

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODOLOGY

The relationship between theory and reality can be represented as cycle. The theory promotes the advancement of understanding and further analysis of reality; in turn, reality examines the realistic and workability of theory, then readjust theories. Conceptual framework can bridge abstract theory and reality, and links theories into empirical analysis and research. Methodology, on the other hand, is the tool used for collecting reliable data for analysis. This chapter's purpose is to introduce the conceptual framework and methodology of this study. Finally, the step design of this research will be presented.

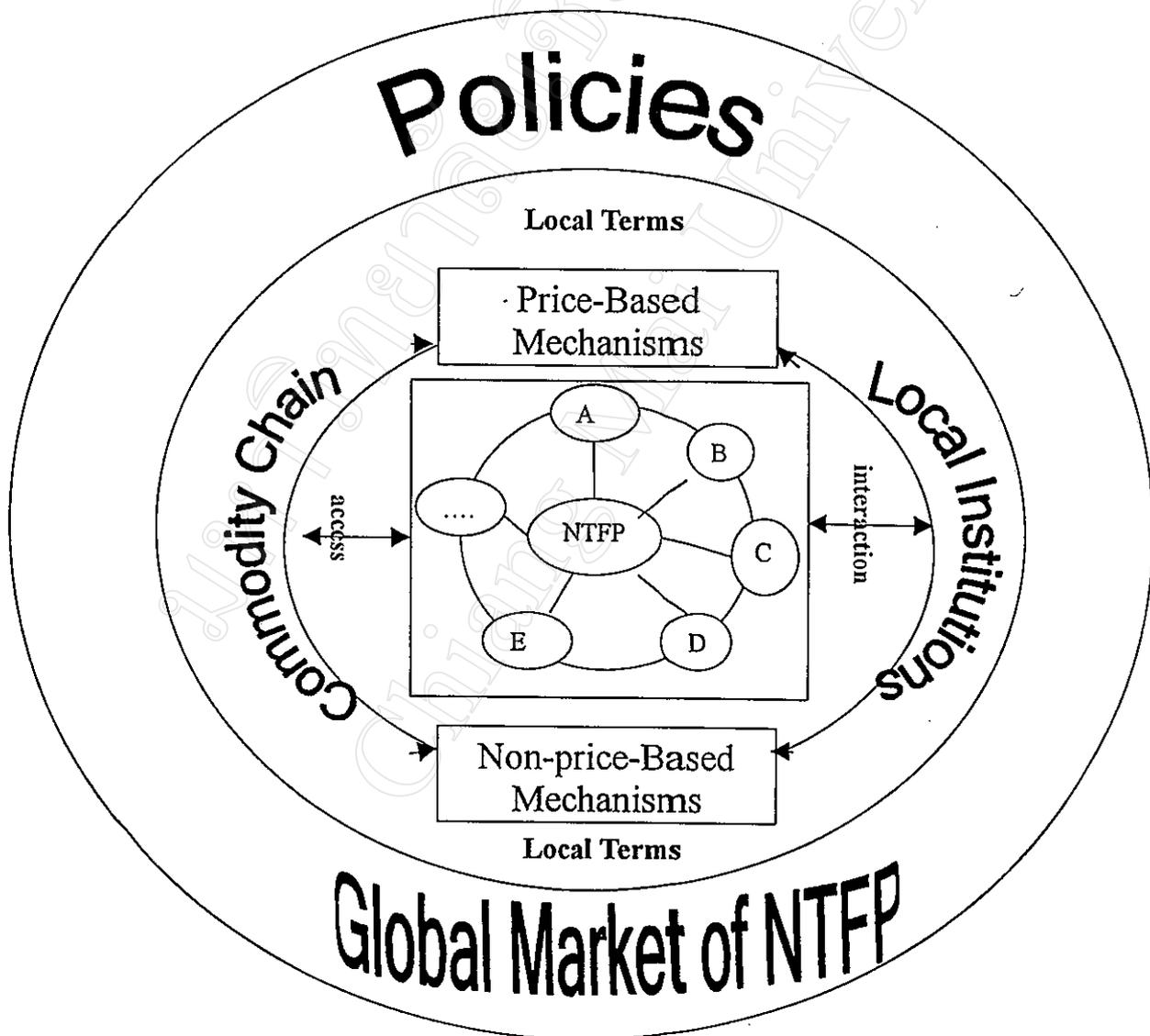
3.1 Conceptual Framework for this Study

In this study of NTFP commodity chain, to form a conceptual framework, firstly, I prefer to apply Gudeman's idea (1992), "practice model" for commodity chain analysis. Based on this, NTFP commodity chain was redefined as regularized networks of social actors' *practice*, which interlocked exchanges through with commoditized NTFP and its constituents pass from extraction or harvesting through production to end use, that emerge underlying both "price-based" and "non-price-based mechanisms. My concerns for this definition are to better understand how actors' economic behaviors are conducted, economic decisions are made, and commodity markets are organized. This perspective would provide a more contextualized theoretical background for observing the complicated NTFP commodity chain in Yunnan, China.

In addition, rather than putting the problematic and homogenous concept of "middleman" referring to the actor in the middle or who links the harvesters and the consumers, in this study, the social actors should be differentiated both harvesters,

consumers and “middleman”. In other words, harvesters may be differentiated by gender, class, age and so forth; the middleman do so, which may include international cooperation, local vendors, wholesalers, exporters and so on. The differentiated social actors play different role in commodity chain, carry with different power, and provide different functions

Figure 3-1 Conceptual Framework



* A.B.C. stand for differentiated social actors who are involved in NTFP collection and marketing

Secondly, for more empirical study, a diagrammatical form for this analytical framework is illustrated above (see figure 3-1). It shows that the local commodity chain of NTFP is externally affected by macro policies and the global market. Internally, it is influenced by both local “price-based” and “non-price-based” mechanisms. Moreover, local institutions (rule and rule-in-use) may also, via “price-based” and “non-price-based” mechanisms, shape and adjust local commodity chain. In turn the commodity chain on which external factors impacted would affect local institutions. The dynamics of local institutions interact with commodity chain would ultimately guide people’s day-to-day economic activities, which might be manifested in local terms (such as fair, unfair, rich forest, poor forest) in term of both ecologically and economically.

The center of the diagram shows differentiated actors in the matrix related to each other, which might be reflected by local terms as well. The local terms here manifest not only the perceptions of people in trading and their environmental interaction, but also the relationship and power relations among the differentiated social actors. Thus, the conceptions of access and institution will be adopted to analyze empirical social relations along with commodity chain of NTFP. For this, I modified Leach’s (et al., 1999) notion of institutions to study Ribot and Peluso’s (in press) notion of access to NTFP commodity chain. Hence, there are two aspects of access: 1) *the access to NTFP resources*, which might be characterized as the classical property notion of access---rights of access to physical things. This is how local institutions govern people’s access to NTFP resources. 2) *the access to benefit along with commodity chain*, which should broaden the notion of access as ability to benefit from thing, drawing upon Ribot and Peluso’s (in press) idea. That can be composed of market access, labor access, access to capital, access to social relations and access to knowledge as well as NTFP resources, and then all of those access subsequently contribute to actors’ access to benefit. Thus, NTFP commodity chain can be studied through mapping differentiated social actors’ different access along with the process of NTFP marketing. That means to identify differentiated actors gain the different types of access at the different levels of NTFP

commodity chain. It will assist in the observation of who benefit and how they benefit from NTFP trading. Furthermore, to understand the dynamic aspect of access, access control and maintenance of access will be investigated. In particular, how local institutions, which are affected by external factors, shape the access control and maintenance of access will be surveyed.

Thirdly, for more applicable detailed study of commodity chain of NTFP, Ribot's (1998) "access mapping" method can be applied to understand how various cross-scale institutions regulate different actors' access to resources, markets, as well as other opportunities, which may contribute to actors' benefit. Here, access mapping consists of: 1) identifying the actors involved in the extraction, production, processing, exchange, transport, distribution, final sale, and end use of the commoditized NTFP in question, that is, identifying the different actors along the NTFP commodity chain; 2) evaluating income and profit at each level of (or among groups of actors within) the commodity chain through the analysis of prices and quantities of the goods handled by the different actors; 3) evaluating the distribution of income and profit within each group along the chain; and 4) using the distribution of these benefits among and within groups to trace out, or map, the mechanisms by which access to benefits is maintained and controlled. This method will provide two maps: one of profit distribution and one of mechanisms, structures, and processes at work in the control and maintenance of that distribution.

3.2 Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative case study approach to obtain an in-depth picture of NTFP commodity chain and its context, and quantitative methodology was applied to analyze the quantity and price of NTFP related to the differentiated social actors' benefits gained along with NTFP commodity chain. This section presents the methods of data collection and data analysis.

The process of data collection had been done by gathering both secondary and primary data. The secondary data provided a general context of this research. Hence, literatures and newspaper relevant to this research was investigated. The special attention for literatures had been drawn on historical record of local community and township as well as some previous PRA reports from the Provincial Forestry Department. In addition, literatures related to economic transformation at macro level were reviewed. Statistics of NTFP marketing activities were collected from provincial and township official document as well as local records. Moreover, materials and document from provincial and township promoted a well understanding of the political and socio-economic context, particularly the context of the Nuozhadu Nature Reserve and the history of the commodity chain of NTFP.

Regarding to primary data collection, PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) methods were used in gathering dynamic information on Huibinhe community and villagers' activities, such as decision making, planning and implementation process. The data gathered by PRA focused on the marketing and conservation activities in the local community. Particularly, participatory mapping was applied to map Huibinhe community NTFP gathering zone, the changes of that zone and forest resource distribution. In addition, this method was adopted to collect data of local commodity chain of NTFP.

Interviews were widely applied to collect primary data in multiple aspects during this study. Information was obtained through interviews with farmers and other key informants in order to analyze of relevant socioeconomic policies. This database served as a framework for studying the changes of traditional NTFP management and institutional arrangements over time as well as a tool to examine the information and insights obtained during semi-structured informal interviews and an analysis on institution. In addition, this method was employed to understand the differentiated

social actors' marketing activities, their benefit, their response to NTFP commodity chain.

Community leader, full members of village's committee, traditional village chief, village elders who could provide history of the village and forest products management and local NTFP production patterns are the key informants. Various actors who are involved in local NTFP trading, processing, transportation was interviewed directly for gathering the data of how they can get access to NTFP marketing and analysis their benefit. In addition, local government officials and some representatives of trading companies were interviewed in order to gain data of dynamics of institution in response to changing market, particularly the local government officials, whose responsibility is forest conservation or aiding local economic development.

Participatory observation and direct observation were also adopted during this study. Particularly I participated into the activities of extraction and marketing of NTFP as well as the community meeting. Furthermore, this method also had been used to understand the local institution, the practice of marketing and non-price-based mechanism in guiding economic performance. Through the action process, it also attempts to develop and test appropriate methodologies for future study. This requires collecting both the existing information and the dynamic information in a changing situation.

Regarding data analysis, based upon empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative data analysis were performed. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, means and frequencies were used, which mainly focused on describing market value and capacity as well as species of NTFP. Descriptive information was also presented qualitatively, especially that which deal with property arrangement, institutional arrangement, and local property and institutional practice. Maps and figures were used for illustration and explanation.

This research took approximately 11 months to accomplish the whole project. First, based upon my personal interests and advisors suggestions, Nuozhadu Nature Reserve was selected for studying NTFP management and marketing issues. In addition, the first trip, which had been carried out before thesis proposal proposed, offered me the general idea of research site. It also contributed to proposal development with empirical situation.

Second, to develop a strong theoretical foundation for this study, 5 months (from June to October 2001) was spent in Chiangmai University. It is composed of identification of current problem in research, then review the previous literatures related to NTFP research in China to understand the context. Further, by discussion with my advisors, relevant concept and theories was reviewed to promote the theoretical foundation for this study, and to form the conceptual framework for empirical research.

During November 2001 to January 2002, I conducted intensive fieldwork for tracing the commodity chain, particularly local community was focused for collection information and data on the empirical situation. To make insight into the trace of commodity chain, I pursue the direction of flowing NTFP commodity which harvested by Huibinhe villagers. It led to identify the actors' involvement in the commodity chain, and provided me the chance to interview those relevant actors. In this period, I conducted three times of field trip in order to well understand the local situation. Each trip promoted more understandings and information, which have been neglected in previous one. In fact, I start to write my thesis after the first trip conducted. Hence, three times of field trip indeed ensure me to have sufficient data.

Summary

This chapter introduces the conceptual framework of this study in order to link abstract theories with empirical situation. Then, methodology of this study is presented to transfer the conceptual framework into research action, which is composed of data collection and data analysis methods. The following chapter will concentrate on the historical development of NTFP management and marketing to present a context for this study.