Attempts of Recentralization of Nepal's Community Forestry

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Abstract

Nepal's community forestry is regarded as a milestone in decentralized forest management, several researchers agree on the livelihoods and environmental outcomes from the community forest, however, the outcomes in governance perspective is rarely questioned. Through the review of the literature, policy documents and decrees, and questionnaire survey in nine community forest user groups in western hills of Nepal; we demonstrate how recentralization is taking place in community forestry in lieu of decentralized policies and discuss their implications on limiting the role of local forest users in forest management. Recentralization through the lens of inventory requirements has been observed in community forestry through (i) the formulation of strategies and policies favorable to increase the role of forest bureaucrats in community forestry (ii) changing the use of technical knowledge patterns and requirements and (iii) increased bureaucratic power. The increased technical knowledge in the form of inventory based forest management planning is found to be the major step in curtailing the devolved rights and increasing the bureaucratic power. Formulation of strategies, guidelines, circulars and policy intervention create a favorable environment for the bureaucrats to exercise more power compared to the autonomy provided by Forest Act 1993. The highly influential upward accountability in community forestry thus questions the modality of decentralized forest management in Nepalese community forestry.

Key words: recentralization, bureaucracy, expert knowledge

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Introduction

The credit of initiating decentralized forest management goes to the failure of centralized forestry via forest nationalization in 1958. The nationalization of forest deprived the local households from the forest resources they had been enjoying. The nationalization of forest offered government the direct control over the forest which had previously been under private or customary communal ownership (Stewart 1986). Traditional rights of forest land, forest products were superseded and a permit had to be obtained from the Forest Department for any cutting be it be fuel-wood or timber so that the state could collect revenue from the forest (Stewart 1986) apart from holding power over forest resources. This step taken by Government proved to be evident in huge deforestation in the country. To add to it, the Himalayan Environment Degradation (THED) (Ives 1987) highlighted the fragility of Nepalese young fold mountains under severe anthropogenic threats. THED was fueled by the environmental movement and neo-Malthusian ideas of population overgrowth as the cause of apparent rapid forest degradation resulting in massive landslides and floods (Nightingale 2010) during the seventies era. It provided platform for various "participatory" policy and institutional innovations, of which community forestry (CF) is the most notable one (Agrawal 2001; Ojha et al. 2007). It was instrumental in catalyzing the formation of community forestry (Nightingale 2010), a decentralized forest management approaches as a response to problems associated with deforestation and forest degradation and rural poverty (Devkota 2010). It is claimed that more than 60 countries in the world are practicing decentralized natural resource management (Agrawal 2001) and it is taking place for various economic, social and ideological reasons (Larson, Ribot 2004).

In Nepal, decentralized forest management in the form of CF has made a history of more than four decades starting from Panchayat Forestry with the promulgation of Panchayat Forest Rules in 1978 and subsequent Community Forestry Program of 1980 (Ribot et al. 2006). Formation of Panchyat forest and Panchyat Protection Forest encouraged people's participation in forest conservation and management. In Panchayat Forest the Panchayat held the ownership over plantation or land ready for plantation (nationalization included all the land that was not cultivated irrespective of having trees in them) and Panchyat Protected Forest had ownership of existing forest which in this case as degraded. Thus the environmental crisis followed by

wider decentralization movement in the development field started sprouting during the eighties.

In 1993 with the enactment of Forest Act, Community Forestry became the priority forestry program of Nepal. The authority of forest management was handed over to the local community forest user groups (CFUG) with its twinned goals of providing resources for the poorest of the poor and conserving forest ecosystems, in particular trees (Acharya 2002; Nightingale 2006; Pokharel et al. 2007). The formation of community forests in the country transformed the relationship between the bureaucrats and the local forest-dependent communities, making the bureaucrats accountable to the users. However, strong recognition of local user's role in managing the forest was observed after enactment of The Forest Act 1993 and Forest Regulation 1995 which legitimizes the transfer of powers from the government is to the local community forest user groups. The Act describes a community forest user group as an autonomous institution that manages community forest and maintains rights to decide about forest resource utilization and to sell products and collect revenue. Section 25 (1) of the Forest Act states that 'The District Forest Officer may hand over any part of a national forest to a user group in the form of a community forest in the prescribed manner entitled to develop, conserve use and manage such forest, and sell and distribute the forest products by independently fixing their prices, according to an operational plan.'

However, in recent years, several authors (Faye 2015; Phelps et al. 2010; Ribot et al. 2006; Sahide et al. 2016; Schusser et al. 2015; Sunam et al. 2013) suspect that the forest bureaucracy has sought to resurrect power through various policy instruments in which limited opportunities exist for citizens to challenge and criticize such state-initiated policy decisions in the forestry sector. Community forestry has emerged as a means to reform power constellations with regard to forest governance, the implementation of community forestry program is rarely followed by genuine power devolution to local forest users (Maryudi 2012). Decentralized forest policy has been moderately successful in delivering resource-use rights to local people. At the same time, it is possible that decentralization leads to recentralization as the governments resist to increase upward accountability over forest resources (Sugimoto et al. 2014).

In this paper we explore the theoretical concepts of recentralization, and illustrate the concept by taking examples of policy reforms in Nepal and explain how the authority devolved to local communities is being seized back by the state.

Recentralization in theory

Decentralization in this context is defined here as the process of reorganizing or dispersing functions, powers, and human and financial resources away from the central government to lower levels (Agrawal, Ribot 1999; Sahide et al. 2016). It is the transfer of power over natural resources to the government appointees (de-concentration/administrative decentralization), or to local actors or institutions who are accountable to the population in their jurisdictions (democratic decentralization) (Agrawal, Ribot 1999; Sunam et al. 2013). The two main strategies central governments use to undermine the ability of local governments to make meaningful decisions are (1) by limiting the kinds of powers that are transferred, and (2) by choosing local institutions that serve an answer to central interests (Ribot et al. 2006). Hence, most decentralization reforms are either flawed in their design or encounter strong resistance from a variety of actors that erodes their effectiveness. If local governments always must seek approval from superiors before undertaking an action, their downward accountability and ability to respond are attenuated (Ribot et al. 2006)

Community forestry program of Nepal is viewed as a putative form of democratic decentralization that involves the transfer of the bundle of powers from the government to local community forest user groups (Sunam et al. 2013). The major motive behind decentralization is that the local institutions have better knowledge of local needs and when are provide abundant powers, they are more likely to serve the local purpose. Transfer of significant powers and ‘‘downward accountability’’ of local authorities are thus the central idea to decentralization (Agrawal, Ribot 1999). However; there are several examples of attempts of disrespecting the decentralization principles, reforms in many countries around the world are characterized by insufficient transfer of powers to local institutions, under tight central-government oversight (Ribot 2002), the devolution of power to local users did not happen (Schusser et al. 2013) i.e. attempts of recentralization are traced.

We postulate that recentralisation as the process of returning decision-making power to higher levels of bureaucracy (Sahide et al. 2016). It is the taking back of authority

already devolved either through rendering technical or increasing the monitoring requirement. In many instances forest bureaucracy has sought to resurrect power devolved to local through enforcement of various policy instruments (Agrawal, Ribot 1999; Gauld 2000; Larson, Ribot 2004; Ribot 2002; Ribot et al. 2006; Sahide et al. 2016; Sunam et al. 2013). Recentralization attempts are exemplified by increasing the technical domination in the decentralized forest. Ribot (2002) expresses amplified technical domination as a means of recentralization. Similarly, Faye (2015) explains how expert knowledge and technical dominance is becoming highly politicized promoting recentralization. The scientific forestry originated in 18th-century German forestry to introduce taxation systems is highly dominant forestry knowledge in colonial and neo-colonial states (Brown 1998; Vandergeest, Peluso 2006). Attempts to increase the control by bureaucrats and technocrats are reported in the recent studies (Ahlborg, Nightingale 2012; Giri, Ojha 2011; Green, Lund 2015; Rutt et al. 2015; Scheba, Mustalahti 2015). Lund (2015) and Nightingale (2010) explain how professional forestry science knowledge is limiting the role of local users in forest management decisions. Scientific forestry knowledge has not only created technocratic hegemony but has curtailed the authority delegated to the local users (Giri, Ojha 2011; Nightingale, Ojha 2013; Ojha 2006), thus, dominate policies and day to day forest management practices in the developing world. Ojha (2006) further argues that this process is creating 'techno-bureaucratic doxa' that makes the bureaucrats powerful by requiring the use of technically demanding science-based methods whilst the communities lose power over their participatory forest. Similarly, Fisher (1990) expresses that technical expertise is supporting politics of expertise over democratic politics. This apparently subtle but more serious and pervasive control over knowledge in the forestry sector has dis-empowered the common users and empowered a few forest professionals in various support agencies, even including a few trained FUG members (Dhital et al. 2003; Timsina, Paudel 2003).

Materials and Methods

The paper is based on the multiple sources of evidence using qualitative methods. It is based on a review of forest policies, guidelines, literature along with an intensive interview with CFUG executives of 9 CFUGs (27) and the District Forest Officials (9). A case study approach was taken and 9 CFUGs in a mid-hill district of Nepal were regarded as a case. The interviews focused on the knowledge of the CFOP

preparation, and problems encountered during its implementation. The Forest Act and other forest-related legislative documents were reviewed to trace the attempts of recentralization in community forestry. The findings are further substantiated and validated through stakeholders involved in forestry sector by sharing our finding during informal meetings and talks and the respondents expressed agreement with our findings.

We adopted narrative building for analyzing our data. Besides, the paper built on a review of recentralization in the forestry sector and accumulates authors' experience in the field especially in undertaking her Ph.D.fieldwork.

Results and Discussion

Policy discourses to increase scientification in community forestry

Several pieces of evidence can be traced on how forest bureaucrats tend to seize back the authority devolved to local communities through the handover of community forest in Nepal. Introduction of forest inventory guideline is one of the first steps in creating room for professional knowledge as the forest bureaucrats hold authority over preparation, implementation, and monitoring of technical forest management plans i.e. Community Forest Operational Plans (CFOP) (Paudel, Ojha 2007; Rutt et al. 2015; Toft et al. 2015). The Community forest inventory guideline prepared in 2004 acts as a means to enunciate techno-bureaucratic power within community forestry systems (Ojha 2013). Hence we collected and analysed the policy provisions that were recommended by the government in different time frame and found that the CF which were initially free from technical knowledge were in the later days bounded to incorporate professional knowledge with enactment of different policy requirements.

The table 1 basically focuses on three aspects of how the state is promoting scientific forestry as a means of recentralization; firstly on the formulation and strengthening the concepts of scientific forestry through inventory provisions. The Forest Act, 1993 offered CFUG as an autonomous institution, adhering to the provisions of Forest Act, Forest Regulation, 1995 insisted on simple management plans for the approval of handing over the forest management rights to the local communities. Hence, the first Community Forest Guideline was prepared in 1995 which too focused on the simple operational guideline without any technical specifications.

But gradually the community forests which were conserved since the beginning of the 80s had started producing good quality trees, then the government realized on the importance on scientific management of the forest resources and it was demonstrated in first amendment of the 1993 Forest Act which introduced inventory based forest management planning in community forests. This was further strengthened when the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation issued a circular to all the District Forest Offices (DFO) and CFUGs in 2000, which made mandatory provisions to CFUGs to prepare inventory based operational plans and renew the plans only after conducting inventory of the forest and prescribing harvests based on the forest inventory. So to channelize it, the government prepared Forest Inventory Guidelines, which was criticized for being non-consultative, complicated, technical and with language barrier i.e. it was published in English (which was difficult for the local communities to understand and translate it into action) (Ojha 2002). Since then, scientific forestry has gained lot of attention of forest bureaucracy who are strengthening the concepts through series of revisions of Community Forest Guidelines (3rd revision- 2014) and Inventory Guideline amendments (2 times). In addition, the inclusion of scientific forest management is often regarded as a means to achieve 'forestry for prosperity', as emphasized in Forest Policy 2015, Forest Sector Strategy (2016-2025). The extent of scientific forestry has now reached beyond an inventory based management planning which prescribed incremental harvesting (see Forest Inventory Guideline 2004) to silviculture based management (see Scientific Forest Management Guideline 2014). Thus, major activities to promote scientific forestry were through preparation and implementation of Community Forest Management Guideline (revised for forth time see Table1) and preparation and strong enforcement of inventory guideline was another important factor in scientification of participatory forestry in Nepal.

Secondly, the government is at different times devising mechanisms to impose their decisions regardless of the forest management plans as provisioned by different guidelines. The 'ban on green tree harvesting' and celebration of 'plant holiday' are the examples of how central government impose their decisions over the decentralized forestry. Strategic manipulation of higher authority orders from constitutional and legal bodies is important in recentralization (Sunam et al. 2013). For instance, a case was filed in the far western region for over-extraction of timber from community forestry however, the implication laid all over the forestry sector. Commission on

Investigation of *Abuse of Authority (CIAA)* issued circular to Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation to adjust the growing stock volume estimation. A circular issued in October 2012 strictly mentions the national average growing stock volume to be confined below 178 m^3/ha though the decision was approved by the cabinet meeting on 16th May 2011. The circular further mentions the annual increment should be maintained from 1.5% to 2% for slow growing species. This act is justified by as a check to manipulations of inventory by the forest bureaucrats where the 'control' of community user group's actions in community forestry is observed. In addition, the CFOP should explicitly mention the yield regulation and annual allowable cut (AAC) to be detailed mentioning which species, what stage, which location and how many trees to be harvested. These kinds of circulars and decree circulated from Department of Forest further scrutinize the decentralized principles and sneaks back the liberty given by Forest Act 1993. MoFSC is strategically utilizing these order to overlook public deliberation in the policy process and to justify a proposal for increasing the power of forest officials and in its own bureaucracy (Sunam et al. 2013).

Thirdly, the government is seeking support from the donors on strengthening the technical aspects of scientific forestry through funding and providing expert knowledge in scientific forestry. The red book funding and launch of mega forestry projects has initiated and strengthened the scientific forestry and increased the role of traditional colonial forestry in decentralized forestry. Donors allocated budget for Government of Nepal's Red Book funding in 2011 and launch of Multi-stakeholder Forestry Programme in 2011/12 which was one of the largest forestry projects at the time (though it suffered from lot of criticisms and had to quit the program before the timeframe) had strengthened scientific forest management as a means of climate change adaptation.

The major activities demonstrating recentralization attempts in Nepalese Community Forestry are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Major activities demonstrating recentralization attempts in Nepalese Community Forestry.

Timeline	What happened	Policy provisions
1993	Forest Act	Provided autonomy to CFUGs entity with authority to independently manage and use the forest according to an the agreed management plan
1995	Forest Regulation	Only simple management plans were required
1997	Government approving Operational Forest Management Plans	Timber oriented scientific management Never implemented due to lack of stakeholder consultation and
1995	Community Forest Guideline	Simple guideline without technical specifications
1999	First amendment of the 1993 Forest Act	Introduced inventory based management planning 25% of the CFUG income to be spent on forest management activities
1999	Ban on green felling (Nov 1999)	No trees could be felled even for meeting the subsistence needs
2000	Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) issued a circular to all DFOs as well as FUGs (Sept 2000)	The circular made it mandatory to conduct inventory while preparing and renewing the community forest operational plan.
2000	Forest Inventory Guidelines 2057 B.S	Abstract and difficult to understand
2000	Formulation of Forest Sector Policy	Technical forest management strengthened especially focusing on block forest management the scientific forest management
2003	CF Guideline revisions	A mandatory provision to include technical forestry in community forest guideline without incorporating local knowledge in the process and prescriptions are becoming more complicated with each revision
2001	Second amendment of Forest Act 1993 (February 2001)	CFUG required sharing 40% of its income generated from the sell of surplus forest products for commercial use. (But failed to amend due to opposition from the civil society, particularly the Federation of Community Forest Users in Nepal (FECOFUN))

Timeline	What happened	Policy provisions
2004	Revised Community Forest Inventory Guideline	Suffice the forest bureaucrats with technical knowledge on preparing and implementing technical forestry. Inventory process elaborated Sustained yield calculations based on forest condition
2008	CF Guideline (Revision)	Mandatory provision to at least invest 25% of the community forest income on forest development activities Inclusion of public audit provisions
2010	Decision to celebrate the year 2011 as 'plant holiday' (May 2010)	No timber could be harvested as government's commitment to UN Year forest as a step to decrease forest degradation and deforestation
2011	Plant Holiday	No timber harvest
2011	Donors allocating budget for GoN Red Book funding	Budget used for operationalizing the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) as stipulated in the Community Forest Guideline
2012	Timber harvesting allowed/ legalized	Massive harvesting of trees
2011/12	Launch of Multi-stakeholder Forestry Programme	Strengthening scientific forest management sufficed with Donor funded projects Donors promoted scientific forestry as a means of climate change mitigation strategy
2012	Commission on Investigation of *Abuse of Authority (CIAA)*	CIAA started an investigation on the timber scandals starting from Far Western Nepal. CIAA filed a case against 200 people for over-estimation of growing stock to justify overharvesting in collusion with traders and CFUG executive members. Department of Forest deputed staff to CIAA to support in investigation
2012	DoF issued circular to DFO for setting the maximum growing stock volume to 178 m^3ha^{-1} with 1.5%-2% annual increment	DFO allowed CF harvest assuming GS volume was 178 m^3ha^{-1}. No CFOPs exceeding this figure were approved by DFO during preparation and renewal of CFOP and the CFUGs had to bear the loss of not being able to extract forest products to its potential.
2012	GoN developed the vision of 'forestry for prosperity'	Piloted scientific forest management in Terai

Timeline	What happened	Policy provisions
2014	CF Guideline revision	Prescriptions increasingly technical and provisions of silvicultural prescription like thinning, pruning etc became mandatory
2014	Scientific Forest Management guideline prepared	Encouraging the number of SFMPs to be increased
2015	Community Forest Timber/ Firewood Collection and Selling Guideline 2071	Increased bureaucratic involvement in forest timber harvesting from marking the trees to final harvest Focused on 4D trees harvest
2015	Forest Policy	Scientific Forestry as a means of gaining prosperity ('Forest for Prosperity'). Generalized SFM into a blanket approach irrespective of the ecological zone, forest conditions, and focused management objectives
2016	Forestry Sector Strategy 2016	About 50% of Terai and Inner Terai forests and at least 25% of middle hills and mountain forests being sustainably/ scientifically management
2017	First National Silviculture Workshop	To strengthen the silviculture based forest management in community forestry

Increasing technical/bureaucratic requirement

The technical requirement has increased in the recent years as the CFOPs are becoming technically more complicated. CFOP preparation explicitly includes an inventory of forest resources and prescribed the amount of forest products to be harvested from the forest. CFOPs are technical documents containing identification of all users of a specific forest, forest resource assessment, and the formulation of forest management plan with goals, activities and utilization of the forest products i.e. biomass, volume and annual allowable harvest for five to ten years putting conservation of the forest as the topmost priority.

The inventory requirements emerged only after the DoF issued circular to DFO and CFUGs to included inventory based management plans i.e. CFOPs for formal handover and renewal of the CFUG's forest management rights in the year 2000. If we look at the trend (Table 1), we find the inventory based management planning has been strengthening time and often though not all attempts are successful. Though the provisions are strengthened, in practice it is found to be a mere desk

work rather than a result of proper inventory. Out of 5 cases in our study site, only 2 of them were inventoried and one of them being some decades back. Other CFOPs were prepared in reference to this CFOP and renewals were all either copying the major stuff or manipulating the inventory numbers according to the guiding circulars and decrees (Baral et al. 2017). The forest bureaucracy is not being able to provide sufficient technical expertise to the CFUGs in preparing and implementing the plans. This blurs the justification by the forest authorities' expressed concern over local communities' lack of forest management skills (Nightingale 2005; Ribot 2002).

Besides, the CFUGs have lost their autonomy and bureaucratic role has increased over timber harvest after the government issued a directive to control timber harvest called the 'Community Forest Product Collection and Trade Directive 2014' (GoN 2014) (Trade Directive hereafter). After the enactment of the directive, CFUGs are not solely allowed to harvest the timber even if they comply with the annual allowable cut stated in the CFOP but, the DFO has to be requested for support in timber harvesting from the forest. Hence, the Trade Directive has increased the reporting requirement where the CFUGs are required to submit following documents as a request for timber harvest. i) copy of meeting minute of General Assembly deciding on the necessity and demand of timber harvest ii) CFUGs annual progress report iii) Audit report, iv) request letter from CFUG addressing DFO to provide them support in harvesting timber and v) demand request of timber by the CFUG in accordance with the Trade Directive. The requirements mentioned in the Trade Directive are so detailed that it becomes almost impossible for the CFUGs to comply in absence of support from DFO staff.

Besides, the reporting requirement, the Trade Directive has increased the role of bureaucracy in timber harvest from community forest. The role of forest bureaucrat starts from the initial preparation to timber harvesting. The marking needs to be done by preparing blaze and marked with a CFUG hallmark (in case of hilly forest for internal consumption but if it is Terai or for commercial purpose both the CFUG and DFO hallmarks should be used) and the tree number. A harvesting register should be maintained with details of tree species, diameter and height of the tree to be harvest. The volume should be calculated and if the volume of the marked trees exceeds the allowed harvestable volume then the marked trees whose volume

exceeds should be cancelled. The formats are already provided to the CFUGs these formats cannot be solely filled by the CFUGs in absence of the forest bureaucrat. After everything is done according to the guidelines, the CFUG with support from forest technician submits the request to the Illaka/Sector Forest Office. The DFO after completing the monitoring and administrative requirements then grants permission for timber harvest. In cases of timber harvest for internal consumption, the Illka/Sector Forest Officer can grant the permissions. The CFUGs are allowed to harvest only the trees marked by the forest technicians and it should bear all the cost and responsibilities of harvesting. This way the bureaucratic involvement and power is increased through additional circulars and guidelines.

This provision has not only increased the dependency of user groups on government foresters due to lack of technical knowledge, sometimes has left the CFOP backlog and users are not allowed to benefit from the community forestry. This resonates with the arguments made by Faye (2015) and Ribot et al. (2010) who regard, scientific management plans as instruments to block the transfer of power rather than to 'sustain' the forest cover as claimed by the government. Principally CFUGs can determine on the harvesting the forest products setting a price on the products and receive and distribute income and use the revenue for community development activities (Acharya 2002; Chhetri et al. 2012; Lund et al. 2014; Ojha 2002; Ojha et al. 2009). Autonomy is the main thrust of community forestry is to provide management authority to the users and capacitate them to enhance the understanding of democratic principles (Larson, Ribot 2004). Thus, these provisions are increasing the upward accountability of the CFUGs.

Externally imposed agendas and shift in knowledge use

Community forestry has been in the interest of donors since the initial stage. The scientific knowledge that community forestry now adopts, originates from European scientific forestry traditions (Scott 1998). In this forestry realm, certain forms and phenomenon of knowledge application are regarded important for measurement and calculation. Colonial origin of scientific forestry emphasize the emergence and spread of a set of common practices that are claimed to make them legible, predictable and productive (Vandergeest, Peluso 2006). This form of knowledge flourished over the developing world during the colonial period (Larson, Ribot 2007) and this legacy of the colonial era is continuously shaping the forest governance in

Global South (Leipold 2014). Hence it has become a universal forest management principle applied all over the world in all types of forest. This can be explained by the provision of inventory in community forestry. This provision has shifted the knowledge paradigm from local management to technical scientific management. Expert knowledge has now become mandatory rather than a matter of choice to the users (Giri, Ojha 2011; Ojha 2002). Several researchers agree that increased techno-bureaucratic control in participatory forestry as a means of recentralization (Faye 2015; Rutt et al. 2015; Toft et al. 2015). These plans are more generalized in nature and are similar in content (Bhattacharya, Basnyat 2007) and the management prescriptions are not contexted specific (Hajjar et al. 2013). The reason for this is continued dominance of the role of forest science and state forestry administration in forest policy-making and weak links between civil society and elected political leaders in the legislature and the government (Ojha et al. 2007). This can be illustrated by a case in 5 community forestry user groups in the study site. The review and CFOP and interview with the CFUG executives demonstrate that out of 5 CFUGs only 2 of them were inventoried almost a decade back and rest of the CFOPs are prepared with reference from them (Baral et al. 2017). Similarly, the inventory results in the CFOPs were simply created and manipulated to adjust the administrative requirements (Baral et al. 2017). The analysis of growing stock volume revealed that the growing stock volume in consecutive plans was similar, this can be understood and explained as the annual harvest was only the percentage of amount that actually accumulated in the forest, however, when the national average growing stock volume (c.f. above) the growing stock volume significantly dropped from the original plan. Apart from the DoF having the poor technical capacity to prepare the plans, the plans that are supposed to govern the overall management of the forest are rarely referred to in carrying out the forest operations (Nightingale 2005; Rutt et al. 2015; Toft et al. 2015). The applicability and relevance of the documents remain questionable as local people depend on their knowledge to manage them as the aspirations of local people were not considered or attempt to reconcile their livelihoods needs restricted community forestry to achieve the intended success (Bampton et al. 2007).

Hence, the modern scientific forestry knowledge is regarded as co-production of science and politics in regaining control by the state is important to explore especially in the developing countries (Mathews 2011).

Conclusion

The paper concludes that recentralization is actually happening within the decentralized forest management in Nepal. The state is recentralizing the forestry through (i) increased bureaucratic power (ii) changing the knowledge patterns and (iii) through the formulation of small-scale strategies and policies favorable to increase the role of forest bureaucrats in community forestry.

Recentralization has been observed in community forestry through the increased technical knowledge in the form of inventory based forest management planning. Silviculture based forest management prescription is found to be the major step in curtailing the rights of the users and increasing the bureaucratic power. Formulation of strategies, guidelines, circulars and policy intervention create a favorable environment for the bureaucrats to exercise more power compared to the autonomy provided by Forest Act 1993. The highly influential upward accountability in community forestry thus questions the modality of decentralized forest management in Nepalese community forestry. These actions of bureaucrats are regarded as a strategy to control communities from a distance as the state seeks to use varieties of strategies to obstruct decentralization (Sahide et al. 2016).

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