives

1. To study the dynamism of the community forest management at Namkian sub-district, Phupiang district, Nan province, Thailand since the beginning to the present time.

2. To study and analyze a new paradigm, holistic-interdisciplinary approach in order to describe the forest community management which is dynamic and highly complex by using community forest located in Namkian sub-district, Phupiang district, Nan province as the case study.

3. Theory, Research Conceptual Framework

Questionably, the previous explanation of the "forest community" has always used the empiricism or determinism by using the deduction of the phenomenon more or less into smaller sectors to understand watershed ecology, ecological economics, political economy, economic ecology, and political ecology separately with different foci [9]. However, the community forest management is complex and linked to the resource base, ecosystem, the production, and the economic system of the community which is highly dynamic [9]. It is to achieve an understanding of community

forest management which is more complex and highly dynamic.

Hence, it needs a new explanation from different paradigm that is a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach. To explain more, this research has focused on seven factors being developed from synthesizing the gaps of existing concepts and explanations comparing with the real phenomenon [see 8, 9]. It shows that community forest management has changed dynamically which related to seven complex factors include 1) forest ecology 2) expansion of land use on the forest 3) market economy 4) intensification of commercial production 5) community collective efforts (6) community forest usage and (7) community forest management. The first five complex factors impact on the latter two factors, significantly.

4. Research Methodology

To understand the complexity and dynamics of community forest management, this study applied mixed methods[10] to collect data from primary and secondary sources, maps and ecological survey of the forest; use of 60 questionnaires, interviews (30 community leaders) and in-depth interview (20 direct forest users).

Also, the researcher has applied statistical information from several sources, such as the official surveys towards the household socio-economic conditions and the analyzed data from questionnaires using Mean, in order to gain in-depth investigation of complex factors which involved factors, such as the economic data, production, and forest usage. There is an attempt to understand the complexity and dynamics of the phenomenon of complex factors. Based on the conceptual gaps prior mentioned, the researcher analyzed the relationship of the complex factors of the first five factors 1) forest ecology 2) expansion of land use on the forest 3) market economy 4) intensification of commercial production 5) community collective efforts) that impact on the latter two factors 6) community forest usage and 7) community forest management, however, by the time-line in all three periods.

In order to analyze and compare changes and dynamism of seven factors over time, information has been transformed into magnitude. The magnitude came from both the qualitative data (based on the perceived and sensitized changes among key informants) and the quantitative data (based on socio-economic conditions). They are

divided into three periods in the form of graphs to illustrate the dynamics of each factor. The community forest usage and management are under stagnation and it is related to other complex factors which have different descriptions from political ecology.

5. Research Findings

The study found out that community forest management: a case study of Nam Kian sub-district, Phupiang district, Nan province has been developing continuously and has the correlation and modification together with the complex factors, which have involved at least seven factors. There are 1) forest ecology refers to physical landscape of forest; 2) expansion of land use on forest; 3) market economy refers to commercial production; 4) intensification of commercial production refers to intensification in land use, inputs and labour force; 5) community collective effort to participation in community and production activities; 6) community forest usage refers to utilize the timber and non-timber forest products in relation to livelihoods; 7) community forest management refers to tangible and non-tangible activities for conservation of forest.

It found that the change of the first five factors affect the latter two factors which have moved through a dynamic change to the dimension of time in each period. They can be classified into three period of time as followings:

1. The first period (1921 to 1967): the settlement of the community. The population was small. The ecological conditions of forests were abundant and the resources the community used for their subsistence were abundant. The use of land was for settlement and cultivation for household subsistence. Villagers were self-sufficient and had no economic problems. They were free from the state. The relationship between villagers and forest was interdependent. Forest was the first essential element to life. The sense of community was high. The relationship between generations was united and collected in public affairs. There were regulations in forest management that agreed with livelihood, tradition, and community culture and shaped the community members to treat the forest through rituals in order to depend on the forest perfectly. There were correlations between the seven factors of complex factors (see Figure 1).

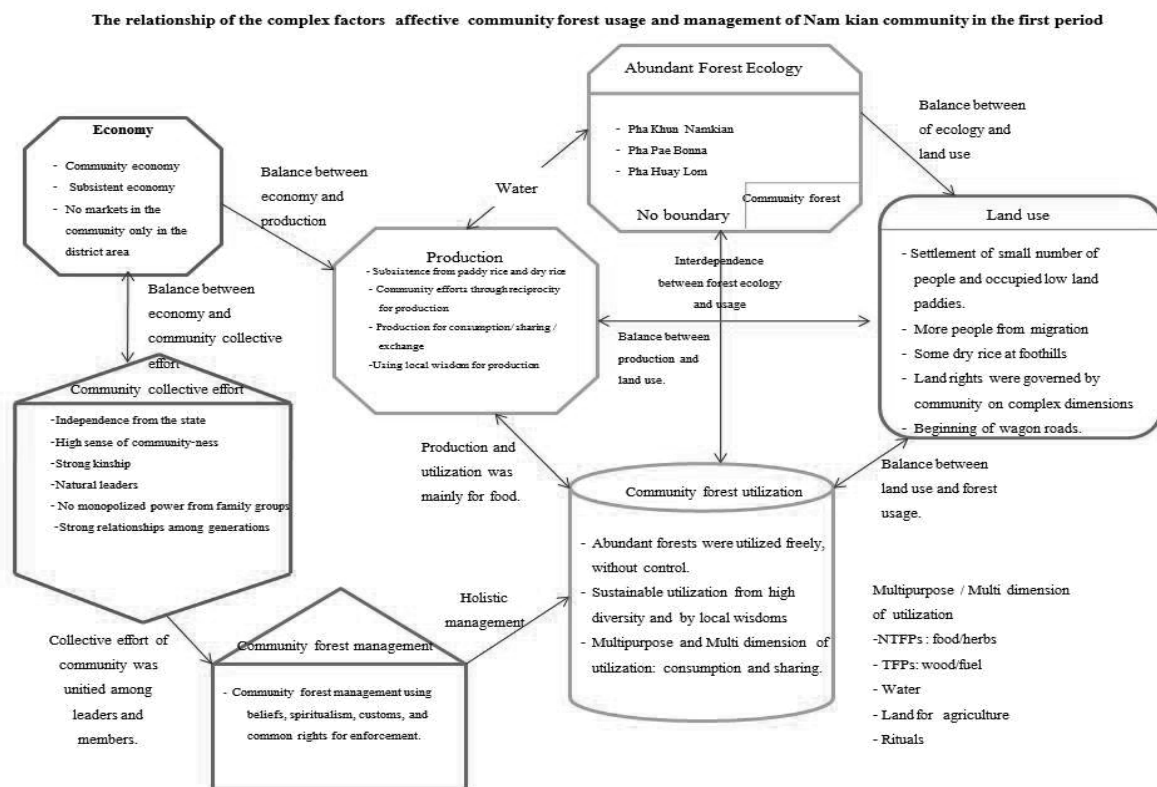


Figure 1. The relationship of the complex factors affective community forest usage and management of Nam Kian community in the first period

2. The second period (1968 to 2004): the expansion of the community. It began to change in many ways both in terms of the numbers of population and the mechanisms of state power, capitalism, and development projects of the state. After the development of the basic infrastructure, there were changes in community events such as the rise of logging by capitalists, policies promoting monoculture together with agricultural technology, the change of production systems to commercial production, and the beginning of increased expansion of land use in the forest. Land expansion affected biodiversity degradation and made the ability of water storage critical. It affected the community widely and at same time it created a social differentiation. The community was weakened by lack of regulation. There were social and health problems, and debt.

As such, there was an urgent for community to search for "leaders" to resolve the crisis of resources and social problems along with the community's awareness of the limits of the forest that started a sign of trouble. They, therefore, created the conditions for forest management together. It depended on the participation in forest usage and forest management to create sustainability. There were strict regulations of living and forest management. At the end of the second period, the sense of community was stimulated and had a collective power in public affairs through various activities, both directly and indirectly (Tangible/Intangible) until the problems were resolved. Hence, we can see that this period of time the community forest management was the most potential and effective of all (see Figure 2).

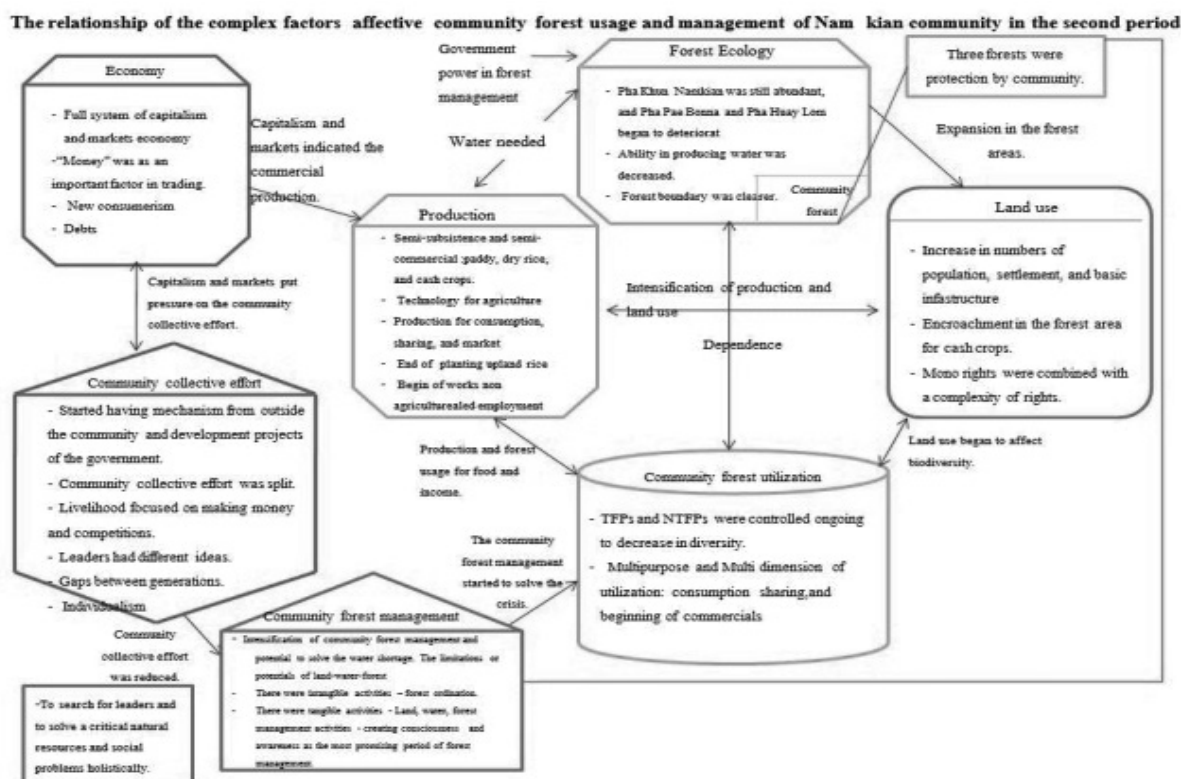


Figure 2. The relationship of the complex factors affective community forest usage and management of Nam Kian community in the second period.

3. The third period (2005 to present). The drastic change of economic, capitalism, and market system had a very strong impact toward the first five factors and then the second last factors; the forest usage and community forest management, were degraded. The livelihood was not directly dependent on the forest as in the past. It was only the supplement factors which could depend on or relieve livelihood in the basic level only. The forest usage and community forest management were degraded to be only for water or mono dimension for agriculture importantly.

The sense of community had changed. Each household was dedicated to hard work and accelerated the intensive production of cash crops. There was no labor exchange and people were highly individualistic. The communication to create the collective empowerment in the community was weakened. There were gaps between generations. The conditions of problems were more complicated due to the different conditions of social status and

careers. The leaders were changed according to the terms and then a new board of director took over to administrate the community. The administrative mechanism within the organization at the end of the third period had been changed by the vision of the leaders.

The community forest management, especially at KhunNamkian forest, was weakened and the discontinued activities such as the meetings, the surveys in the forest, the youth camp for forest conservation, and the coordination with external network diminished. They lacked funding, meetings, and planning for forest management which were limited to only some groups of leaders. The new generation was out of the community for education and employment. Therefore, they lacked the power to transfer the knowledge and that knowledge of forest management was discontinued (see Figure 3).

The relationship of the complex factors affective community forest usage and management of Nam kian community in the third period

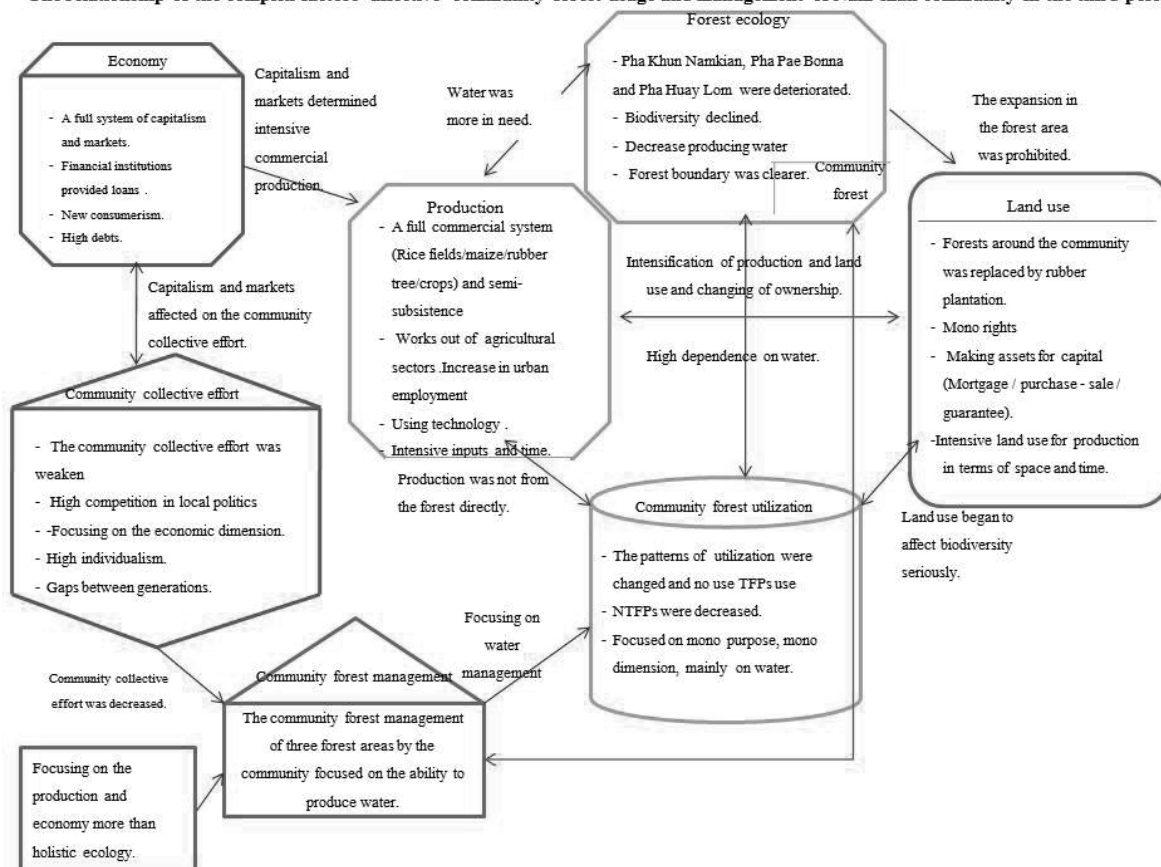
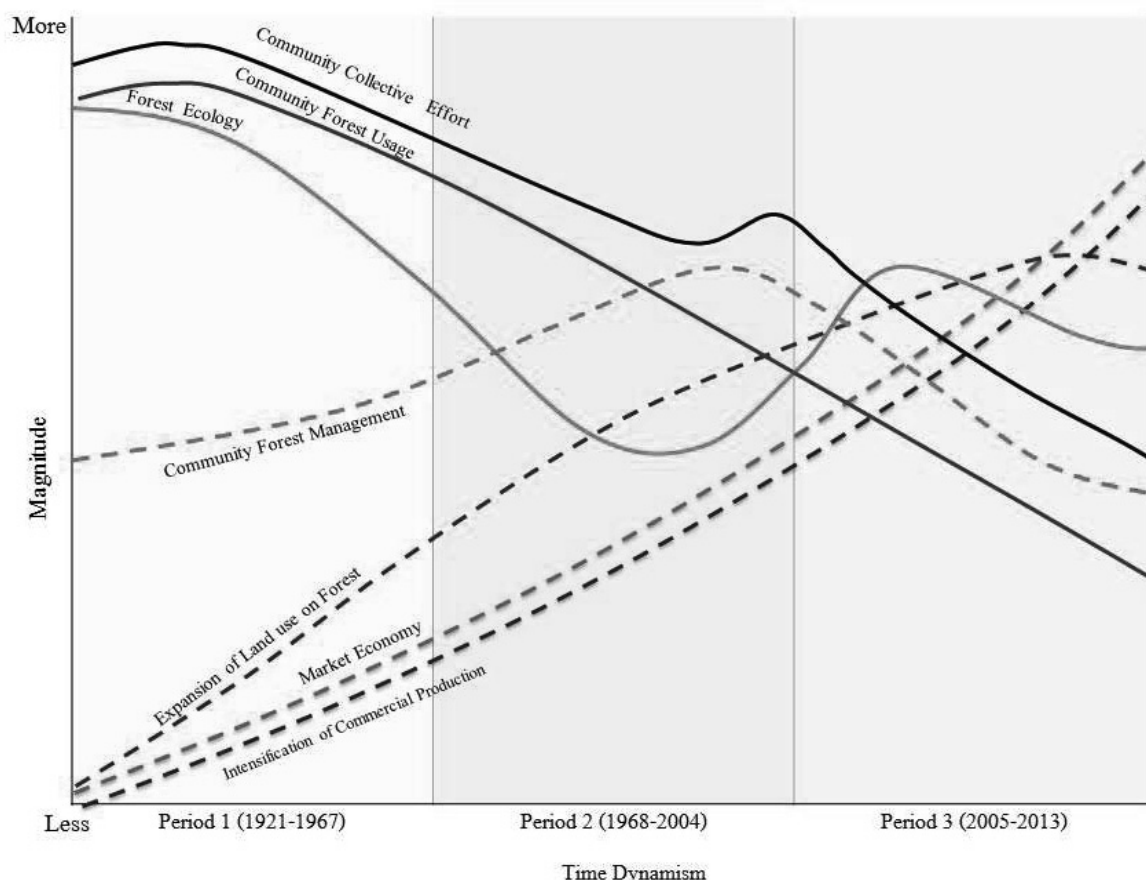


Figure 3. Relationship of the complex factors affective community forest usage and management of Nam kian community in the third period

To fulfill the second objective of the new paradigm, particularly the study of the dynamics, it was found that the community forest management of Namkian sub-district has been developing continually. Now that all five complex factors have been derived from the framework of using a new paradigm to analyze the characteristics of the forest ecosystem, expansion of land use in the forest area, production system, economic systems, and a sense of community along with community forest usage and management. Each factor can be shown in the graph. The dynamics of the changes were shown at

the time period and the magnitude of change of the seven factors which determined the relationship and found that the community forest usage and management has multiple dynamics together with other factors which affected each other, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. The dynamics of the changes and the changing magnitude of the seven factors which affected



each other

From Figure 4, it can be summarized that the dynamics of the 7 factors which affect the community forest usage and management are listed as the followings.

1. Characteristic of the Forest Ecology during the beginning was abundance. Later in the mid 1st period and the mid 2nd period, the forest began to deteriorate and continuously decreased in size. Water production also decreased. At the beginning of the 3rd period, the forests began to be restored and in the middle of the 3rd period, biodiversity had declined. It can be seen that the line shows the highest magnitude of the characteristic of forest ecology in the 1st period and decreased significantly in the mid 2nd period. However, in the mid 3rd period, the magnitude of line had a small increase at the end of the 2nd period and began to decrease in the 3rd period.

2. Expansion of Land Use on Forests during the 1st period could be occupied independently due to the small numbers of the population. The plains areas were used for settlement and watershed areas irrigated the rice fields. In the slope areas they grew upland rice for

subsistence. In the 2nd period, lands in the forest areas were utilized to grow cash crops and these areas had the highest expansion rate. However, in the 3rd period they could not extend the land continuously due to space limitations. The line shows that the forests land use was high in the 1st period and continued to increase to the highest in the 2nd period and then decreased in the 3rd period.

3. Market Economy during the 1st period was for a subsistent living. There were no markets. Later in the 2nd and 3rd periods, it started to enter into a full system of capitalism and markets along with a new consumerism. Financial institutions provided loans which as a result created an increase of debt. The line shows that the magnitude of the market economic system was higher at the end of the 1st period and spiked continuously in the 2nd and 3rd periods.

4. Intensification of commercial production at the beginning was for subsistence and semi-subsistence which then entered into the commercial production system fully. The line shows the magnitude of intensification of

commercial production increased greatly and continuously in the 2nd and 3rd periods.

5. Community Collective Effort is key to the management, self-care and governance, a way of living, a strong relationship between the generations, and a high sense of community. Latter in the 2nd period the community was lawless and weak. At the end of the 2nd period the sense of community was stimulated to act in self-management. The 3rd period was changed to be more accepting toward individualism and rarely had time to participate in the community affair because they had to accelerate production for living and maintaining the household economy as the most important priority. The magnitude of the collective power went down the lowest by the end of the 1st period. However, at the end of the 2nd period the magnitude was higher than that of the mid of the 3rd period. The magnitude had shown that it was reduced continuously.

6. Community Forest Usage at the beginning was used independently and for many purposes without any controls because the populations were small in number, forests were abundant, there was other local wisdom being used, and household consumption and utilization was last. Later in the 2nd period, those patterns began to change and forest usage intensified. Even though, forests were recovered in the 3rd period, people did not have time to find non- timber forest products. Usage of the forest was reduced for the need of "water" only for agriculture. The line shows that the magnitude of community forest usage had decreased continually and remained very low in the 3rd period.

7. Community Forest Management in the past, according to the traditional ways, had beliefs of the supernatural. Traditions or rules of the community helped to establish norms in the resource usage to be the framework of adequacy. The interesting thing is that in the 2nd period of the phenomenon, forest degradation was in a crisis due to the inadequacy of water. It raised an awareness of the limitations of the forest to the community. At the end of the 2nd period, there were changes and adaptations by creating a new condition on the principle of participation in the empowerment forest management which was found to be the most effective. Nevertheless, in the 3rd period, the community forest management began to lower the overall intensiveness and mainly focus on just water management. The line shows the magnitude

of the community forest management was high at the end of the 2nd period and tended to decrease in the 3rd period.

The conclusion of the dynamics and the correlation of complex factors show that the change of community forest usage and community forest management is the result of the first five factors, which are interrelated. It makes community forest usage and management dynamic in each period of time and slides along the contexts and conditions. Therefore, stagnation of community forest management does not reflect the previous explanation from of the political ecology which states that the use of wisdom and the modification of the relationship with state power could only make the community forest usage and management to have potential to manage the resources sustainably and truly justified [11].

6. Conclusion

The study found out that the community forest management has not been developing alone, but developing together with the five complex factors. There are forest ecology, expansion of land use on the forest, market economy, intensification of commercial production, community collective efforts, and community forest usage and management which are developed accordingly.

The community forest management of each watershed is not separated from each other between forest ecology, expansion of land use on forest, market economy, intensification of commercial production, community collective effort, and community forest usage and management. They are interrelated. A change of one factor could affect another factor. This cannot be avoided.

Stagnation of community forest management of Nam Kian sub-district found out that the significant impact toward the community forest usage and community forest management has weakened. The influence of intensification of commercial production together with a new consumerism under a higher demand of consumption has an influence on the way of life of the community. The transformation of complex factors related to the movement has not stopped, but it has developed dynamically according to the periods of time. The value and meaning of the forest in a period of time and in a certain context have different variants. In this study, there is a crucial finding in explaining the new explanation.

The community forest management of Nam Kian sub-district has occurred with non-linear characteristics[see12].

It was not intensive in the first period and then it was at the peak in the second period. Later in the third period the forest management had weakened and created stagnation.

The stagnation of the community forest management in this study had not been caused by a primary determinant of state power, but it is a combination of complex factors, especially in the market economy and intensification of commercial production in land use, labor, and inputs. They affect the ecology and the degradation of biodiversity which affect forest usage. The community collective effort is degraded, so that the ability of forest management is degraded also. This is the phenomenon to describe the stagnation which does not reflect well from the description of political ecology.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations gained from the research

Any policy or measure for sustainable management of forest especially community forest should take some of the findings in to consideration. First, as this research posed that co-existence and interdependence between people and community and their surrounding natural forest are the guiding principles. However, to realize it is not straightforward. There have been uncompromising stand point between state on the one hand, and people with NGO and academic support on the other. While the former uses power and legal measures but the later opposes it and advocates local power supported by indigenous culture. This research, as least illustrates that complexity and dynamism of the cases varies neither power of state nor of local can realize the principle. Rather we need to help solve the economic power of the people before we can promote community forest in a more sustainable manner.

7.2 Recommendations for further studies

This research may contribute some intellectual thinking about the situation of community forest. In particular, under dynamic and complex phenomena of community forest in Thailand, the conventional theories [see 9] may fail to capture the reality. When incorporating the more holistic- interdisciplinary thought, it seizes what are really taking place between community total

livelihood and their dependence and interdependence on the forest. However, this research is able to investigate only within the community, the future investigation on various situations of community forest and more academic contributions will be certainly enhance affected policy in the long run.

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