

## **The Crisis of Deforestation and Public Governance of Community Forests in Thailand**

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### **Abstract**

This paper argues that the Thai state's forest management since 1896 has been centralized in accordance with the traditional public administration regime, with its emphasis on top-down control without consultation or local people's participation. This regime resulted in deforestation and crisis, which led to social conflicts during in the 1970s and 1980s. The Thai state was ineffective in managing this severe problem and then, in the late 1990s, it shifted its forest management policy to the New Public Governance regime by granting communities' rights in forest management. This new management policy features collective public leaderships, working networks and the use of soft instruments of dialogue and mutual learning, which results in protection for the forest but also recovery in many devastated areas.

**Keywords:** traditional public administration paradigm, scientific forestry management paradigm, new public governance paradigm; community forest, soft instruments

## Introduction

Since World War II, nearly all underdeveloped and developing countries have modernized their societies by accelerating their industrial growth. The Earth's natural resources, formerly abundant, have become significantly reduced in the process, especially the fertile forest, of which less than 20 percent survives (World Rainforest Movement, 2002).

In the past, deforestation challenged the forest management of the bureaucratic administration system in Thailand, which was under the 'traditional public administration' and utilization of 'scientific forestry management' paradigm. This Western-style development paradigm had dominated forestry management since the modern nation-state formation. Technocrats in non-Western countries pointed out that 'forest' must be managed in accordance with scientific forestry knowledge by strictly centralizing overall forest management. These technocrats labelled villagers as ineffective forest harvesters and the root causes of grave deforestation. At the same time, the logging concessions issued by these same technocrats granted reforestation rights to capitalists, due to the strong belief that capitalists are the only effective harvesters and the providers of substantial revenue for the state.

However, the scientific forest management proved itself ineffective in both preserving *and* conserving forests, due to unassailable evidence that, in the last 100 years, this forest management paradigm has not only resulted in vast deforestation but has also contributed to the environmental degradation which persists to our day (World Rainforest Movement, 2002). This article illustrates the failure of forest management in centralizing overall forest management authorities under the traditional public administration paradigm. Additionally, it provides a fresh alternative on the state of forest management in Thailand under the paradigm of new public governance, featuring 'Community Forest', a case study of increasing importance in the last decade.

## Forestry Policy Development in Thailand

Formerly, Thailand had abundant forest resources but the development and formation of peripheral capitalism<sup>1</sup> 140 years ago, caused the rapid destruction of natural resources. Severe deforestation occurred shortly after the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, commonly known as the Bowring Treaty. Signed by Siam and

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<sup>1</sup> Peripheral capitalism refers to the expansion of capitalist states into countries deemed in the periphery or outlying areas of the world capitalist system.

Great Britain in April 1855, it introduced the system of extraterritoriality in Thailand. This modern world economy system was essentially based upon the international division of labor between the periphery, which produced raw materials, and the core, which manufactured products with raw materials from the periphery. Siam had become the main rice cultivator of the world, exporting 68,000 tons of rice in 1857, increasing to 1.1 million tons in 1925, while the total 5.1 million rai<sup>2</sup> (8,160 sq. km) of rice-planted area, increased to 17 million rai (27,200 sq. km) in 1925. The Siam state in those days initiated canal construction for irrigation scheme and supported the expansion of rice-planted areas. Only the 157 km-long Rangsit canal construction scheme, which the state promoted in the 1890s, could transform 293,813 rai (470 sq. km) nearby-canal forest areas into rice-growing areas (Chaiyan, 1994: 137).

Moreover, forest destruction occurred in the Northern region of Thailand due to logging concessions the Siam state issued to British capitalists, which expanded rapidly in the 1880s (Suehiro, 1989: 57-58). At the time, there was a high demand in Europe for teak, a hardwood suitable for shipbuilding (Chaiyan, 1994: 19). In the 29 years between 1896 and 1925, 3.5 million logs of teak were shipped from northern Thailand for export (Suehiro, 1989: 29-30). The teak industry, which included saw-milling, had been developed and monopolized by European capitalists. Teak concessions were almost exclusively granted to the five major European trading houses, who held an almost monopoly-level of 90% of the total number of available trees in northern Thailand in 1908-1939.

The peripheral capitalism development was the source of considerable deforestation in Thailand, caused by its constituent elements of logging for export, land reclamation for rice cultivation as a cash crop and expansion of infrastructure (roads, railways and canals) to facilitate economic growth. The result was rapid deforestation, that is, the decreasing forest area from 224.5 million rai in 1910 (BE 2453), to 171 million rai in 1961 (BE 2504) and to 80.3 million rai in 1997 (BE 2540). In the near future, this deforestation rate will average 200,000 rai per annum (Apichai, 1996: 30-36).

The National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) is a Thai government agency responsible for planning and formulating development strategies. In the five years between 1961 and 1966, the NESDP had the explicit policy to conserve 50% (161.55 million rai approx.) of the country's total forest area,

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<sup>2</sup> 'Rai' is a Thai unit of measurement equivalent to 0.16 hectare or 0.395 acres.

by promulgating the “National Reserved Forests Act, BE 2057”,<sup>3</sup> issued in 1964, a policy implemented by the Royal Forest Department by surveying and gradually issuing national reserved forest area. Numerous provisions were made for the protection of forests, including “imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, or to a fine not exceeding thirty thousands sic Baht, or to both”<sup>4</sup> for any person damaging or destroying landmarks, sign posts or other signals provided in the 1964 Act.

Until 1992, the Royal Forest Department was able to issue 147 million rai of National Reserved Forest Area, including 88 million rai of conserved forest, 52 million rai of forest for economic purposes (areas for orchards, fast-growing trees and rubber plantations) and 7 million rai of agricultural areas.

However, the remaining forest area was only 138 million rai (43% of the total), which is lower than the estimated goal. The reasons are connected to the devastation suffered by the national reserved forest area in 1961-1973, due to three main causes, as detailed by Apichai (2002: 4). Firstly, road construction connecting different regions, as explicitly declared in the first two NESDP plans, which led to the seizure of two-sided areas of the constructed roads by influential individuals, bureaucrats and capitalists. Secondly, policy implementation that promoted cash crops cultivation for export, such as corn and jute at that time, resulting in massive land expansion for growing cash crops. Thirdly, revenue accumulation by the Thai government for the export of wood, as in 1968, when the government decided to continue its revenue accumulation from wood exporting by extending logging concession terms in 500 forests countrywide.

In taking stock of developments, the third NESDP plan (1972-1976) lowered the forest area target from 50 percent to 40 percent of the total. Deforestation continued and by 1983, only 94 million rai (29.3 percent of the total) of forest area remained. This led to the re-adaptation of the government forest policy in 1985, when the Cabinet agreed to retain 40 percent of forested areas, including 25 percent for economic uses (orchards, rubber and fast-growing trees) and the remaining 15 percent for forest conservation (1A zone of watershed forest in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries forest reserved areas).

This policy led the Royal Forest Department to promote the private sector and MNCs (multinational corporations), planting fast-growing trees (eucalyptus) (Apichai, 1996: 36-39). A perception developed among high-ranking forest officials that local communities were encroaching on most of the available conserved forest

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<sup>3</sup> The 1964 National Reserved Forests Act repealed previous Forest Protection and Reservation Acts issued respectively in 1938 (BE 2481), 1953 (BE 2496) and 1954 (BE 2497).

<sup>4</sup> Section 33, National Reserved Forests Act, BE 2057, English version (Thailand Acts of Parliament: Panwa's Series, National Reserved Forest Act, B.E. 2507 (1964)).

areas. Consequently, as a way of conserving trees in the deep forests, the government lent its support to the private sector for reforestation programs, by growing economic trees as a 'buffer zone' surrounding the deep forest, in order to deter local people from invading the inner zone of the conserved forest for their daily activities. The state, in turn, lent the 'buffer zone', which was in the areas of the national reserved forests, to the private sector for long-term rent (30 years) at the rate of 10 baht per rai annually. This policy encouraged a fast-growing wood industry and pulp production industry (Apichai, 2002: 6-7).

However, the forest areas of the country as a whole declined steadily, to 89.6 million rai (27.9 percent of the total) by 1989. Moreover, severe flash flood in 1988 led to the collapse of numerous houses as a result of a large number of logs falling down from the hill and causing hundreds of casualties in Tambon Katun, Amphoe Pipun and Kiriwong village, Amphoe Lan Saka, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, in the south of Thailand. In that year, severe flood also occurred in nearby Surat Thani Province. This tragic event led to the government's declaration of 'forest encroachment' by giving up logging concessions countrywide in 1989, the year after the Nakhon Si Thammarat floods.

A new national forest policy was proposed, designed to increase conserved forest areas to 25% while decreasing forest areas for economic purpose to 15% of the total (Apichai, 2002: 11). At that time, the state suspected that local communities had invaded conserved forests for housing and livelihood, without permission, resulting in a government's decision, in 1991, to initiate the land allocations for the poor living in the degraded reserved forests scheme (*Khor Jor Gor*), in order to resettle local residents from the conserved forest areas to the degraded reserved forests (Pasuk & Baker, 1998: 202-03). The state required that those who had previously lived in degraded reserved forests could occupy less arable land (14 rai per household) as a way of sharing the remaining land with the newcomers. Moreover, the state incentivized the evacuated people by granting them title deeds and all the necessary facilities in exchange for the consent of the evacuees in receiving less allocated land in degraded reserved forests. There was an expectation that such a policy would increase the total forest area by moving local people out of the conserved forest areas, while the same local communities would derive their own land from transforming degraded reserved forests into farmlands (Apichai, 2002: 9-10). However, in practice, this scheme was widely opposed because the newly allocated lands were small and arid. More importantly, the infrastructure provided by the state in this scheme was unclear, which caused perpetual protests from the affected communities, leading to the government terminating all of the *Khor Jor Gor* schemes in 1992 (Precha et al., 1996).

The state's forest policy in the last century can be summarized as follows. In the early phase, the state promoted logging concessions in order to attract substantial revenue. Later, in the era of developmentalism,<sup>5</sup> in the 1950s and 1960s, the state constructed a number of large hydropower dams and roads, as well as promoting cash crops for export. Until the 1970s, state policies supported reforestation for economic purposes (orchards, rubber plantations and fast-growing trees). However, when the ecosystem was affected in the late 1980s due to rapid decreases in conserved forest areas, the state refrained from issuing further logging concessions. The state's policy at that time did not involve local participation. Local people were evacuated from the forested areas, in the belief that they were the root cause of destruction. In contrast, the state fully supported private sector activities of reforestation for economic purpose, believing this to be not only an important channel for increasing forest areas but also for creating a 'buffer zone' that would deter local people from invading the deep-forest conserved areas.

## **Rights movement for community forest management**

The structural contradiction of Thailand's peripheral capitalism in the last six decades reflected economic development strategy that gave primacy to export-led industrialization. This strategy not only pushed the cost of development to the rural sector as burden bearer of such development cost but also dramatically affected the destruction of huge natural resources. Such problems gave rise to people movements in protest at the state's projects, which had highly negative effects (especially dam construction, garbage disposal plants, waste water treatment ponds, power plant, etc.). At the same time, there were rights movements to manage their own resources (Somsak, 2010). More often than not, their movements were obstructed by the government, which was highly bureaucratized and, unavoidably, the conflicts soon escalated.

Bureaucracy in the past has exercised a great deal of influence in Thai society, leading one Western historian to name this highly bureaucratized system 'Bureaucratic Polity' (Riggs 1967). Bureaucratic elites regarded themselves as the rulers and were condescending towards ordinary people, often exercising their considerable influence without consultation or participation. However, the strength of

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<sup>5</sup> A theory advocating economic development through growth of the domestic market and the adoption of economic barriers, including high import tariffs.

people's movements in the last two decades has empowered them to advance their demands for participation at both local and national levels.

More often than not, the government sectors lacked sincerity in their arrangements for people's participation and, moreover, any such moves were largely intended to legitimize their *quasi* monopoly in decision making. The result was violent conflicts between the state and people's movements. In addition, the development strategy that caused environmental destruction was also a condition of the conflict between the state that centralized forest management and fast-growing trees promoting policy during 1970s-1980s, and the local people that were evicted from forest areas. These people were accused by the state as the culprits of forest destructions.

Inevitably, conflicts erupted and eventually gave way to the formation of people's movements demanding community rights for forest management. These movements first occurred in the Northern region in the late 1980s, leading to the formation of two networks – namely, the Northern Farmers Network and the Assembly of Northern Community Forests – which demanded the 'community's rights for forest management'.

Northern Farmers Network is the first network, whose members consist of households of indigenous, highland ethnic groups affected by the state's declaration of the conserved forest areas. Additionally, the crops cultivated by these communities have been affected by low prices. This is due to the 1992 policy of liberalization of imported soybean, which caused the collapse of domestic soybean price. This problem caused the protestors to call for government support for crop prices. Subsequently, these same communities organized stronger networks with the support of NGOs and academics (Sayamon *et al.*, 2002). In 1995-1997, this first network demanded that the state should resolve the problem of conserved forest areas overlapping with villagers' land rights; and also demanded a guarantee of communities' rights for forest management.

The second network, Assembly of Northern Community Forests, organized its first forum in 1993, demanding communities' rights for forest management. Most of the network members were urban dwellers who had participated in opposing logging concessions in 1989. Members of this network are those who dwell in 700 community forests in eight Northern provinces. The assembly's goal is to encourage mutual learning and knowledge exchange about forest management among its members and to push pressure on the authorities to promulgate laws that guarantee the community forest activities of local people (Sayamon *et al.*, 2002: 256-57).

The first movement demanding communities' rights for forest management in the North occurred in 1989 when villagers from Ban Huay Kaew, Ging Amphoe Mae

On, banded together to protest against capitalists who came to rent public forest areas for economic purposes. It was the first time that such protests sparked local people's movements demanding community forest law. The Royal Forest Department was responsive to this demand by drafting a community forest bill. However, this bill favored capitalists' interest in planting fast-growing trees. Eventually, local people, academics and NGOs drafted their own community forest bill in 1990 (Kesada, 2001). However, their movements were banned in the aftermath of the 23 February 1991 coup, when Prime Minister Chatichai's government was overthrown and replaced by a military junta. Fifteen months later, in 1992, the military dictator/self-appointed Prime Minister was ousted in the 'Bloody May' uprising, when at least 40 people were killed and hundreds more *injured*. The victory of the people's movement after the 1992 Bloody May events led to re-democratization in Thailand.

This is the starting point of people's movements for real political reform in Thailand. In such context, villagers, academics and NGOs<sup>6</sup> banded together again to demand communities' rights for forest management. In 1994, the government launched a campaign to bring a community forest bill into the House of Representatives. Meanwhile, the Royal Forest Department amended its own community forest draft. In addition, there were other drafts on community forest from political parties.

Unable to decide which community forest draft to adopt, in April 1995 the government organized a forum of government agencies, academics, NGOs and villagers, which resulted in another community forest bill (Kesada, 2001). However, since then there has been a public debate on the necessity of having community forest in the conserved forest areas between those who were in favor and those who were against. The remaining question was the belief that local people in conserved forest areas were unable to protect forests. Particularly some of those who did not agree with the aforementioned idea, not only were they accused of bias against indigenous highland ethnic groups, but also held a strong conviction on inflexible scientific forestry management. While local people and people's movements justified their demands to dwell in their forest lands and their own forest management by their 'local wisdom', each concerning party moved by submitting their own petitions to the government. This led to a public hearing to decide on the revision of the aforementioned bill before submitting the revised draft together with a petition of 50,000 signatures to the Parliament in March 2000, as required in Article 170 of

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<sup>6</sup> Groups of people who joined the movement supporting community forest bill include the Northern Farmers Networks, Assembly of Northeastern Farmers, Southern Community Forests Networks, Assembly of the Poor, Assembly of Northern Community Forests, Confederation of Southern Indigenous Fishery and Assembly of Indigenous Ethnicity of Thailand (Prachatai, 2005).

the 1997 Constitution (Prachatai, 2005). Subsequently, people's movements applied pressure on this issue for several years. However, their movements were abortive due to the fact that each concerning party could not share the ideas of the counterpart. At the time of writing, the community forest act, which was controversial in the past, has yet to be promulgated.

Although Thailand has no direct legal community forest, the movements of many groups have demanded community's rights for natural resources protection and conservation. This is the reason for the proliferation of several acts promulgated in the past ten years. Each act guarantees community's rights and community's participation. The 1997 and the 2007 Constitutions, in particular, guarantee the communities' rights in conserving and restoring their own traditions, local wisdom, art and culture. Moreover, these acts recognize local people's participation in conserving natural resources and in sharing their opinions and experiences about possible negative impacts of both state's projects and private enterprises' projects.

### **State's policy adjustment and community forest promotion**

The Royal Forest Department is a state agency authorized to have direct responsibility for forest resource management. In the past, this state agency was highly bureaucratic in directing from above and was not well disposed towards wider people's participation, believing that local people lacked knowledge of forestry science and alleging that they were responsible more for destroying forests than for conserving them. However, in the late 1990s the Royal Forest Department had to adjust its forest policy by recognizing communities' rights for forest conservation. This forest policy adjustment was initiated due to the following conditions: 1) the Royal Forest Department realized its forest policy failure in the past, which had caused grave and continual deforestation. This state agency was well aware that it could not solely preserve and conserve forests, because it does not have adequate resources (officials and materials); 2) people networks' movements demanding communities' rights in forest management have enlarged and strengthened since the late 1980s; 3) it was in part due to international support for community forest that Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia succeeded in reforesting and conserving forests by allowing

communities' participation;<sup>7</sup> 4) the 1997 Constitution guarantees communities' rights for the forest management.

Though there was no law recognizing community forests directly, the Royal Forest Department had to acknowledge its direct support for forest communities. The Royal Forest Department's implementation of the community forest scheme was authorized by the two existing laws: the 1941 Forest Act and the 1961 National Reserved Forest Act.<sup>8</sup>

In order to support communities' rights for forest conservation, the Royal Forest Department enacted out the following: 1) informing the public and educating local people about community forest management; 2) ensuring the organization of community forests via the approval of the Royal Forest Department Director-General; 3) promoting community forest activities in forest conservation, such as, giving plants and joining the activities of reforestation; 4) supporting budget for community forest management, as necessary.

The first approval of community forest project by the Royal Forest Department Director-General occurred on December 21, 1999, with three areas approved concurrently, namely 1) community forest project at Ban Khao Row Tian Tong in Chai Nat Province; 2) community forest project at Ban Pang Khanon in Khampaeng Phet Province; 3) community forest project at Ban Khao Wang Yiam in Khampaeng Phet Province. To date, the Royal Forest Department has approved

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<sup>7</sup> The theme of the 1978 World Forestry Congress, held in Jakarta, Indonesia, was "Forests for People". The congress helped to provide impetus to a movement also known as "social forestry", "community forestry" and "participatory forestry". The congress explicitly stated that a new concept of forest management should be internationally accepted, to stress that no-one has a better knowledge of forestry than indigenous people who dwell in forests. Forests are, consequently, everything to these indigenous communities (food resources, homes, relaxing places, libraries for learning, etc.). Their way of life is therefore inextricably bound to forests. This is the reason why these people love and cherish forests. In addition, their traditions and their rituals reflect forest conservation. This new concept, also called "Community-based Forest Management", supports indigenous people as forest managers (World Rainforest Movement, 2002). The state itself has limited resources and therefore cannot take care of forests countrywide. For this reason, many countries encourage indigenous people to show responsibility towards forests, in exchange for food gathering. Community forest management has seen a worldwide expansion.

<sup>8</sup> Section 17 and Section 32 of the 1941 Forest Act state about logging in prohibited forest areas that: "the provisions in this part shall not be applied to a competence officer who acts for the purpose of forest conservation or technical research or experiment". And Section 19 of the 1961 National Reserved Forest Act states that: "for the purpose of control, supervision or conservation of a national reserved forest, the Director-General may order in writing a competence officer of the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant to act in any manner whatsoever in a national reserved forest".

the setting of 8,438 community forest projects undertaken by 8,999 villages covering forest areas totaling 3,696,447 rai (Community Forest Management Bureau, 2014).<sup>9</sup>

## **Experiences of Community Forest Management in the Eastern Region**

The author's study of the community forests in the Eastern region was conducted through field research of seven projects in the areas of Ban Takrao Thong, Ban La-Og, Ban Yang Ngam, Ban Nong Hongse, Ban Tapun Thong, Ban Sai En and Ban Sam Yaeg Nam Phen. The study reflects community forest management in Thailand. All of these seven projects originated under the following conditions. Firstly, before the formation of these community forests, the forest areas were invaded in the era of developmentalism (late 1950s to late 1980s) for the purposes of logging, road constructions and orchards/rubber plantations. This resulted in forest degradation with repercussions on communities who had lived in or near these forests, which had been once green and fertile. In summer, it is quite hot in these areas and daytime hours are longer than in other seasons. Lack of water withers trees in those forest areas, a source of concern for villagers. Secondly, in the late 1990s a change in the Royal Forest Department's policy advocated a goal of promoting communities' rights in forest management. Thirdly, certain communities have charismatic leaders who are outstanding, visionary, devoted and highly respected. This very type of leader connects the villagers, who are anxious about their harvest caused by deforestation, with the Royal Forest Department's policy change in promoting communities' rights for forest management. More importantly, these leaders are crucial for initiating community forest projects and forest rehabilitation projects.

The seven aforementioned communities remain rural, their livelihood largely dependent on income from orchards and rubber farms. The members have kinship relations and value mutual respect. The villagers' economic status depends on the amount of arable land. Small-sized land tenures with insufficient income need additional sources of income from second or third jobs, typically as hired hands. In Ban Takrao Thong and Ban La-Og, most villagers enjoy a fairly good economic status, with poor villagers largely absent. In Ban Yang Ngam, Ban Nong Hongse, Ban

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<sup>9</sup> On a regional basis, the following were found: 3,937 community forest projects are organized in the Northeastern region, followed by 2,753 community forest projects in the Northern region, 996 community forest projects in the Central region and 752 community forest projects in the Southern region (Community Forest Management Bureau, 2014).

Tapun Thong, Ban Sai En and Ban Sam Yaeg Nam Phen, however, wide gaps in villagers' incomes exist. Numerous poor households are found particularly in Ban Sam Yaeg Nam Phen, where the source of income inequality is thought to be in part as a result of some areas being urbanized faster than others.

From these community forest case studies, it is found that five projects are successful, including Ban Takrao Thong, Ban La-Og, Ban Yang Ngam, Ban Tapun Thong and Ban Sai En. These communities are able to protect logging and prevent their community forest areas from being encroached upon. No new cases of logging and deforestation have been reported in recent years. In addition, these communities can proudly rehabilitate the forest's abundance. These three successful community forests – Ban La-Og, Ban Takrao Thong, and Ban Sai En – are now organizing their own “community forest learning centers”.<sup>10</sup>

The two community forests which have reported modest success are Ban Nong Hongse and Ban Sam Yaeg Nam Phen. In their early phase of community forest formation, these two villages had a bustle of activities, including forest plantations, forest patrolling and surveillance, and forest line-mark designation for forest fire prevention, and so on. However, in the past three-four years, these villages' community forest activities have faded away and this has resulted in illegal logging by the outsiders, causing numerous bare patches in these community forests. Moreover, the villagers whose residences are close to the forests' line-marks still invade community forest areas for logging and rubber plantation. These two community forest projects lack enthusiasm in finding out solutions to the aforementioned problems they are facing.

To date, there are five successful community forest projects which have networks of partners for community forest management. The main participating partners are as follows: 1) forest officers who play an important role in encouraging villagers to form community forests, consulting, training, budgeting and supporting the preparation of forest fire prevention. Additionally, these forest officers also participate in reforestation activities and join patrolling activities for the surveillance in certain community forests; 2) villagers in each community who actively give support to these

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<sup>10</sup> In the case of three community forests, it is found that: 1) Ban Takrao Thong has organized a “Community Forest's Biological Diversity Learning Center” for students, villagers and the public, who are invited to study flora and fauna; 2) Ban La-Og has organized “Herbal Learning Center”, consisting of 200 herbal species, all of which are labeled at their bases along with written description of the medicinal properties of each herb for the interested learner; 3) Ban Sai En has organized “Community Forest Learning Center” for students, villagers and the public, to study the ecosystem which represents the holistic interdependence of living organisms in community forests and community forest management system.

projects because the villagers themselves are aware that deforestation can result in severe drought. So they are willing to participate in reforestation activities and to monitor any deforestation; 3) Schools which play a critical role in joining reforestation participation, monitoring and preventing any forest invasion, and making use of community forests for learning purpose; 4) some monasteries actively participate as a partner. It is found that villagers and monks are able to act together to protect forests; 5) community forests from other villages. There are also “Community Forest Networks” both at the regional level and at the district level for mutual assistance, collective reforestation, organizing dialogue knowledge-sharing. This partner also provides advice to its members in the event of dispute between villagers and capitalists who illegally invade community forest areas; 6) business sectors, especially some large private enterprises which are concerned with “Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR) activities. These large enterprises give support to reforestation activities by donating funds to facilitate community forest activities, organizing community forest contests, and so on.

Concerning the villagers’ use of community forests, it is found that in four community forests – Ban Takrao Thong, Ban La-Og, Ban Yang Ngam and Ban Nong Honse – villagers are light users of their community forests due to the fact that most of the villagers are farmers and have, therefore, fairly high economic status. In the case of Ban Yang Ngam and Ban Nong Honse, each village has a small-sized area of community forest and the villagers are aware of forest conservation. The other three villages are Ban Tapun Thong, Ban Sai En and Ban Sam Yaeg Nam Phen, with villagers making use of community forests as their sources of income through food foraging, wild orchids, herbs, and so on. This is due to the fact that most villagers in these three communities are relatively poor and have insufficient land. These villagers are obliged to survive by being reliant on such forests.

Important factors affecting the success of community forestry are as follows Firstly, “charismatic leadership”, which is vested in those community leaders who are strong-minded, truly conscious of natural resources conservation, visionary, courageous and actively responsible for doing their conserving activities. These charismatic leaders are highly respected by their communities and are also able to incorporate outside partners to lend support to community forest activities. Secondly, social capital, which consists of norms of reciprocity, mutual trust and social networks. Social capital serves as a bonding agent for joining concerning partners in the fulfilment of their common goal.

## Theoretical Contributions of Public Governance

The results of the study mentioned above reflect the state's paradigm shift from Traditional Public Administration regime to a New Public Governance regime (Osborne 2010: 1-12). This part of the article summarizes these theoretical concepts.

Traditional Public Administration (TPA) originated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and dominated the public administration until the 1970s. This concept confirms that public administration is a state prerogative. Accordingly, the structural organization of the state is centralized, compartmentalized and hierarchical. Not only does this kind of structural organization adhere strictly to the rules and regulations but also its administration and politics must be kept separate. Due to the current state of the administration for the public, it is necessary to implement a merit system and the relevant personnel administration. This concept is deemed to be ineffective, inflexible, lacking innovation and unresponsive to the challenges of globalization. The TPA concept has been challenged but survives to this day. Due to the weak points mentioned earlier, the role of this concept is apparently greatly diminished. In order to renew its theoretical space, a new theoretical regime is supplemented.

The New Public Governance (NPG) concept appeared early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has gained wider acceptance. Although this concept does not dominate public administration in many countries, it is a challenging concept which is further eroding the TPA regime's weak points. The NPG concept was introduced in the context that civil societies have been participating in public management as partners, in cooperation between community and government agencies for local developments in various activities such as education, community security, babysitting center, residence for the aged, community forest, cultural tourism, and so on. Although NPG cannot fully replace TPA, it is found that the latter regime is still the mainstream of management in many areas. Furthermore, NPG management has been increasingly accepted during the past ten years (Osborne, 2010; Peters, 2010; Bovaird & Loffler, 2005; Cheema, 2005).

Conditions facilitating the emergence and expansion of NPG over the last ten years are as follows. Firstly, contemporary social problems are complex and are casting doubt on exclusive management by a government agency (Cheema, 2005: 21). It is for this reason that civil society has to participate in resolving existing issues, by coordinating various partners' activities to achieve the common goal. Secondly, widespread criticisms on traditional bureaucracy, seen as a large formal organization, complicated, departmentalized, with a hierarchical chain of command and adhering strictly to rules and regulations. This bureaucratic system is exceedingly formal, lacking in initiative and incapable of coping with a changing environment. These condi-

tions called for bureaucracy reform by organization downsizing, which will in turn maximize its effectiveness (Pestoff & Brandsen, 2010) and give wider space for civil society to have more participation in public management. Finally, the development, in recent decades, of strong civil society. Civil society, irrespective of its affiliation, needs to behave like an active subject (Cheema, 2005: 19), by cooperating as a partner with state agencies. This will result in various developments as well as checks and balances. However, conflicts cannot be eliminated.

There are three critical elements to the NPG. Firstly, decentralization of authority to local government and civil society, which enables the latter to be relatively strong and autonomous. Secondly, the formation of a concept promoting the view that the state does not necessarily monopolize public administration. Civil society should be granted more space in its participation to public activities. However, the government sector should not delegate all its responsibilities to civil society. Though responsibility for public administration still remains in the hands of the state, the state should function primarily as the issuer of guidelines without the obligation to act as a direct producer. The third and final critical element in the NPG system is represented by network operations, including various partners such as government agencies, business sectors, communities, NGOs, academia, professional associations and international organizations (Kennett, 2010). The structural organization of this network is flat, informal and without a chain of command.

The factors linking these networks for the NPG management to achieve its goal efficiently and effectively are as follows: 1) mutual trust that binds together various partners to run public management activities successfully and with few obstacles; 2) norms of social exchange that highlight the value of commitment for the common good, mutual assistance and awareness of conservation. If such value can be cultivated in the concerning partners' minds, public management activities can proceed smoothly; 3) dialogue and intensive communication, such as frequent meetings, to enhance mutual understanding, foster the de-escalation and management of conflict, and cooperation among the partners; 4) fragmented, but integrated leadership. Each concerning partner has its own leaders and it is perhaps inevitable that some fragmentation of leadership may exist. The NPG concept should not only realize collective leadership existing in many centers, but also organize coordination through frequent and ongoing dialogues for optimum coordination between concerning partners' leaders; 5) effective conflict management. As cooperation between concerning partners may inevitably lead to conflict, it is necessary to build instruments for effective conflict management.

From the theoretical concepts discussed above, it can be seen that they conform with the development of forest management in Thailand, namely the TPA and NPG, as follows:

Forest management development in Thailand began in the reign of King Rama V, when the Royal Forest Department was found in 1896 of which the first director-general was Mr. Herbert Slade (Chaiyan, 1994). Forest management at that time was under the TPA paradigm, which placed importance on the centralization of all relevant authorities, with departmentalized administration closely adhering to the chain of command. At that time, the state viewed forest management as an activity based on scientific knowledge and therefore only state officers were thought to be qualified for forest management. By contrast, villagers were not able to take responsibility for forest management because, allegedly, they did not possess the relevant scientific forestry knowledge. Moreover, while the forest authorities had no confidence in villagers who had in the past engaged in forest invasion, at the same time they promoted forest plantation for economic purposes, in the belief that forest areas would effectively be enlarged and their economic value increased. However, forest policy development in the last hundred years has demonstrated that forest management under TPA regime, and basic forestry knowledge, failed to protect and conserve forest areas. Moreover, it led to widespread conflict before the paradigm shift of forest management to NPG regime in the late 1990s. This new paradigm explicitly recognizes communities' rights, local wisdom and decentralizes forest management authority to community networks. It is hoped that, in years to come, many community forest projects will become tangible reality, to cover over 3.7 million rai of forest areas, resulting in a green environment for the Thailand of the future.

## **Conclusions and Final Remarks**

This article has illustrated that the forest management in Thailand is in need of modification to better promote community forest management as a form of “new public governance”. This is due to the evidence that public problems in our days are not only sensitive but also highly complex. The government sector cannot resolve these problems on its own. The important partners concerned include local communities, forest officers, community forest networks (both at district and regional level), Tam Bon (sub-district) administrative organizations, schools, monasteries, NGOs and business sectors with a focus on “corporate social responsibility” (CSR). Above all, local communities are the main coordinating agents under the indirect supervision of the Royal Forest Department officers. Such networks give support to reforestation activities collectively. Other activities include, among others, weed control, building barriers to prevent forest fires (wild fire), organizing forest patrolling and surveillance teams, monitoring illegal logging, along with issuing rules and regulations for sustainable collective use of forest resources.

In applying NPG to community forest management, the additional suggestions are as follows. Firstly, development of public leadership capable of stimulating villagers' interest and motivating community members of both their own partner and of other partners, to be increasingly aware of the importance of community forest management and participate actively in community forest management. In addition, public leaders must be capable of integrating different ideas and different interests so that the resulting cooperation can be supported (Broussine, 2005). These public leaders need to be broadminded and receptive to alternative ideas. They should accept other partners' ideas and give support to the recruitment of new leaders who can work collectively in the form of "collective leaderships", capable of bringing the organism of networks to achieve the common goal.

Secondly, it is necessary to build an instrument for linking all concerning partners by adhering to mutual trust, norms of reciprocity and common value, especially the values of devoting the common good, respecting community rights and natural resource conservation. In addition, it is necessary to use soft instruments, that is, collective consultation and dialogue which has to be held frequently and regularly. This will facilitate the integration of all concerning partners' policies.

Thirdly, the Royal Forest Department's role, which cannot directly control the community forests' activities. Each community must have autonomy to perform its own community forest activities. However, forest authorities must use indirect methods of supervision and monitoring, through performance management (Peters, 2010: 44-45), that is, building key performance indicators (KPI) for measuring output and outcome properly. The KPIs should not be complex in order to measure the minimum requirements, to enable villagers and facilitate goal achievement.

Lastly, collaboration between the forest authorities and the communities should be based on a "soft system", by presuming that the current problems are complex and should be analyzed through several different lenses. Each analytical method has its own value. In this sense, it is seen that the "soft system" seems to reject the application of a specific, ready-made method. On the other hand, such a system is widely open for the villagers living closely to the problem and can participate with their own analysis and solutions. Not all problems should be solved by specialists. In other words, everyone (both those who are directly affected by the problems and those who are resolving them) is in some way or other involved in the problem. This method is therefore a composite of humanity which facilitates the villagers gaining their own space in this system. This "soft system" is not a ready-made model of problem-solving. Only the collective thinking and learning of all partners concerned in the process is an answer to villagers' problems (Surichai *et al.*, 2007: 9-10). Such a system can link technocrats and villagers to jointly cooperate for the common good.

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