

Conflict in Natural resource management in Central Vietnam: The Role of Collective Action in protecting Community Benefits

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1. Introduction

The rapid economic growth in Vietnam over the last two decades has put high pressure on the natural resources. Local communities are facing the challenge to maintain their rights and benefits from resources they have managed for generations due to intervention of outsiders. In such cases collective actions are often formulated basing on "action taken by a group in pursuit of members' perceived shared interests" (Marshall 1998). This research presents empirical evidence for the collective action of local people to protect their benefit in Pho Trach-one ancient village of Thua Thien Hue province in Central Vietnam (figure 1)-has been established over 500 years. Applying customary law, local people have maintained the natural forest of 250 ha in the sand dune for environment protection and livelihood benefits. Since 2005, the appearance of sand mining company has damaged natural resources of community: destroyed forest, exhausted water, damaged graves... which results in the conflict between community and sand company.



2. Objective

To analyse conflict escalation, underlying cause of conflicts and potential actors involving in conflict management to find solutions reinforcing the collective action of local community.

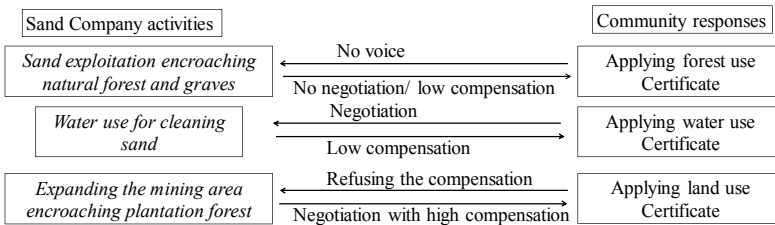
3. Research method

This research based on the data collected from key informants and a survey with 36 households closed with the natural forest. Qualitative analysis is main method. Responses and perspective of the local people on forest use and exploitation of the silicate company are discussed to address conflict escalation. The role of potential stakeholders in conflict management is analysed through vein diagram and One-Sample T test about the perception of local people.

4. Results

Escalation of conflict (figure 2 & 3):

Figure 2: Sand company activities and responses of local community



No commitment from company in return land after sand exploitation, protection of graves and natural forest.

Underlying conflict causes in the area (figure 3):

- Ignoring the informal property rights
- Lack of the consistency among the government authorities
- Interest of outsiders vs. local benefits

Collective action and conflict management: Collective action in Pho Trach village originated from the awareness of the local people on their weak voice in negotiation process. To protect community' benefits, they organized many meetings and send representatives to negotiate with company.

For conflict management (table 1&2; figure 5):

- 1) each HH cannot resolve conflict;
- 2) Pho Trach cooperative was identified as local representative for negotiations;
- 3) CPC⁵ got low trust from local although this is legal and power organization closest to local people;
- 4) No involving groups with high power or legality often have no relationship to those resources

Table 2: One-Sample Test

Actors	Test Value = 0.5					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Difficult for conflict management	5.292	35	.000**	.333	.21	.46
Cooperative involvement	2.935	35	.006*	.222	.07	.38
CPC involvement	-.329	35	.744	-.028	-.20	.14
DPC/PPC involvement	1.711	35	.096	.139	-.03	.30

Why supporting to collective action?

Collective action is considered as one outcome of resource conflict and it help to increase awareness and governance of the community in its resources management. So far, it completely lacks mediators to be bridge between local people with company. This can push conflict to go further weaken due to manipulated by outsiders. Therefore it is necessary to get the involvement of stakeholders for conflict management to improve livelihood of local people and sustainable development of natural resource.

5. Conclusion

Case study of Pho Trach village, in Thua Thien Hue province, Central Vietnam showed that:

- Without legal recognition on property rights, local people often face with risks to lose their resource and getting low compensation once the outsiders occupy those resources.
- Contesting tenure and benefits may created conflicts between local people and outsiders.
- Collective action as a outcome of conflict helps community in protecting their property rights on common resources.
- ↳ Recognising legal rights for local people on their indigenous resources can facilitate a more sustainable management of natural resources and better livelihood of local people.
- ↳ involvement of actors with high power and legality in conflict management.

Figure 1: Research site

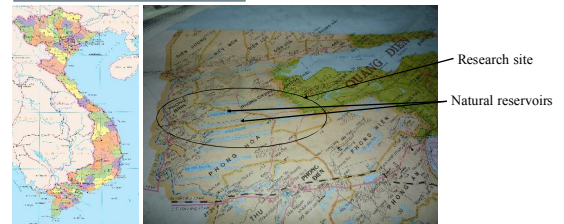


Figure 3: Conflict escalation between sand company and local people

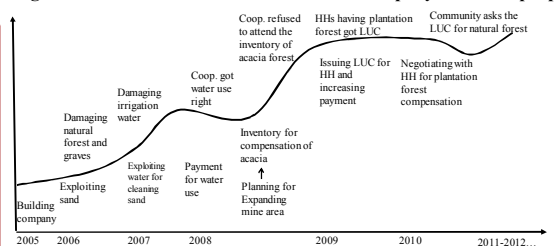


Figure 4: Community vs. Outsiders

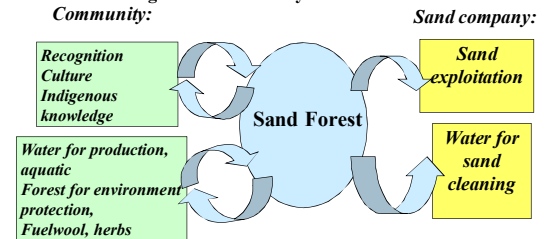
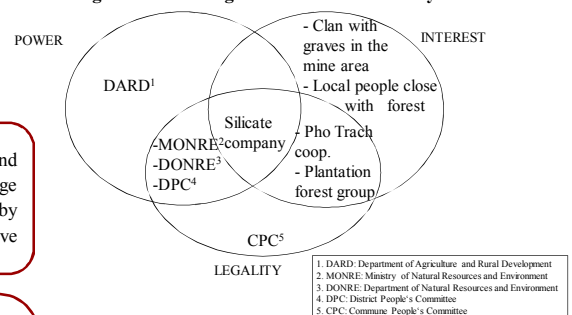


Table 1: Opinion of local people on the role of stakeholders

Role of Actors in conflict management	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Difficult for conflict management	36	.83	.378	.063
HHs resolve conflict with company	36	.00	.000 ^a	.000
Co-operative involving	36	.72	.454	.076
CPC resolves conflict	36	.47	.506	.084
DPC/PPC resolves conflict	36	.69	.467	.078

a t cannot be computed because the standard deviation is 0.

Figure 5: Venn diagram of stakeholder analysis



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References

Marshall, G., 1998. A dictionary of sociology. New York: Oxford University Press.

