

People's Response Activities for Environmental Degradations and Roles of Outsiders: A Case Study in the Mountainous Northern Thailand

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1. Background

The research is a case study on R Village in mountainous Northern Thailand. Surrounding area of the village a number of refugees from the Vietnam/Indochina War migrated, the population grew in high ratio and shifting cultivation has caused forest and soil degradation both of which attack their own life like other place in the world. In their poor living, how do the local inhabitants who are origin and victim of the environmental degradation aware, recognize and act? And what are roles of outsiders who wish to contribute to the solution of the problems?

2. Research Setting

We can see that the inhabitants have started cooperative management on forest, and many of them have tried fruit cultivation in their farm. I analyzed the data collected by semi-structured interview, questionnaire and so on and discussed the contributing factor of them and impact of extension works of outsiders such as the NGOs and the government.

3. Results of Analysis

First, two contributing factors of the forest management are found, the activities of outsiders as triggers starting the management activity, and the intension of forest management behavior of people making the management rule effective.

Second, two contributing factors of fruit cultivation for each inhabitant are found from statistical analysis, his or her conscious of soil degradation and his or her evaluation of feasibility (evaluation about his or her own money, time and the skill). The outsiders' activities have significant affect on the inhabitants' conscious of soil degradation, but don't show significant affect on their evaluations of feasibility.

On the other hand, some kinds of self research activities by inhabitants themselves are shown, such as trial making bio-fertilizers and organic vegetable farming.

4. Discussion

The two activities of the inhabitants can be called the response activities for environmental problems. Forest management is for conservation of water resources and fruit cultivation are affected by conscious of soil degradation. And also the actual activities and the environmental conscious/intension of conservation of them don't have simple relations and gaps easily happen between them.

Though people in R Village have shifting cultivation as traditional culture which has already lost sustainability, they show "Co-evolution" that is processes of their livings changing to more sustainable ones by interaction between human systems and eco-systems.

Outsiders have their limitations but they can improve their works by outsiders' participating to people's self research activities which have been ignored by outsiders.