

Economic Status and Capital Management of Communities with Transnational Families in Northeast Thailand¹

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Abstract

This article aims to present the economic status and capital management of communities in Thailand's Northeast provinces of Khon Kaen and Udon Thani, where large numbers of transnational families live. A mixed research method was used. For the qualitative method, data were obtained from in-depth interviews with 30 key informants consisting of 20 representatives from transnational families and 10 experts. For the quantitative method, structured interviews were used to collect data from the sample group, who are citizens or representatives of households in the communities where 400 transnational families live. The study found that the economic status of most of the families is similar, with an average annual income of between 100,001 and 500,000 baht. Most transnational families are able to improve their economic status through remittances and support from foreign husbands, which contribute to accumulation of capital that includes money, land, and investments in various businesses. They are also able to enhance their social status in terms of becoming more accepted and playing a greater role in the community. Overall, capital management of these communities has a high level of community capital management, accounting for 54.25 percent, with physical capital being managed the most, followed by social, cultural, local knowledge and wisdom, economic, and natural capital, respectively.

Keywords: transnational family, economic status, capital management, community

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, intercultural marriages in Thailand have continued to increase, especially those between Thai women and foreign men in the Northeast. This change is considered a new value in building a family (Tosakul, 2010), which affects the communities and the family system in Isan society in terms of way of life, family and community economy, changes in local language and culture, governing patterns, and the relationship between place of origin and destination. Such changes have brought about a new family pattern called the “transnational family,” which has an impact on the family structure of Isan and Thai society, as this pattern is more complex than those in the past. Relationships between married couples from different cultures living in different areas and between married couples and their families (Thinkham, 2009) are maintained through communication technology, telecommunications systems, and air transport (Faist, 2000; Mazzucato et al., 2015).

Marriage registration data from the national Registration Administration Office, in which only marriages between Thais and foreigners between 2012 and 2016 were selected, revealed that a total of 37,900 Westerners registered marriages with Thais (Phuengsamran et al., 2018). In addition, a survey of marriage registration statistics between Thai women and foreigners in Khon Kaen and Udon Thani provinces from 2010 to 2020 found that there were 1,534 registrations in Khon Kaen and 1,524 in Udon Thani, which reflect the rise of new family patterns that are culturally diverse (Suppatkul, 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to organize knowledge and research on transnational families in Isan society to manage it at the community level and create guidelines for living together in a multicultural society. The majority of previous research focused on transnational families in terms of marriage decisions, adjustment, and how married couples maintain their relationships. These situations can be seen among many Thai women with foreign husbands who are able to maintain relationships with families in their hometowns (Lapanun, 2019; Suksomboon, 2008;

Suppatkul, 2018; Suppatkul, 2020). They show the nature of “transnational families” that maintain social relations with people both in their place of origin and destination (Mahler, 1998).

This study’s literature review indicates that there is still a gap in research on the relationship between transnational families and general families in the context of communities where transnational families live. Therefore, it aims to understand how families in the communities with transnational families in Khon Kaen and Udon Thani provinces attain economic status, how family and community capital are managed, and how people initiate cooperation with each other. The results of the study can be used to create a policy proposal to develop social mechanisms that facilitate economic expansion and capital management of such communities and facilitate appropriate cooperation with relevant agencies.

Literature Review

This article uses the concept of the transnational family together with the concept of capital as the framework for analyzing and explaining the economic status and capital management of communities where transnational families live, as well as understanding the characteristics of transnational families in relation to capital management of the community. The concept of the transnational family describes family characteristics which are shaped by social, economic, political, and cultural changes developed over a long period of time. It is often used in the context of international marriage or intercultural marriage of people living in different areas to describe how they maintain family relationships both between the married couple and between the married couple and their family of origin or other relatives (Thinkham, 2009). The concept is related to the experience of cross-border migration and differences in language, culture, society, or religious background (Cohen, 2007). Members of transnational families might not live together; however, they are able to create and maintain a sense of family in what is known as “familyhood,” even if they reside in different

countries (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). Because of cultural differences, married couples must work together to manage their relationship in new ways (Beck-Gernsheim, 2007). This study defines a transnational family as “a transnational couple” who speak different languages and come from different backgrounds, cultures, and societies, and are related to each other by marriage or by creating a family together. They are either together or not together, but the members still feel whole as a family.

The concept of capital is based on the economic study of factors for production or human-made resources which are used in conjunction with other factors to lead to the production of various goods and services, including land, labor, and entrepreneurs. Karl Marx referred to capital as a mode in which assets are changed or “transformed” into production processes, such as investment and labor, which then create surplus value and profit (Kaeothep and Hinwiman, 2008). Capital is not a single thing, but a production relationship that consists of manpower, technology, machines, materials, money, and management/knowledge (Iamwara, 2006; Kaeothep and Hinwiman, 2008).

Capital is therefore both a resource and knowledge that can be exploited either in the form of accumulated labor that becomes an object, an individual, or a group of people combined to gain control of social power (Bourdieu, 1997; Natsupa, 2001; Thongsawang and Rehbein, 2023). Capital also serves as livelihood assets in terms of tools for understanding the way of life and human adaptation for survival (DFID, 1999).

The study of capital management divided capital into six forms: (1) utilization of skills, knowledge, and expertise to help with various activities or solve diverse problems in the community, including transfer of culture, knowledge, and application of information in agricultural production, and promotion of activities and knowledge to generate income and promotion of English usage (DFID, 1999); (2) economic capital in the form of money or various assets that can be clearly calculated, identified (Bourdieu, 1997), and utilized to achieve livelihood goals (DFID, 1999), which are measured by the ability of people in the community to donate money or tools needed to organize community

activities, the creation of a group for financial management involving savings, loans, and the group’s account management; (3) social capital, which consists of networks, norms, trusts (Putnam, 1994), group membership under rules and controls (Narayan and Pritchett, 1997; DFID, 1999), cognition, and recognition (Bourdieu, 1997), with an emphasis on the study of kinship relationships, assistance and group establishment in the community, participation in activities as well as acceptance and trust of community members; (4) cultural capital, which refers to the product of ways of thinking, value systems, and ideologies to express the human spirit and adaptation to society and nature (Jantornnamchu, 2003; Bourdieu, 1997), studied from practices, conservation, transfer of community traditions and rituals, and provision of space for expressing multiculturalism; (5) physical capital, which includes infrastructure necessary for living, such as transportation, stable housing, clean water, energy, and access to information (DFID, 1999); (6) natural capital, consisting of resources such as soil, water, air, forests, and biodiversity that support human livelihoods (DFID, 1999). The study of all forms of capital focuses on examining the utilization of infrastructure and the use of resources available in the community for the livelihood of households and the communities where transnational families live.

Capital management of these communities is related to many factors, one of the most significant of which is the migration of Thai women and the arrival of foreigners. These factors have contributed to changes in rural areas or communities of origin as more capital flows in both from remittances and investments, resulting in an expansion of the community’s economy as well as changes in lifestyles that are increasingly similar to those in urban areas (Sutiyayamani, 2015; Parisutthiwutphon, 2003; Onkoet, 2007; Samat, 2012). Changes caused by intercultural marriages reflect the rising socio-economic status of the woman’s family members who receive remittances from her to fulfil a daughter’s duty – a cultural obligation and a willingness to sacrifice for the family (Jampaklay, Khamkhom, Korinek, Kittisuksathit, Ko Ko, Sok, and Prum, 2022). Such changes also include increased participation

in household decision making (Bélanger et al., 2010; Srisombat, 2022) and the emergence of “*mia farang*,” or wives of foreigners who are economically well off and have ways of consumption and lifestyles different from those of other villagers (Lapanun, 2012; 2013). This literature review thus leads to the hypothesis that in the communities where transnational families live, access to capital and opportunities to develop and change are related to the arrival of foreigners, which may affect the capital management there.

Research Methodology

study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Khon Kaen University on 28 May 2021, as project number HE643061. It began with qualitative research to examine the economic status and capital management of households and communities where transnational families live. Data were collected from document review, guided in-depth interviews, and non-participant observation. Thirty key informants were selected by purposive and snowball sampling (Cresswell, 2013). They were divided into two groups: (1) 20 household-level informants who represent transnational family members and play a role in managing household and community capital, and (2) 10 knowledgeable persons serving as community leaders, such as village health volunteers, local wisdom experts, or those who have a role in managing the community capital and can provide the context, environment, and information on the increase in the number of transnational families and management of community capital. The data obtained in these ways were then analyzed using content analysis and presented in a descriptive analysis.

As for the quantitative method, surveys of economic data and capital management of households and the communities with transnational families were used. A structured interview schedule was also used with the sample group of 400 participants consisting of individuals or family representatives in these communities. Data were processed and analyzed by uni-variate analysis using descriptive

statistics including percentage, frequency, mean, standard deviation, along with maximum and minimum values.

The research area covered Khon Kaen and Udon Thani provinces in the northeastern region of Thailand, home to the second and third largest proportion of transnational family residences in the country after Nakhon Ratchasima province. These provinces have had considerable infrastructure development, economic growth, and expansion of urbanization. In addition, they have the potential to accommodate the arrival of multinational families and capital movement which reflects changes in the economic status of the families and communities and serves as a model for capital management of communities where transnational families live under cultural differences.

Results

The results of this study are divided into three parts: 1) community characteristics, 2) economic status, and 3) capital management of these communities.

Characteristics of Communities with Transnational Families

Understanding the characteristics of the communities with transnational families serves as a basis for analyzing transnational family formation, including the relationships of household members that bring about changes in economic status, the environmental context of the community, and the ability to manage family and community capital linked to development in the area. These changes eventually bring about infrastructure changes that allow the community to expand and increasingly become like an urban society that is able to accommodate the arrival of foreigners and multinational families (Laoaun, 2010; Unthaya, 2014; Kunnithichai, 2009).

Khon Kaen province, as the center of the Northeast, has had continuous infrastructure development. Additionally, the province also serves as the center of educational and technological institutions. There are numerous public utility systems and facilities, such as public health

services, department stores, and investment and trading centers. Recently, there has been an attempt to develop the province into a smart city and a MICE city (one that sponsors meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) by promoting innovation and technology (Khon Kaen Provincial Office, 2021). The expansion of Khon Kaen city, which has made living conditions more convenient for many people, has led to an increase in the number of transnational families. In the context of the communities studied, it was found that marriages between Thai women and foreign men started around 1996. As a knowledgeable person in the community said, “it has been around for a long time. It was so long ago, that the first person to marry a foreigner now has children who are all grown up. Looking back, it’s been probably 25 years” (Buapan [Pseudonym], 2021). The presence of a foreigner in the community reflects a multicultural society that affects ideology, values, and relationships between people in the society (Lapanun and Thompson, 2018).

In the case of Udon Thani province, the rise of transnational families has been linked to the Vietnam War era, when the Thai Royal Air Force agreed to allow the U.S. Air Force to use its bases. Since 1964 (Pattha, 2007), foreigners have been coming to live and interact with people in the community, leading to changes, such as the construction of nightclubs and infrastructure that facilitate transportation, industry, tourism, and cultural exchanges as well as cross-cultural marriages between Thai women and foreign men. The establishment of transnational families became obvious in 1992, when foreign men moved in to live with their Thai wives, causing the community to feel increasingly enthusiastic about learning languages and working and living with foreigners. It was found that Thai women marrying foreigners were from both rural and urban areas and their levels of education ranged from basic to high levels. Therefore, the ability to communicate, adapt, and survive as well as succeed in married life has varied according to each person’s background.

The expansion of infrastructure is a factor facilitating the lives of transnational families. At the same time, having multinational families

living in the community attracts more investments to the community and surrounding areas. Numerous businesses have emerged, such as homestays, foreign restaurants, clinics, internet cafes, and coffee shops. These factors have greatly affected the capital and resources of the community in ways such as an increase in land prices, the ability to spend more, changes in consumption values, and a form of social relationship that requires more privacy than before. Consequently, the lifestyle of people in the community has clearly shifted to one that is very urban (Sesthakun, 2001). This is considered a unique characteristic of the community that has an influence on capital management of family and the community in which transnational families live.

Economic Status of Families in the Communities with Transnational Families

Most transnational families have accumulated capital together. Thai women often receive financial support from their foreign husbands in the form of money, land, a house, and investment in businesses such as restaurants in the country of origin. This has allowed them to gain more access to capital in various fields. After their financial situations improved, they were able to support their family members through remittances, fees (collected from rentals), or accumulation of farming land to generate income.

At the same time, the social status of transnational families improves when they gain more acceptance from people in the community. They play an important role in various community activities, particularly as economic capital contributors who donate money or provide scholarships to children or youth. In other words, they create prosperity for the community, as said by a woman married to a foreigner:

The community is much better than before. When someone wants us to help, if we can, we do it. For example, we have a tractor and a loader at home. If there is a temple fair or community event that wants to use them, we provide them. We send our driver to help them right away, or if there is a merit-making event, we can help host it, or give some

scholarships to students in the community. I've helped so much that I got a certificate of appreciation. I've also built bathrooms for schools and temples. If I didn't have a foreign husband, how would I be able to help like this? So, I see that having a foreigner husband does not only make my life better, but our family and our community also benefit from this, too (Mali [Pseudonym], 2021).

In these ways the change in the economic status of Thai women with foreign husbands has allowed them to provide financial support in a variety of ways to families and communities in their country of origin. As was mentioned, it is the daughter's duty to sacrifice for the family (Jampaklay et al., 2022), and this cultural value becomes an important condition that allows the community to manage capital through the participation of transnational families.

When considering the overall picture, households in the communities with transnational families in Khon Kaen and Udon Thani have a relatively similar economic status. Most households have an average annual income of between 100,001 and 500,000 baht, with the highest non-agricultural income being 3,600,000 baht, part of which comes from remittances. The highest annual income from the agricultural sector is 969,000 baht while the average annual total expenditure is between 100,001 and 500,000 baht. The average amount of total debt is between 50,001 and 250,000 baht, which includes debt from the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, and debt from daily expenses. These figures reflect changes in the socio-economic status of the families and communities linked to population growth and the presence of transnational families in the area (Tosakul, 2010; Suksomboon, 2008).

Capital Management of the Communities where Transnational Families Live

The study found that each community changed in its ability to manage capital after a transnational family joined that community. That is, under social and cultural diversity, having economic abilities that contribute

to community development, such as infrastructure, transportation, shops, residences, and tourist attractions to accommodate foreigners or respond to consumption needs of multinational families is an important factor that requires the community to manage capital and find ways to live together appropriately. As one of the informants stated,

When foreigners come to live here, our community will definitely change, whether in terms of lifestyle or the food we eat. Some of their habits are compatible with those of the community. Some aren't. This is what the foreigner and the community need to work out together to adjust to each other (Jamrus [Pseudonym], 2021).

The duty of managing community capital management falls to both traditional and multinational families. In the context of Khon Kaen and Udon Thani, communities manage capital by encouraging people to participate in activities such as merit-making events, village committee meetings, donations, or other activities that give members the opportunity to form groups according to each person's ability. Such activities include those in which they work together to maintain peace and order in the community, such as a campaign to prevent dengue fever or theft, or one on waste separation in the households. These activities help strengthen the community and enable it to adapt to a becoming a modern society, while preserving its traditional culture. Anong, a village volunteer explained,

Our community is very strong. We have many activities. On Mother's Day and Father's Day, people in the community will come out to help sweep the streets, clean houses, and make merit together. Whenever we're invited to join activities, give scholarships to students, or offer money to the temples, we always get help from the wives of *Farangs* (Anong [Pseudonym], 2021).

Not only are Thai women involved in the community's activities, but foreigners also participate in various activities and adjust to getting

along with other members of the community, as told by Man (pseudonym), a man from Udon Thani who has a foreign son-in-law,

Even a foreigner doesn't want to live alone. He also wants to get to know us, wants to be friendly with people in the community. Whenever we had a meal or celebration in the community, I invited him and he would come (Man [Pseudonym], 2021).

The community also places importance on strengthening the relationship between traditional and transnational families through cultural diversity, which strengthens the entire community. This is consistent with the quantitative analysis results indicating that overall, the majority of respondents agreed that their community had a high level of capital management, accounting for 54.25 percent, followed by a medium and low level, accounting for 37.25 percent and 8.50 percent, respectively. It is noteworthy that the community in Khon Kaen had a higher proportion of capital management than the one in Udon Thani, represented by 60.00 and 48.78 percent, respectively, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Percentage of respondents classified according to the overall capital management of the communities with transnational families.

Management of capital and resources in the community	Udon Thani	Khon Kaen	Overall
High (157 points or more)	48.78	60.00	54.25
Medium (101-156 points)	40.49	33.85	37.25
Low (less than 100 points)	10.73	6.15	8.50
Total	100.00 (205)	100.00 (195)	100.00 (400)
Mean	147.74	159.20	153.33
S.D.	36.06	34.14	35.56
Maximum	204.00	212.00	212.00
Minimum	43.00	43.00	43.00

When considering community capital management from the percentage of average to full score in order to compare community capital management in each aspect, it showed that capital management has been found the most on physical capital and social capital with similar proportions, representing 76.05 percent and 75.50 percent, respectively, while economic capital management received only 67.77 percent. Natural capital was managed the least, accounting 64.43 percent, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Percentage of average to full score classified according to the capital management of the communities with transnational families.

Capital management of the communities	Mean	S.D.	Maximum	Minimum	Full score	Percentage of average to full score
Physical capital	30.42	7.75	40.00	8.00	40.00	76.05
Social capital	22.65	6.30	30.00	6.00	30.00	75.50
Cultural capital	25.64	6.24	35.00	7.00	35.00	73.26
Knowledge and local wisdom	24.86	7.89	35.00	7.00	35.00	71.03
Economic capital	27.11	7.93	40.00	8.00	40.00	67.77
Natural capital	22.55	9.03	35.00	7.00	35.00	64.43

The results of the study of capital management in the communities with transnational families can be presented according to the forms of capital management is described below.

1. Knowledge and local wisdom capital management

The communities in Khon Kaen and Udon Thani provinces have managed this type of capital through transfer of knowledge by local wisdom experts in the community, mentors, or parents who teach or provide knowledge to the younger generations. What they teach includes basketry skills, treatment or use of herbal medicine, or activities for children to learn about and practice community beliefs and traditions. As one of the informants explained,

We've always had training activities in the village to provide knowledge about basketry. I've usually joined them because I'm the group president. The participants are all villagers. Once they're skilled in basketry, they can make their own products at their homes and sell them. They can become sellers themselves or they can ask the basketry group in the village to sell for them (Phanom [Pseudonym], 2021).

This is true in the context of transnational families where Thai women provide information and knowledge about Isan society, culture, religious ceremonies, and local customs to foreign husbands as well as their children and grandchildren. A Thai woman married to a foreigner said,

I'll tell him, for example, if we have a merit-making event or if some people come to collect money, I'll let him know why they are doing this, and what the money they collect is used for. I tell him everything. One time he saw me putting some money in an envelope for an ordination ceremony and a wedding. He asked why I had to do that, so I explained it to him (Noi [Pseudonym], 2021).

These practices are consistent with the results of the quantitative study, which found that overall, the community had a high level of knowledge and local wisdom capital management, especially in promoting the use of skills, knowledge, and expertise to improve the community. Transfer of knowledge and wisdom from generation to generation has been actively encouraged both in Khon Kaen and Udon Thani provinces.

2. Economic capital management

Economic capital management in the transnational communities in the two provinces is similar. The community in Khon Kaen has various forms of financial groups, such as the savings, cremation, million-dollar fund group, etc. People in the community can become members and participate in monitoring the work of the group committee

which emphasizes clear, transparent, systematic, and auditable management. There is group accounting, making capital management systematic, starting from the process from membership application and benefit allocation to loan processing, as the informant described about the management of the community's economic capital,

The community's economy is strong and well organized. It also has a good leader and activities that bring people in the community together. For example, the cremation group has been around for a long time. I've been a member for almost 20 years and we've been doing it continuously (Phin [Pseudonym], 2021).

Similar to the community in Udon Thani province, the one in Khon Kaen places importance on group formation to manage economic capital because of strong community leaders, members of the community committee, and the ability to accumulate capital and manage it for the maximum benefits of people in the community under the perception of participation in decision making, and the activities they carry out together. This is in accord with the results of the quantitative study, which found that most communities had a high level of economic capital management through financial integration, donation of property for public benefits, donation of necessary equipment or tools to the community, etc.

Participation of transnational families in managing economic capital was primarily in the form of donations of property or money for activities, improving the community, and promoting potential members such as children, youth, or those lacking opportunities. When the community needs financial support, Thai women married to foreign men and their families will give full support. Noi (pseudonym), for example, would give financial support and donations of things like drinking water during the COVID-19 testing activities even though she did not directly take part because she was a restaurant owner and had to take care of customers. Similarly, Noi's husband lived in the community, but when there were merit-making events or celebrations, he would not take part

as he could not speak Thai and was not familiar with the people in the community. As a result, his contributions to economic capital management were mainly in the form of donations (Noi [Pseudonym], 2021).

However, the interviews indicate that although Thai women married to foreign men can provide good financial support to the community, such support comes from the community's expectation that transnational families have to donate more money to their activities than others in the community.

3. Social capital management

This kind of capital strengthens the community through building good relationships and dependency between people in the community. Nowadays, people are living further away or are separated from each other even though they still maintain strong kinship relationships. However, living conditions and values that changed due to urbanization have contributed to changes in the relationship of people in the community. As one informant said,

There are still people coming to help each other, but most of them are more like close relatives. My sister-in-law went to work in Taiwan. She was looking for Thai people to work abroad. She came and took people here with her. We support each other like this. As for other people in the community, if there are events in the community, they still go and help. Whether it's an ordination ceremony or a wedding, everyone goes to help. But in ordinary times, more people are living separately (Decha [Pseudonym], 2021).

When it comes to the role of transnational families in managing social capital, it was found that they are mostly accepted by people in the community once they are invited to participate in activities since they can provide financial support for these events. In addition, having parents or relatives who are important people or are accepted in the community, holding the positions such as village headman, village health volunteer, village headman's assistant, or local sage, allows transnational families to participate in managing the social capital of their communities

through a network of family members. As Nam (pseudonym) said, she herself is accepted and trusted by people in the community because her father is an elder there; people respect him as a temple assistant (Thai: *makkatayok*). This role has made Nam's father well known and familiar to people in the community, and that familiarity has also passed down to her as well. When various problems arise, Nam's father will act as a consultant and find a solution (Nam [Pseudonym], 2021), which is another form of participation in managing the community's social capital.

The communities both in Khon Kaen and Udon Thani manage social capital through the formation of formal and informal groups. Members can join the group and have activities together under the group's rules. This is considered capital management that allows people in the community to establish good relationships with each other. This is consistent with the results of the quantitative study which found that, overall, the community had a high level of social capital management through giving importance to relationships of relatives and friends and building member cooperation to deal with various community problems. It reflects the role as stakeholders in jointly managing community capital, which is consistent with the study of An and Phuong (2021), indicating that social networks and trust are considered important dimensions of social capital.

4. Cultural capital management

The community studied in Khon Kaen province places importance on carrying out activities according to the traditions and beliefs of the people there. It also provides opportunities for people of all ages to participate in activities, such as donating money and things such as stationery and sports equipment and dedicating themselves to preserving the community's cultural traditions. In addition, the community provides sectors like groups, schools, and temples opportunities to do activities together. This has contributed to a more unified community, and it also helps pass on key values, beliefs, and cultural traditions to future generations through socialization of family, educational, and religious institutions. Similarly, the cultural capital

management of the community in Udon Thani places importance on preserving cultural traditions by continuously organizing related activities with the participation of both traditional and multinational families.

One of the community leaders said, “When there is a merit-making event in our village, every family comes. If the children are busy, they’ll have their parents come. If parents are busy, their children come. The people of this village are very involved” (Phanom [Pseudonym], 2021).

Transnational families in both Khon Kaen and Udon Thani are involved in managing community capital in a similar way, namely by participating in various merit-making events, such as making merit on important Buddhist days, such as the beginning and ending of Buddhist Lent, *Kathin*, as well as making donations to support Buddhist institutions or activities according to national and community traditions and culture.

At the same time, Thai women are responsible for passing on the knowledge and importance of the community’s cultural traditions to people in the family, including children, grandchildren, and foreign husbands. In the case of Saen (pseudonym), she often has conversations with her foreign husband, especially about the traditions, culture, and values of Thai society that give importance to repaying the favor of parents and having to meet or communicate with relatives or even people in the community when there are activities or traditions in the community. As she stated:

Farangs will adapt to Thai traditions. My husband has to adjust to me, and I have to tell him about our traditions, customs, and culture as well. For example, why Thais have to take care of their parents, why they have to give them money. I told him that if he really loves me, he must understand why I have to take care of my parents. If he loves me and wants to stay with me, he has to accept this, too (Saen [Pseudonym], 2021).

It can be seen that most transnational families are involved in managing the cultural capital of their communities through educating family members and foreign husbands as well as participating in traditional activities of the community, which is linked to the family’s

way of living and conditions of cultural differences with foreign husbands. This is consistent with the results of the quantitative study indicating that the communities have a high level of cultural capital management, especially in terms of encouraging that merit-making ceremonies or traditional practices, which helps the community to preserve cultural traditions along with building strength and unity of people in the community.

5. Physical capital management

This is a form of capital management to promote conveniences in daily life and to respond to production needs, access to public health services, and utilization of infrastructure development with the focus on thorough and adequate access to electricity and water supplies both in the community and agricultural areas as well as a transportation system that is convenient and safe. In Udon Thani specifically, road safety has been managed by educating both Thais and foreigners in the community about safe driving practices, rules, and speed limits. The community also supports the Internet network within the community so that people can communicate with each other and access information easily and quickly. This is considered capital management that also helps develop the community’s human capital. The development of the community’s physical capital is partly the result of transnational families having various experiences living in modern Western countries, which are adopted and adjusted to be consistent with the way of life in Thailand (Kaewwongyai, Lapanun, and Suppatkul, 2021).

These activities are consistent with the results of the quantitative study indicating that the community had a high level of capital management, especially in terms of electricity, water supplies, and roads. Moreover, the community’s public health care is well-managed. In this regard, the informant reflected on the success of physical capital management through the following statement:

Life is very convenient here, the roads are very good. When I first brought my husband here, fortunately, the roads were already in good condition. He saw my living conditions, and he felt okay. When it came time to decide to live here, it wasn’t very difficult (Mali [Pseudonym], 2021).

The participation of transnational families in managing physical capital in both Udon Thani and Khon Kaen was found to be mostly in the form of financial donations rather than exerting effort or being the main participant in developing the physical capital of the community. They also perform duties of monitoring, maintaining order in the community, reporting community problems to community leaders, and jointly planning on how to cope with such problems. The study also found a pattern of participation by transnational families through mechanical support for road repairs, multi-purpose buildings, or public places in the community. As example is Dao (pseudonym), a Thai woman married to a foreign man who has good economic status. She talked about participation in managing community capital; in addition to helping with the budget and donation, she also supplied tractors and backhoes because she has these machines and thought they would be beneficial in helping reduce the community's budget (Dao [Pseudonym], 2021).

It can be seen that transnational families play a greater role in managing physical capital through financial donations than through participation in activities. Since foreign husbands tend to have limited communication with people in the community and because of cultural differences, such factors cause people to live separately or if the foreigners want to participate in community activities, it is mostly in the form of the cooperation by the wife, who is a member of the community.

The results of the above study are consistent with the results of the quantitative study. In terms of participation in physical capital management, traditional families play a greater role and participate more in infrastructure development in the form of labor than members of transnational families who mostly provide support in the form of money.

6. Natural capital management

The community in Khon Kaen has systematically managed its natural capital to meet its people's needs, especially in terms of water supplies. There is support for drilling wells for household consumption and for off-season agriculture together with water usage from the community's public water sources. There is a balance between nature

and livelihood by encouraging people in the community to jointly preserve and use the community forest under a mutual agreement as told by community leaders:

The community helps preserve the community's forest. People can go there and collect what is in the forest for a living. Also, when there is construction, the community committee and members will discuss [whether people can take the wood that is left]. If they agree, they can take it, but there will be some expense depending on the agreement, or if someone wants to buy the wood, we will be called for a meeting. If the committee and villagers agree, the wood can be sold and the money from selling it will be kept as part of the central budget (Damrong [Pseudonym], 2021).

This is also similar to the community in Udon Thani where leaders and community members work together to care for natural resources and the environment. As a result, community forest conservation occurs along with livelihoods and it is a way to promote jobs through community tourism activities. This is consistent with the results of the quantitative study which showed that the community had a high level of capital management in terms of planning for natural resource and environmental management and community forest conservation which is capital management found in both the Udon Thani and Khon Kaen communities.

When it comes to the participation of transnational families in managing the natural resources and environment, it was found that most have never used public forests or water sources in their communities either for household consumption or income generation as they generally have sufficient resources for consumption. This can be seen from the statement of Nid (pseudonym), a Thai woman in a transnational family, who said,

We have a community forest which we all can make use of. Some people go there to look for mushrooms and wild bamboo shoots, but I've never been there. I don't go out much. I'm afraid

I'd get lost if I went into the forest, so I stay at home. I'd rather earn a living here in the community (Nid [Pseudonym], 2021).

Therefore, it was found that transnational families seldom utilize the community's natural resources and environment. Consequently, there is little participation in the management of such capital; mostly they will cooperate in ways such as planting trees and not trespassing or damaging the forest so that natural resources and the environment remain abundant.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Intercultural marriage and the formation of the transnational family have long been dynamics in both Khon Kaen and Udon Thani provinces. They involve changes and spatial development as well as economic, social, political, and cultural changes that facilitate interactions between foreigners and local people, including relationships in the form of a couple. Marriage between a Thai woman and a foreign man to create a family brings about changes in the economic and social status of Thai women, their families, and relatives in terms of cross-border relationships, lifestyle adjustment, and livelihood support provided to each other. It is also an important part of bringing about changes in communities where transnational families live, which affect the management of each type of capital differently.

Communities with transnational families have the potential to manage each type of capital well with the cooperation of community members—both traditional families and transnational families whose support comes from foreign husbands, especially economic support that raises the economic and social status of Thai women. At the same time, information about the culture and way of life of the people in the community is provided to foreigners to enable them to understand and realize their significance. Additionally, local knowledge and wisdom are also passed on to people in the community. This reflects the management of knowledge and local wisdom capital related to the

cultural dimension that creates strength in maintaining community culture. Social capital is also managed by promoting good relationships among community members and providing opportunities for them to participate in managing various types of community capital effectively. This is similar to the management of physical and natural capital that focuses on giving people in the community a sense of shared ownership, leading to joint preservation. All of these factors clearly reflect the strength of the community where transnational families live.

The findings from this study are consistent with past studies indicating that having foreigners living in a community creates economic opportunities and leads to urban and Western lifestyles that are prosperous as a result of development in economics, society, and infrastructure that are conducive to living. That is, rural areas or communities of origin have changed, modernized, and benefitted from capital flowing into the community through remittances (Jampaklay et al., 2022) and investment, causing economic expansion in the community and shaping lifestyles of people there to be more urban (Sutiayamani, 2015). Moreover, immigration of foreigners allows the community to grow economically (Parisutthiwutphon, 2003; Onkoet, 2007; Samat, 2012). Change in consumption values among *farangs'* wives (Lapanun, 2012; 2019) and the rise in socio-economic status of their families (Bélanger et al., 2010; Srisombat, 2022) have stimulated the community economy and enabled businesses to expand to meet the consumption needs of multinational families, resulting in employment opportunities and changes in the way of life that are in line with the social and cultural diversity in the community as well as the relationships patterns between the people there. This has helped the communities to manage various types of capital more efficiently.

These changes reveal how transnational families play an important role in stimulating the community economy, leading to community capital management under the cooperation of members of both traditional families and multinational families. Therefore, to ensure the sustainability of capital management of these families and communities, importance should be placed on promoting participation,

creating a collective consciousness of resource ownership, and embracing cultural diversity. In addition, relevant agencies such as municipalities or sub-district administrative organizations, the Department of Community Development as well as various educational institutions should play a role in promoting community economic development to develop a capital management model appropriate for the context of multicultural society in which transnational families live. In addition, the communities should be given the opportunity to play a major role in development activities that go according to their needs, and they should be allowed to do so on their own without promotion or support from other agencies.

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