

Analyzing Network Performance and Accountability at the Subnational Level of Government in Thailand: A Network-Enveloped Hypothesis¹

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การบริหารงานภาครัฐคือปัจจัยหนึ่งที่ได้เคลื่อนผ่านไปสู่ระบบเครือข่าย การทำงานเพิ่มขึ้น นักวิชาการจำนวนมากต่างสนับสนุนให้ผู้บริหารในองค์กรภาครัฐ ให้ความสำคัญและพัฒนาทักษะการทำงานในระบบเครือข่ายเพื่อช่วยเพิ่มขีดความสามารถในการแก้ไขปัญหาสาธารณะที่มีความ слับซับซ้อนขึ้นทุกวัน บทความนี้ จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะนำเสนอประสบการณ์ในการทำงานแบบเครือข่ายขององค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นจำนวน 4 กรณีตัวอย่าง และต้องการซึ่งให้เห็นว่าการสร้างเครือข่าย การทำงานมีส่วนเพิ่มศักยภาพในการจัดการปัญหาสาธารณะ (performance) ได้

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โดยตรง อีกห้องยังมีส่วนสนับสนุนให้การทำงานขององค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นเกิดความรับผิดชอบต่อสาธารณะ (public accountability) เพิ่มมากขึ้น

ผู้เขียนได้พัฒนา “ทฤษฎีปัจจัยทว่าด้วยการออกแบบเครือข่ายการทำงานโดยพิจารณาถึงบริบทแวดล้อมอย่างรอบด้าน (Network-Enveloped Hypothesis: NEH)” เพื่อใช้ในการอธิบายถึงเหตุผลหลักที่เครือข่ายการทำงานมีส่วนเสริมสร้างตักยภาพในการแก้ไขปัญหาและความรับผิดชอบต่อสาธารณะขององค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น ทฤษฎีปัจจัย NEH มองว่ารูปแบบเครือข่ายการทำงานเกิดขึ้นได้ในหลายลักษณะ (kind) โดยที่ระดับความเข้มข้นของความร่วมมือระหว่างตัวแสดงต่างๆ ในเครือข่ายอาจเกิดขึ้นได้มากหรือน้อยต่างกันออกไปตามแต่สถานการณ์ (contingent) เมื่อผู้บริหารท้องถิ่นสามารถออกแบบรูปแบบเครือข่ายการทำงานที่มีความสอดคล้องกับปัจจัยเชิงสถานบัน บริบทของบริหารงานท้องถิ่น ลักษณะของปัญหาของชุมชนที่ต้องการแก้ไข ระบบการทำงานภายในเครือข่าย และบริบทแวดล้อมด้านสังคมและเศรษฐกิจในชุมชนแล้วนั้น การทำงานในระบบเครือข่ายย่อมมีส่วนเสริมสร้างสมรรถนะในการจัดการกับปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นในชุมชนท้องถิ่นเป็นอย่างดี และในขณะเดียวกันก็มีส่วนสนับสนุนให้การทำงานขององค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นมีความรับผิดชอบต่อสาธารณะ เพิ่มขึ้นทั้งในแนวตั้งและในแนวราบ

Abstract

A number of studies examine network performance and accountability. Nonetheless, very few of them explore how network performance is reconciled with democratic accountability. This essay provides empirical evidence from the experiences of Thai subnational governments, indicating that networked collaborations do enhance both program performance and democratic accountability. The authors develop

a contingency logic of networked arrangements to help explain the attainment of both administrative values under the Network-Enveloped Hypothesis (NEH). NEH is the notion of fluidity of collaborative structures that are contingent on network objectives, leadership styles, resource mobilization, socioeconomic environments, and public administration imperatives. Matching the internal network operating systems and the external environments not only improves problem-solving capacity but also enhances democratic accountability.

Keywords: Networked management, Collaborations, Networked-Enveloped Hypothesis, Thai local governments

Introduction

Networked management has evolved as a key strategy in public-policy making and implementation (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003). It is “a structural interdependence involving multiple organizations or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of the others in some larger hierarchical arrangement” (O’Toole, 1997a:45). A growing body of literature on interorganizational networked management indicates that public administrators work in networked environments, collaborating with their partners in order to accomplish increasingly complex tasks (Arganoff and McGuire, 2001). And, as the research shows, substantial efforts and resources are devoted to networking in a host of policy areas (Fitzgerald and Leigh, 2002; Provan and Milward, 1995; O’Toole, 1996, 1997a; O’Toole and Meier, 2003; Scheberle, 2004).

To date, a number of studies have examined network performance and accountability (Bardach, 1998; Bardach and Lesser, 1996; Behn, 2001; Bogason

and Musso, 2006; Lubell, 2004; Meier and O'Toole 2003; O'Toole, 1996; Van Bueren, Klijn, and Koppenjan, 2003). Nonetheless, very few of them explore how network performance is reconciled with democratic accountability. Scholars are often concerned that networks may be adopted to keep public agencies distant from public issues and, in effect, would deteriorate democratic accountability (Kenney, 2000; Lubell, 2004). Some proponents of network performance argue that we should compromise traditional accountability control with retrospective accountability for results, relaxing *ex ante* regulatory control and enhancing post-audit systems (Behn, 2001; Bardach and Lesser, 1996). Giving public officials the substantial autonomy to exercise their discretion under collaborative environments would eventually improve network performance (Behn, 2001).

The trade-off proposition between higher performance and less accountability, nonetheless, falls short on legal and political constraints on the public sector. Government agencies are clothed in legal mandates (Agranoff, 2005). In addition, bureaucracies, by a very basic design, are held accountable to executive and legislative bodies, either before or after the fact, as a part of democratic governance (Kickert and Koppenjan, 1997; Rosenbloom, 1983; Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2004). The proposition to substitute the new accountability-for-result system for a traditional one, as suggested by Behn (2001) and Bardach and Lesser (1996), thus undermines the effectiveness of democratic control over the bureaucracy.

Here we take a different viewpoint and posit that these two values can be reconciled if a form of networked arrangements that nicely matches external network environments and internal network operating systems. We term this as the "Network-Enveloped Hypothesis (NEH)." The NEH is based on contingency logic, arguing that the arrangement of collaborative structures must be congruent

with the external environments and the internal network operations. When this condition is met, collaboration not only induces better policy/program performance, it also strengthens control over the bureaucracy. In this essay, therefore, we aim at explaining how network performance and democratic accountability are simultaneously enhanced under the logic of the NEH.

Basically our hypothesis is built on the work of McGuire (2002), which develops a framework for the fluidity of managerial behaviors in networks. McGuire posits that management behaviors, which consist of activation, framing, mobilizing, and synthesizing, are fluid and contingent on the overall capacities of the networks and environments in which the networks operate. It is thus the task of network managers to match strategically managerial behaviors with the network contexts in order to fulfill the objectives and goals of collaborations (McGuire, 2002).

Our idea departs from McGuire (2002) in two distinct points, however. First, we focus on the fluidity of collaborative structures at the network level, not on the managerial behaviors of network managers, as proposed by McGuire (2002). Specifically, we examine the structural variation of networked arrangements contingent on the collectively established objectives and the environments that the networks face. Second, unlike the sole conceptual argument made by McGuire (2002), our essay provides an empirical test of the explainability of the fluidity notion of the NEH. Four case studies of policy/program collaborations in Thai subnational governance will be explored here.

The essay begins with theoretical explanations of networks performance and accountability. It then presents an overview of local networked management in Thailand. Data and method are the subjects of the subsequent section. There case details will be briefly provided, focusing on the origin of networks,

interactions among players, and network performance and accountability. Finally, the essay examines the extent to which local networks help enhance public performance and accountability as suggested by the NEH.

Performance and Accountability in Networks

Students of networked management have devoted considerable effort to network performance.⁴ Myriads of factors account for the improvement of network performance. Fundamentally, collaborations require clear specific purposes (Bardach 1998; Trafford and Proctor 2006). Additionally, successful collaborations depend on skillful leadership in mobilizing distinct partners and adopting effective strategies to tackle problems at hand (Bardach 1998; Kickert and Koppenjan 1997; McGuire 2002; O'Toole, Hanf, and Hupe 1997). These skills certainly are different from those of purely spontaneous business and rigid hierarchical procedures (Agranoff and McGuire 2003). Public administrators cannot act like a machine, but rather as a promoter of the course of actions that are consistent with the multiplicity of actors that operate within networks (Kaufmann, 1991; Kickert and Koppenjan, 1997).

⁴ Several examples across different policy areas can exhibit this fact; e.g. education (O'Toole and Meier, 2003; Smith and Wohlstetterh, 2006), public health (Provan and Milward, 1995; Provan and Sebastian, 1998), social welfare (Fredericksen and London, 2000; Provan, Veazie, and Staten, 2005), economic development (Agranoff, 2005; Agranoff and McGuire, 2001, 2003; Fitzgerald and Leigh, 2002), infrastructure development (O'Toole, 1996), and environment and natural resource preservation (Lehmann, 2006; Lubell, 2004; Kanjan and Kaewchote, 2004; Scheberle, 2004).

Modes of decision-making also contribute to the success of partnerships. Generally, partners have significant influence over the decisions of the networks (Grodzins, 1966; Kickert and Koppenjan, 1997). The success of collaborations thus depends less on bureaucratic decisions than on collective ones, which are a result of mutual agreements among the diverse partners to create new value together (Kanter, 1994). Furthermore, network performance can be achieved by good integration of specialized knowledge and information from network partners to the productive uses for collective operations (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003). Finally, congruence between formal and informal authorities in networks also contributes to the success of partnerships. Although networked relationships occur in nonhierarchical environments, they require formal hierarchies to support normal operations and maintenance (Frederickson, 1999). Likewise, partnerships would underachieve if they were not well-integrated into statutory structures (Carley, 2006).

Besides the issue of performance, networked management also raises concerns on public accountability⁵ (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Bardach and Lesser, 1996; Ingraham, 2005; Kettl 1993, 2002). Under loosened hierarchical arrangements and diffused authority, the determination of who is principal and who are agents is very difficult. As Rhodes (2000) argues, it is possible that "accountability disappears in the interstices of the webs of institutions that make up governance" (p.77). Some scholars argue that networks may be responsive to stronger or more politically powerful groups, rather than being

⁵ In this essay, accountability means the extent to which one must answer, explain, or justify to a higher authority for one's action or inaction. Accountability may be dictated by law, procedures, agreements, professions, ethical standards, or public expectations. Behn (2001, Ch.1), for instance, provides rigorous discussions of the meaning of accountability.

neutral producers of public goods (O'Toole and Meier, 2004). This would, therefore, magnify the tendency toward political inequality. Alternatively, networks can be used as a political strategy to keep public administrators distant from controversial policy issues (O'Toole and Meier, 2004). Having non-state actors to take the lead in a network will decrease the likelihood the governmental agencies will be blamed if the network performances are far from public expectations.

There are two possibilities of dampening democratic accountability in networks: one regards public administrators and another concerns interest groups. From the public choice perspective, information asymmetry often causes deviated bureaucratic behaviors (Moe, 1984; Vickers and Yarrow, 1988). Since administrative agents tend to have more information about policy implementation than do their political principal, they may know whether the implementation of certain policies is likely to be effective or not. Thus, networks may provide room for the bureaucratic agents to shirk their political masters by keeping themselves away from 'wicked problems'. Secondly, it is not uncommon that partners join networks with self-interest objectives. Thus, interest groups may capture networked policy venues and manipulate network agendas for their own sakes at the expense of the larger community (Bardach and Lesser, 1996; Bogason and Musso, 2006).

To this extent, several options to promote public accountability in networks are available. First, government agencies should be contemplative in partnering their core functions (Kettl, 1993). Alternatively, administrators should ensure that a full array of stakeholders get involved in networks in order to balance policy decisions (Ingraham, 2005). Additionally, performance management could be adopted (Bardach and Lesser, 1996; Ingraham, 2005). It is wise to watch what network partners do and to assign each of them specific responsibilities and financial accountability (Davies and Hentschke, 2006). Finally, explicit

agreements among partners may lay down frameworks in which any divergence from the frameworks should be avoided (Moe 1984; Vickers and Yarrow, 1988).

Managing Networks in Thai Subnational Governments

Fundamentally, local governments in Thailand are incorporated by the principle of self-governance. Each local government consists of an executive body and a local council, each of which is headed by locally elected persons from local residents and serves a four-year term. The elected executive, the so-called mayor of the municipality (1,161 units) or chairman of the Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO, 75 units) and of the Tambon (sub-district) Administrative Organization (TAO, 6,617 units)⁶, is the top political head of the executive body and is held accountable to the local council and to residents. These three types of general forms of local governments are uniformly applied in all 75 provinces, and their relationships are arranged into a two-tier governing system⁷.

Being in close proximity to local constituency, policy formulation and implementation of local programs are usually pursued through networks. Local networks occur in various policy areas and incorporate diverse partners. Civic

⁶ Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior of Thailand, as of October 4, 2006.

⁷ The lower-tier governments, municipality and TAO, function as a single operating unit, which is close to local residents, providing local public services within their defined territory. While municipalities are located in urbanized areas, TAOs are mostly established in less-developed rural communities. By contrast, PAO is the upper-tier local government which covers an entire province and is responsible for administering local services at the provincial level as well as for working in development projects that require collaboration among municipalities and/or TAOs within the provincial territory.

participation in local public affairs has blossomed since the wide-scale democratic reform after the military coup in 1992 (UNDP, 2003). Several success stories exhibit this fact (Kokpon, 2003; Krueathep, 2004; Suwanmala, 2004a, 2004b), including illustrative cases provided in this essay, although the magnitude of civic participation is considered as restricted by western standards (White and Smoke, 2005; Smoke, 2005).

The reason for the existence of local networks is mainly due to institutional limitations of local government units. It is commonly known that the majority of local Thai governments, especially TAOs⁸, have limited organizational capacities (Bowornwathana, 2006; Green, 2005). Therefore, the collaborative approach is an attractive tool for local administrators to mitigate institutional constraints. Moreover, the devolution movement that began in the late 1990s has pushed forward public participation as a means to monitor local governments' performance and to hold local administrators accountable (Suwanmala, 2004a, 2004b; UNDP, 2003; White and Smoke, 2005). Thai scholars and practitioners alike have advocated participatory approaches in local administration so that local residents can express their views and defend their rights to state their voices in local policy venues. Local authorities nowadays have become more open and accessible to local constituents and advocacy groups.

⁸ TAO is the latest institutional development of a multi-level governance system in Thailand. It has been erected by the national parliamentary act in 1994 and has very limited administrative and fiscal capacities, compared with the other forms of local governments. In term of human resources, TAO is allowed by laws to have the number of permanent staff between 3 and 21, depending on the amount of own-source local revenues. Moreover, total revenue of TAO is about 3.18% and 20.98%, on average, to those of PAO and municipality, respectively (Ministry of Finance of Thailand, 2004 fiscal year data).

Data and Methods

The paper analyzes four case studies of Thai local governments that have pursued collaborative approaches to tackle their problems at hand in recent years. These cases are part of the Thai Local Government Initiatives Project carried out during 2003-2005, the project in which we were involved. The project was financially supported by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) and delivered 529 developed cases as a part of final research outputs. In this essay, two selected cases are related to municipality, one concerns PAO, and another one involves TAO.

The four cases were purposively selected from a pool of 529 surveyed cases in order to obtain in-depth information of different types of networked arrangements and their implications regarding performance and accountability. The reason for this sort of selection was to follow Yin (1989) and Berg (2007), who suggested that the case-study approach is a preferred strategy to answer exploratory-type research questions. For instance, "what is out there in local networked administration?," "how do networked administrative structures affect program performance and public accountability?," and "why were they so affected?" After reviewing all 529 cases, we came up with a contingency logic of local networks that does enhance local program performance and democratic accountability. In the end, we chose four outstanding cases that nicely present the contingency logic which, in turn, facilitates to develop the NEH as to be discussed soon.

Admittedly, this case-selection strategy is subject to several weaknesses, especially for representation and generalization. However, we find this method fits our research purposes. It has the merit of developing concepts and characteristics of Thai local collaborative management. This is what Yin (1989)

calls “analytic generalization” rather than “statistical generalization” (p. 38-40). In other words, the method facilitates theory construction, a process that normally takes place before doing a random sample to test the theory on a wider scale.

Basically, the main purpose of the larger Local Government Initiatives Project was to evaluate administrative adjustments of local governments after the 1999 devolution. We aimed at collecting in-depth good-practice cases of local programs that were initiated *after* or *as a result of* the 1999 national decentralization movement⁹. The majority of the 529 cases (about 79.6%) took place between 2001 and 2003. Our goal was to collect cases with rich detailed information on what programs were implemented, why and how they were implemented, who was involved in policy formation and implementation processes, what kind of resources were utilized, and what the program results were. The final cases went through several data collection and validation processes.

First, we conducted a mail survey from a list of localities to acquire preliminary data concerning whether they had initiated new administrative arrangements that had the potential to be developed as a case study. The survey covered all 75 provinces, except Bangkok, and was carried out from June to August 2003 (the response rate was about 9.3%). Then, short telephone conversations (about 15-30 minutes) were made from the survey responses to ensure that the short-listed cases met our research purposes.

Next, field researchers visited the local government sites to conduct in-depth interviews with local politicians, administrators, and city residents in order to acquire detailed information about the origins, strategic implementations,

⁹ This surely may cause case-selection bias. Readers should be cautious in generalizing the results of this study.

obstacles, and results of each case. The researchers also examined relevant documents, such as official budgets, memoranda of management and community meetings, case evaluations, annual reports, newsletters, or photographs. All cases were collected by using a uniformed data collection sheet and field researchers were required to participate in a 2-day workshop before starting the data collection process. Each case usually took three working days to complete the form. This phase took place during September 2003 and April 2005.

The compiled data from the field were then reported to and re-examined by our investigator teams. After checking for their completeness, the potential cases were sent back to respective local administrators to have them rechecked and validated. The investigators screened out deficient cases and eventually developed 529 full cases. This step took place concurrently from January 2004 to June 2005.

In what follows, case details are explained. The four cases are (1) partnership in public education (Yala Municipality); (2) public-private partnership for the management of provincial sport facilities (Prae PAO); (3) preservation of community water-source (Kud-Namsai TAO); and (4) civic participation in urban planning and infrastructure development (Khon-Khan Municipality). The case presentation is in the following structure: the origins of collaboration; collaborative processes and structural networked relationships; and collaborative results.

Yala Municipality: Partnerships in Promoting Interactive Student Learning

Yala Municipality is a central city located in the far south, with a population of about 76,500 in 2003. The city administers six municipal schools,

with a total number of primary-school students of about 1,700¹⁰. In 1999, the National Parliament promulgated the National Education Act of 1999, which has refocused pedagogical approaches from teacher-based and classroom orientation to student-based and flexible learning styles so that children are able to develop mentally, physically, and socially.

Initially, city administrators grasped the idea of promoting student-based learning but still lacked a definite, tangible plan. They thus sought partnerships with external agencies and local stakeholders: two non-profit organizations and one for-profit organization specialized in promoting child education and development, and teacher and parent associations. After a series of consultations, the city's idea was eventually materialized in late 1999. The initiative combines edutainment approaches with the development of new interactive learning facilities, the Exploring Park and Exploring Center, aiming at stimulating a child's learning from a variety of play-and-learn activities.

The Exploring Center is an in-door learning facility for learning 11 different skills: emotional quotient (E.Q), sensational, computational, natural, imagination, social, critical, decoding, spatial, invention, and problem solving. Attending the center is part of the school curriculum, incorporating a one-hour-per-week learning package. The Exploring Park, on the other hand, is an out-door facility, consisting of 7 exploring zones: mathematics, physics, tower, energy, miracle, sport, and playground (see Figure 1 and 2 below). The Park is open to students and the general public.

¹⁰ This number does not include students in public schools administered by the Ministry of Education and private schools.



**Figure 1 Exploring Park
(Tower Zone)**



**Figure 2 Exploring Park
(landscape view)**

In the end, this collaboration seems to provide satisfying results. The data on facility usage in 2001 indicated that there were about three to four thousand usages per month for the Exploring Park and about six to eight hundred usages per month for the Exploring Center. Additionally, satisfaction surveys revealed that more than 90% of students and teachers were highly satisfied with the facilities and interactive learning programs, and more than 60% of parents were very satisfied since they observed positive changes in their children's behavior toward learning and going to school.

Note, however, that consultations with local residents in general and/or civic organizations were limited by the nature of task. Decision-making authority thus was restricted to those that were involved in the consultative process, mainly city administrators. In addition, the local educational partnership had a short life. It was dissolved after the collaboration was successful.

Prae PAO: Public-Private Partnership in Provincial Sports Center Management

Prae PAO is located in the lower northern part of Thailand and has an approximate population of 450,000. In 2001, the provincial sports center was

devolved to PAO from the Sports Authority of Thailand in accordance with the manifesto of the Decentralization Plan and Process Act of 1999. In the beginning, the PAO administered the sports center using traditional methods: setting regulations, hiring more staff, and requesting for more budget allocations. Residents who want to use the sport facilities must pay membership and entrance fees. Generally, the fees are comparatively lower than those charged by private sports clubs. After a year of administration, however, the PAO faced huge financial losses and many complaints about service quality.

In response, PAO's administrators sought a more efficient way to manage the sports center. They decided to contract-out the management of the sports facilities to a professional private company, and stipulated that service fees must remain unchanged and that the company must improve service quality. These requirements were in exchange for granting management autonomy to the company to administer the center, including the right to earn a profit if the business was successful. In addition, Prae PAO established an oversight committee consisting of 14 members in total: 5 members from PAO administrators, 5 from those that were nominated by local sport clubs, 3 from regional government officials, and a chairman of the PAO that also chaired the committee. The committee monitors and gives advice to the private contractor on a regular basis. Operating plans, obstacles, and relevant information about sport facilities management are often discussed among PAO's administrators, private company representatives, and the oversight committee.

By 2003, the privately managed sports center was offering better quality service. Customer complaints were significantly reduced and the number of users dramatically expanded from 156,415 in 2001 to 447,396 in 2002, and to 559,784 in 2003. Moreover, the private contractor gained attractive returns on

investment, from -4.76% in 2001 to 8.3% in 2003 (not including intergovernmental subsidies). As a result, this public-private relationship provides not only a better service quality to local residents (operational performance) and reduced operating costs for the city government (financial performance), but also enables citizens to have access to monitoring the management of the sport facilities.

Kud-Namsai TAO: Community-based Measures for Water-source Protection

Kud-Namsai city, located in Khon-Khan province and with a population of about 7,000, is surrounded by fertile Nampong water sources. A majority of the population (about 80%) lives on small fishing and agriculture. The water sources are, thus, a major source of water supply and economic lifeblood to the community. Unfortunately, the encroachment of large factories on Kud-Namsai since late 1980s (electrical power generation and paper production industry) has caused serious water pollution. Residents often found the illegal dumping of hazardous waste into the community waterways, where major hazards were observed in March 1992 and May 1993. However, they were not able to identify the origin of the disposal due to its not-easy-to-observe chemical attributes.

At first, the residents responded to the problem by informing factories to stop dumping industrial waste into the community waterways. They also reported to government officials of the Department of Industrial Control, Ministry of Industry and the Regional Office of Environment Protection Department (REPD), Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment. However, the officials reacted feebly to the problem. They simply set up a small working group and monitored the quality of Nampong watersheds for just about 3 months. Essentially, there was no punitive legal measure ever issued to any factories since no evidence

of chemical hazard was ever discovered during the short monitoring period. Put differently, this action simply deterred the problem, but did not ensure that hazardous waste disposal would be ceased in the future. Disastrously, the situation became worse in December 1997 when a major waste disposal evidently caused the death of thousands of fish and aquatic lives. In effect, angry mobs and local media gathered outside the plants and blamed the plant management teams for their irresponsible actions.

Immediately after the abovementioned event, a collaborative working group was formed, with strong support from the TAO, local environmental NGOs, local universities, international organizations (WHO), the REPD, and plant representatives who agreed to join and support the community in solving this problem. About 50 local residents have volunteered to regularly monitor the water quality in their neighborhood. They were intensively trained in methods of scientifically testing water quality (e.g. Biochemical Oxygen Demand: BOD and Chemical Oxygen Demand: COD, Acid-Base (pH) test, etc.) and were provided with standard testing equipment, all supported by the partners. Additionally, the city government established a Community Environment Information Center in early 1998 and has provided financial and logistical support for the works of the volunteer groups ever since.

Interestingly enough, there are a couple of reasons that can account for the setting up of volunteer actions. One is the sense of protecting communal lives and properties that were triggered by the strong, sensible social movements taking place earlier. Another is due to the limited availability of capable personnel of the city government to handle all the water-quality testing and preserving tasks. These have urged the small TAO government to assist the volunteers directly to solve the community problem.

The volunteer group is divided into four sub-units, testing the samples of

water from 15 predetermined locations throughout the community waterways. The water sampling and quality testing is conducted once a month and will be increased up to 3 times a month during the rainy season (normally June - October). Water-quality testing data are then analyzed against scientifically accepted standards and reported to all parties concerned, including plant operators and local residents.

Because of their scientifically-based data, the reports are regarded as a good indication of community water-quality and they have a strong deterrent effect. No acute dumping of hazardous waste has been detected since 1998. This community-based action of water-quality monitoring initiative proves how the potential of collaboration and scientific knowledge can be transferred among network partners for the betterment of communal lives.

Khon-Khan Municipality: Town Hall Meeting for City Planning and Development

Located in the downtown area in the northeastern of the country, Khon-Khan City has a population of over 130,000. The city has enjoyed dynamic economic and social growth, and the municipality plays a vital role in promoting city development. Nonetheless, as a robust community, citizens often complained about municipal construction projects that were misplaced. These projects had eroded city's beautification and created more negative impacts on people's way of life than they should have. In 1997, the municipality, hence, developed a participatory approach in the so-called focus group meeting as a venue for policy discussion between municipal administrators and local residents who observed potential impacts (environmental, societal, and economic) which might arise from the city's development programs.

The idea of this meeting indeed originated from the city mayor's policy that any development project shall seek the prior approval of city residents. With technical support from the Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development (DANCED), the Social Research Institute of Khon-Khan University (local major university), and local nonprofit organizations, city administrators successfully gained wide civic participation in the meetings. Initially, more than thirty communities formed groups and had wide policy debates among group members. Then, each group's representatives joined policy dialogues in focus group meetings with the local administrators to make? collective policy decisions over city development directions. This approach was very successful in encouraging close consultations between the local authority and its citizens, and, therefore, was extended to a town hall meeting a year later.

Unlike the focus group meeting, town hall meetings are held on a regular basis, usually every three to four months, as a forum for broader planning and development-related issues. Those that may be adversely affected by the development projects should be informed and invited to the meeting. The city mayor will chair the meeting and ask the persons in charge of the projects or experts from universities to elaborate on the issues in more detail. Then, a dialogue will start until reaching an appropriate collective solution. To date, both city administrators and representatives from local residents and communal groups have extensively discussed and actively engaged in the meeting. Information and views regarding city planning and developmental issues are exchanged widely among all stakeholders.

Since 2002, more than 200 representatives from about 160 civic groups in 73 neighborhoods have regularly participated in the meetings. Periodic surveys conducted by the city indicated that about 95% (March 2002 with 80 respondents)

and 94.3% (September 2002 with 104 respondents) of attendants are highly satisfied with the information provided by the city's administrators and are having fruitful dialogues with them. In the end, town hall meetings have proved beneficial not only for the formulation of the city development policies but also for the enhancement of political accountability.

In closing this section, a summative matrix of four cases is provided in Table 1 below. In the subsequent section, we analyze key elements of the collaborations that are attributable to the enhancement of network performance and democratic accountability.

Table 1 : Summary of City Collaborative Activities

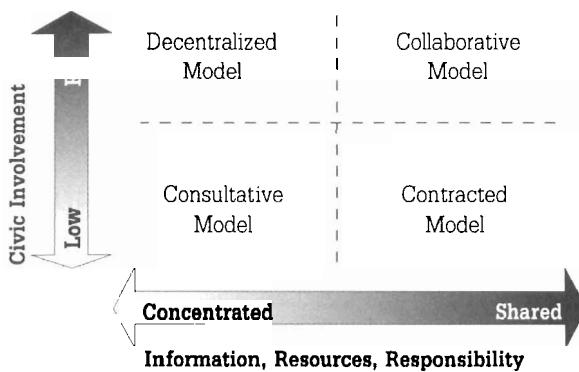
City	Yala City	Prae PAO	Kud-Namsai TAO	Khon-Khan City
Origins of partnerships	<i>Need to develop strategies for stimulating student learning in municipal schools</i>	<i>Need to improve service quality of provincial sport center and to reduce operating financial loss to city government</i>	<i>Need to solve the problem of water pollution caused by hazardous waste disposal into community's waterways</i>	<i>Need to engage citizens and other stakeholders in formulating city planning and developmental policies</i>
Collaborative measures	<i>Consultations with three specialized NGOs, teaches and parent associations in materializing new learning initiatives</i>	<i>Contracting out sports center management to private for-profit contractor with the use of oversight committee</i>	<i>Community volunteer group to monitor the quality of water-source, with technical and physical support from network partners</i>	<i>Collaborations and joint decision-making with about 160 locally formed community group through the Town Hall meeting</i>
Results	<i>Interactive student-based learning programs and new learning facilities in municipal schools</i>	<i>Improvement in service quality and usage of provincial sports center and a reduction in financial costs for PAO</i>	<i>Scientific-based water quality reports on a monthly basis which help prevent illegal waste disposal into the community waterways</i>	<i>Collective decisions on city development policies which help minimize social and economic impacts from city development projects and help promote local democracy</i>

Synthesis: A Typology of Networked Activities

Before adopting the Networked-Enveloped Hypothesis (NEH) to analyze network performance and accountability, it is worth considering major characteristics of collaborative arrangements from the case studies discussed above. In this section, we develop a typology of networked arrangements.

Readers will find that this typology is important as a building block for understanding the fluidity logic of NEH. Specifically, the collaborative activities exhibit differences across two dimensions: (1) the degree of sharing of information, resources, and responsibility; (2) the degree of civic involvement in local public affairs. Given these two characteristics, four distinct types of networked management of Thai local governments are developed, as shown in Figure 3, varying the degrees of collaboration from a simple tie to more intense ones.

Figure 3: A Typology of Networked Arrangements



I. Consultative Model: In this model, local government still takes the lead in solving community problems or policy issues. Yet city officials are a bit more open to external ideas and information. They usually consult with partners when necessary. However, the sole decision-making authority is still situated in the local bureaucracy. Only limited pieces of information or public participation are allowed when local policy windows are intermittently unlocked. In addition, these sorts of partnerships do not last very long; the consultative process is usually disbanded when the emerging problem has been solved. The case of Yala Municipality falls into this type.

II. Contracted Model: This model is somewhat similar to the traditional public-private partnership, where the delivery of public services is performed by contracting business sectors. The case of Prae PAO exhibits this sort of networked arrangement. Relationships between the government and private sectors tend to be formal and are regulated by explicit contract or agreement. The responsibility is thus shared between the contracted government and the contracting private organizations. The private actors usually have management autonomy as well as financial obligations within a specified framework. Information about service performance is often shared such that administrators can effectively monitor the performance of their private counterparts. However, civic involvement in this model is still limited.

III. Decentralized Model: Networks of this type encourage wide and active civic participation. Administrators often facilitate and provide some form of assistance to local communities in order to have them take the lead in performing public tasks. In effect, this facilitator-like city government places a great deal of implementation autonomy into the hands of communities. Communication and information sharing between local administrators and civic organizations are less frequent and mostly concentrated at a communal level. Therefore, local administrators neither have complete information nor control over the work of communal groups. The monitoring of water quality in Kud-Namsai City reveals this pattern of networked relationships.

IV. Collaborative Model: Several partners join the networked venue with dispersed missions in this model. Local administrators are not dominant in networks but are just one among multiple players. Their key role is to be an integrator that forcefully mobilizes the networks and skillfully balances differences

among the distinct players. Here a sharing of information, expertise, and resources is very common. The bottom-up participation from civic communities is also necessary to reap the benefits of citizens' ideas and feedbacks on complex tasks. Success or failure depends largely on each partner's strengths and contributions to the networks. Khon-Khan's Town hall meeting represents this collaborative model.

The Essence and Logic of Network-Enveloped Hypothesis

Now we turn to a fundamental logic of the Network-Enveloped Hypothesis (NEH). As already discussed, it is the main objective of this essay to show empirically how networked management helps improve program performance as well as lifts up democratic accountability. The NEH is based on the contingency logic, positing that the arrangement of collaborative structures must be congruent with external environments and internal network operations (see also Table 2). An underlying assumption is that network structural arrangements vary systematically across network settings and environments. Thus, our NEH is an attempt to sort out and justify these contextual characteristics of the outer environments that affect the arrangement of network structural relationships and that affect the operations within the networks.

Table 2: Major Essences of Network-Enveloped Hypothesis

Fundamental logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The fluidity logic of networked arrangements contingent on network objectives, operating systems, and environments
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To enhance democratic accountability for local governments ○ To improve capacity in solving public/communal problems
Contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Institutional capacities ○ Socioeconomic contexts
Network operating systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Network objectives and the nature of problems ○ Leadership ○ Decision-making and communication ○ Resource mobilization ○ Performance monitoring system

As already stated, a network's attainment of desired performance and accountability control is contingent on its ability to form and to adapt the operating systems that suit the environments well. If this condition is not met, public administrators may favor a particular form of collaboration over others. Then, they will end up with a trade-off selection between performance and accountability, as suggested by previous work (Behn, 2001; Bardach and Lesser, 1996). In the following analysis, we will elaborate on each of the elements of networked operations and show their linkages for improving performance and accountability, respectively.

Institutional Settings and Socioeconomic Contexts of Networks

The analysis of network typologies in earlier sectiont provides a framework for an understanding of networked arrangements and their relationships to the

institutional settings¹¹ and socioeconomic contexts in which local governments operate. Table 3 summarizes the relationships. At a glance, the Collaborative Model and the Consultative Model are typically adopted in a relatively large central city (Khon-Khan and Yala Municipalities), whereas the Decentralized Type is employed in a small rural-based community (Kud-Namsai TAO).

When considering these relative institutional capacities (the total number of city staff and the ratio of population per city staff), the relationship between networked arrangements and capacities is evident¹². Local administrators choose a particular networked approach partly contingent on their institutional strengths. Cities with more capable personnel, implied by the total number of city staff, *may or may not* collaborate very meaningfully. On the one hand, since larger local governments have more resources and capable personnel, they are able to collaborate very proactively with their partners, as showed by the Collaborative Model in Khon-Khan City. On the other hand, large organizations may possess all the resources needed to perform their tasks, so they may go alone with in-house capacities and a few supports from external actors, as shown in the Consultative Model of Yala City.

¹¹Here we focus on the institutional capacities of the local governments only, not on other partners in the networks, since they are the core of partnerships, forging and mobilizing collaborations, as argued by Meier and O'Toole (2004).

¹²Indeed, this finding reveals the nonlinear relationships between institutional capacities and modes of networked arrangements. The finding aligns with the study of Graddy and Chen (2006).

Table 3: Institutional Settings and Socioeconomic Contexts of Five Selected Cities

Modes of Networked Management	Local government types	Institutional capacity			City Character- istics	Major economic activities
		Population	City Staff	Population/ City staff		
Collaborative Model	Khon-Khan Municipality	129,290	778	166	Central city	Government educational, trade, and transportation hubs in the northeast
Decentralized Model	Kud- Namsai TAO	7,150	21	340	Rural- base community	Agricultural-based economy
Contracted Model	Prae PAO ^{a/}	486,502	82	5,933	Mixed central- rural areas	Commercial and agricultural-based economy
Consultative Mode	Yala Municipality	77,095	1,180	65	Central city	Commercial-based, trade center in the south

Remark: Figures are based on the year the local networks were formed.

^{a/} PAO is the upper-tier local government and performs mainly large-scale provincial public services and coordinating functions among lower-level local governments

In case of small localities, by contrast, city governments alone may not be able to perform all of their tasks due to their limited number of personnel and available financial resources. They therefore have a high need to collaborate. Nonetheless, they cannot collaborate with partners as forcefully as do the large

organizations. As a result, small localities tend to encourage local community groups to take the lead in solving community problems and support the operations of community groups.

The decision to adopt the Decentralized Form in the case of a small city is also distinct when looking at its corresponding community characteristics. Kud-Namsai is a rural, agricultural-based society. Individuals generally are closely tied with one another mainly due to the nature of their daily lives and economic activities. Thus, the community-led action is such an attractive measure that local administrators can engage the communal groups to work with the city government. This would help mitigate the institutional weaknesses of city governments and also increase the governmental reach to communal problems. This is, however, hardly the case in an urban city with a large population, where individuals are loosely tied and the mobilization of volunteer civic groups requires much harder effort.

Social capital may partly explain the effective use of the Decentralized Mode of partnerships in rural communities. Social capital institutes the notions of “cooperation, solidarity, and public-spiritedness” (Putnam et al,1993:89), which can lead to better performance or better implementation of public policies (Knack, 2002; Putnam et al, 1993). Our case of Kud-Namsai provides empirical evidence that the volunteer groups are central to the improvement of performance. They engaged actively in helping city administrators to solve water-pollution problems under the Decentralized Model.

Note that the adoption of the Contracted Form in Prae PAO is a special case, where the PAO's administrators are usually distant from local communities. In addition, the problem of provincial sports facility administration does not adversely affect the ordinary lives of residents at a community-wide scale. To

this extent, the restricted model of a contracting-out partnering arrangement seems to suffice.

Network Operating Systems

Now we turn our discussion to the internal parts of networks. The literature often suggests key elements of effective performance management, consisting of (i) clear goals and problem definitions, (ii) explicit performance measures, (iii) involving key stakeholders in designing and measuring performance, (iv) skillful leadership, (v) multiple sets of performance measures, (vi) rationalizing program structures and resource mobilization toward desired results, and (vii) documenting performance progress and using this as a basis for decision-making (Behn, 2003; Bouckaert and Balk, 1991; de Lancer Julnes and Holzer, 2001; Kravchuk and Schack, 1996; Wholey, 1999). Our cases demonstrate empirically that the local networks emerged with specific purposes and were formed by skillful leadership. In addition, they nicely integrated the informal operations with the hierarchical structures of local authorities, which confirms the arguments of Frederickson (1999) and Carley (2006) discussed earlier. In the subsequent analysis, we will explain how local networks institute operating systems that help achieve their desired goals.

(i) Public problems and network goal-settings

When public administrators operate in networks, they have many strategic choices available for performing a given task (Meier and O'Toole, 2001). The success of networked activities, thus, depends largely on how well the problems are defined and how well the strategic solutions are installed. It can be observed from our cases that intense collaborative forms are likely to be adopted when

networks have to deal with long-term or recurring problems. In the Collaborative Model, local administrators use collaborations as a venue to generate strategic, long-term policies. Likewise, the Decentralized Form is employed not only as a policy forum but also as a grid of the continuity of program implementation. On the other had, the Contracted or the Consultative Models are adopted specifically to solve particular short-lived problems. Table 4 exhibits the natures of the problems in each case-study.

The relationship between the collaborations' objectives and structural arrangements nicely fits with what the NEH suggests. Collaborative arrangements must be manipulated such that they can serve the purposes of partnerships. Long, enduring tasks require more intense collaborative efforts than do issue-based ones. The fluidity of collaborative arrangements suggests that public administrators adopt the most effective option in a given circumstance. The matching between the collaborative forms and network purposes would ensure that the collaborations can improve the performance of public policies/programs.

Table 4: Natures of Problems and Networking Objectives

Networked Management	Nature of problems/tasks	Network objectives
Collaborative Model	Developmental policies and programs (city planning and infrastructure developments)	Identifying strategic ideas and approaches that are practical and mutually agreed upon by stakeholders
Decentralized Model	Adverse impacts on community's life and death (water pollution)	Seeking collaborative solutions and efforts that can solve the problems effectively and thoroughly
Contracted Model	Internal management difficulties (provincial sport facility management)	Searching for alternative management approaches to increase service quality and operational efficiency
Consultative Model	Specific, short-term issues (education)	Develop strategic ideas that are practical to specific needs

One may ask how heterogeneity of priorities among distinct partners affects the setting of network objectives. There are two explanations derived from our cases. First, when networks are dealing with developmental issues, information-based and exhaustive discourses would allow heterogeneous partners to discuss and share ideas until reaching collective, agreed-upon conclusions. In Khon-Khan City, for example, participants in Town-hall meetings are allowed to talk and to reflect on their ideas openly. There is no rush for any significant decision. Policy issues that are controversial will be carried over to subsequent meetings until appropriate alternative solutions are available.

Second, when networks are established to handle urgent issues, the heterogeneity of partners is often less acute. This is so because the nature of the problems automatically defines the domain of the networks. It naturally filters out irrelevant partners. For instance, when the water pollution in Kud-

Namsai became worse, the problem raised high concerns among stakeholders such that only those who were relevant to the restoration of community water-sources formed collaborations. As a result, the partners principally had a common focus on the problem from the beginning.

(ii) Leaderships, decision-making, and network mobilization

Collaborations need leadership to steer the process (Agranoff and McGuire, 2001; Bardach, 1998; Behn, 2001). Our case studies show that leadership roles can be played by civic leaders or local government heads (see Table 5). Basically, public issues are community-wide. Either city mayors or civic leaders can conceive the problems and raise awareness among residents. NEH posits that networks can be mobilized differently under different leadership styles. For instance, in Yala City as well as Prae PAO, cities' political heads took the lead in initiating partnerships. This is the opposite in small, rural-based communities where communal leaders have begun collective responses, as in the case of Kud-Namsai TAO.

In effect, the networks that are directed by city administrators are based largely on top-down mobilization approaches. That is the city administrators seek collaborations, specify needs, and direct the networks. To this extent, ultimate decision making authorities are virtually exercised through the local bureaucracies. On the otherhand, bottom-up civic deliberation is normally exercised when civic leaders are the primacy of networks (Kud-Namsai City) or when they engage closely with the collaborations (Khon-Khan City). In this circumstance, the community directs how the decisions will be made and how the collective actions will be carried out.

Table 5: Relationships between Leadership Styles and Networked Decision-Making

Networked Management	Leadership in networks	Decision-making styles
Collaborative Model	City mayors and administrators take the lead in forming and directing collaborations	Public consultation until reaching appropriate solutions or ideas. City mayors play key roles in setting agendas and policy windows
Decentralized Model	Civic leaders formed volunteer activities to solve the emerging community problems	Civic deliberation and building mutual consensus among partners through civic forums. All have voices and are involved in implementing the collaborative activities proactively and meaningfully
Contracted Model	City chairman/administrators take the lead in forming public-private partnerships	Top-down directing approach. PAO's administrators specify the detailed contractual relationship with private partners
Consultative Model	City mayors take the lead in consulting with external partners	Top-down consultative approach. City administrators specify the details and needs for consulting jobs.

(iii) Resource mobilization and performance monitoring mechanism

Several studies explain that resource exchanges are a major reason for collaborations (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Bardach, 1998; Provan and Milward, 1995; Smith and Wohlstetter, 2006). Our cases also confirm this fact. Local administrators may seek citizen feedback or expert opinions from their partners (as the case of Khon-Khan and Yala Municipalities). Alternatively, local administrators may use the partners' expertise in performing public tasks (as with the case of Prae PAO). These two collaborative forms exhibit the inflow of information, resources, and expertise to local authorities. On the other hand,

resources can be transferred from local authorities and external partners to volunteer civic groups, as in the case of Kud-Namsai. Networks help exchange knowledge as well as needed financial and physical resources to the communities so that the volunteer groups can perform their tasks more effectively.

As stated earlier, monitoring mechanisms are also crucial to the improvement of performance and accountability. Our cases indicate that there is a variety of control mechanisms used in monitoring network performance and political responsiveness. Apparently, they are classified into two major categories: (1) Output-based measures and (2) Citizen-based measures. The former consists of results on financial operations (Pare PAO), usages and service quality reports (Prae's sport center management, and Yala's Exploring Centers), and water-testing results (Kud-Namsai's watershed preservation), whereas the latter includes civic monitoring of city activity reports (Khon-Khan City) or on water quality (Kud-Namsai City) and citizen satisfaction surveys (Khon-Khan, Yala, and Prae Cities). All these measures help network partners ensure that the collaborations are driven toward the desired goals. What we can learn from the variety of monitoring mechanisms is that they need to be simple and pragmatic, especially for local governments with weak institutional capacities, and suitable to the operations of the networked activities, as suggested by the contingency logic of the NEH.

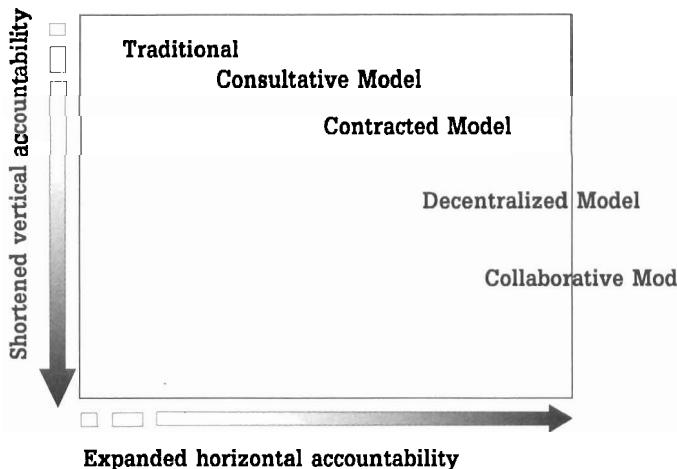
Table 6: Resource Mobilization and Network Monitoring Mechanisms

City	Resource/information/knowledge flows	Monitoring mechanism
Khon-Khan Municipality	Seeking infrastructure development ideas and policies, as well as citizen feedback on developmental plans and policies	Civic monitoring, City activity reports, and Citizen satisfaction surveys
Yala Municipality	Seeking expertise in innovative educations/student learning	Parent-teacher-student satisfaction surveys, Student service usage
Prae PAO	Enabling managerial expertise in administering provincial sport facilities	Financial operations, Citizen satisfaction, Usage and Service quality reports, Oversight committee
Kud-Namsai TAO	Exchanging technical knowledge and providing financial, equipment, and logistical support to the volunteer group	Scientific water-testing results, Civic monitoring of water quality

Two-Dimensional Accountability Systems under Network-Enveloped Hypothesis

As mentioned earlier, the issue of democratic accountability draws high concern when the loosened hierarchical control under the networked environments may undermine public accountability (Bogason and Musso, 2006; Rhodes, 2000). Fortunately, this essay has depicted the appealing fact that the fluidity of networked relationships not only helps improve program performance, it also strengthens democratic accountability. Our cases exhibit two forms of democratic accountability under the NEH logic: (i) the Shortened Vertical, and (ii) the Expanded Horizontal. Figure 4 depicts the changing structure of these two accountability mechanisms corresponding to the fluidity of networked arrangements.

Figure 4 Changes in Structural Relationships of Accountability Mechanisms



First, in the Consultative and the Contracted Models, networks do not change the traditional structure of bureaucratic accountability much. Formal decision-making authority still lies within local bureaucracies, and bureaucratic agents have to be accountable for the political principals, who subsequently are held accountable to local constituents. Indeed, the collaborations tie political executives and local constituencies more closely, having face-to-face relationships, and help utilize extensive information from partners that eventually lead to more effective policy decisions. Additionally, partner feedback now supplies the direct flow of information on how well the local bureaucracies are responsive to the political principals and local constituents. These networked mechanisms help ensure that the local political wills are exactly pursued by the bureaucratic agents under the shortened version of vertical accountability control.

Second, networks expand the focus of democratic accountability to incorporate the dimension of horizontal accountability, where administrative agents also are held accountable directly to the network partners, who basically

are formed within the constituency. This is made possible because collaborations enlarge the room for civic engagement in local affairs which, in turn, facilitate more government responsiveness and accountability. In a rural-agricultural-based community like Kud-Namsai, where the primary social relationship is predominant, citizens are often engaged in community affairs, forming volunteer groups and working closely with local administrators. In the case of a large city like Khon-Khan, citizens formed community groups and participated proactively in the town hall meeting. Citizens and communal groups can now easily reach political executives as well as bureaucratic agents through direct civic deliberations. Given this seamless, citizen-driven mode of local administration, political preferences among these three distinct actors are now very congruent and, therefore, the divergent bureaucratic actions are less likely to occur. In effect, the traditional accountability system is still maintained and strengthened while the expansive horizontal one is augmented to the public accountability systems via collaborative efforts.

The contingency logic of the NEH plays a crucial role in determining what accountability mechanisms the local administrators should adopt in forging partnerships. When local administrators face stringent regulatory or procedural controls over financial or operational issues, they may adopt a restricted type of collaboration, e.g. the Consultative Model, so that traditional accountability structures are not breached, which has now become shortened in the collaborative environments. The benefit of doing so is that local public administration will be more open to external information that would further enhance more effective decision-making or program implementation. In a like manner, when the nature of tasks do require or allow for more intense forms of collaborations, local administrators may adopt the Collaborative Form, refocusing from the vertical

accountability control to the expanded horizontal one. Now the two-dimensional accountability mechanisms are moving in the way that concurrently helps promote program performances and political responsiveness.

The Contracted and the Decentralized Models are somewhere in the middle between these two poles, and are appropriate when institutional capacities or stringent regulatory controls do not allow local authorities to assume a leading role in solving emerging issues. To this extent, localities may devolve their responsibilities to either private contractors or community-based volunteer groups and perform only monitoring tasks. This would ensure the utilization of popular control over local bureaucracies and enhance the capacity of program implementation by external partners.

Discussion: Rethinking Network Performance and Accountability

Our presentation thus far exhibits the cases of networked management and their consequences for public performance and accountability. It is clear now that collaborations do matter for effective and democratic local administration. They contribute satisfactorily to the enhancement of policy/program performance and, simultaneously, public accountability. We explicitly state our standpoint that there is no trade-off between program performance and democratic accountability under the collaborative efforts, at least from the experience of Thailand, if the conditions of the NEH are satisfied.

The literature often suggests the tradeoff logic between network performance and democratic accountability (Bardach and Lesser 1996; Behn 2001). This trade-off proposition, although it sounds intriguing, ignores the importance of political and legal values in the public sector. The NEH, by contrast, overcome this pitfall, stating that network performance and democratic

accountability can be reconciled when the arrangements of networked relationships are congruent with external forces as well as internal operating systems. The NEH postulates that networked relationships are fluid and can be arranged in many forms to fit the objectives of collaborations, institutional capacities, and exogenous factors. These contingency arrangements provide pragmatic options for local administrators to pick the most effective collaborative strategy that serves their needs.

Also, the fluidity of networked arrangements helps prioritize the value of accountability depending upon the requirements of laws and administrative necessities. The NEH conveys an important meaning for democratic accountability, suggesting that local administrators be held accountable to network partners in a two-dimensional, but convergent, accountability system. It envelops every partner in a network, where individual partners are held accountable to all other players in reciprocal-relationships. Accountability systems are two-dimensional, whether shortened vertical or expanded horizontal, and are contingent on the modes of networked management being employed in a particular circumstance. These two dimensions converge when all triangular political actors (political executives, civic groups, and bureaucratic agents) come close to unique political wills via the collaborative efforts.

The NEH postulates that the traditional accountability must be settled first and supplemented by the horizontal one. The vertical mode of the accountability system is a *must* when the networks have to deal with core governmental functions or tasks that are stringently determined by laws or administrative procedures. Here networks help shorten the traditional line of bureaucratic oversights and reduce the time of information flow by bringing the local constituency closer to the authoritative bodies. On the other hand,

networks provide opportunities for the horizontal mode of democratic accountability to be augmented to the vertical one. This can be achieved by devolving public tasks to the communities with active collaborations and oversights from the bureaucracies, and by legitimizing civic deliberations and feedback on bureaucratic actions.

The NEH helps promote democratic values to grow in local administration by broadening the rigid, unidirectional logic of traditional accountability to comprise the two-directional system without compromising *ex ante* controls. Networks do enhance democratic responsiveness and transparency through civic deliberation and monitoring, which would in the long-run help develop public trust toward networked constituency. The NEH departs from the idea of Behn (2001), which relies solely on trust and mutual interdependence, and also differs significantly from that of Bardach and Lesser (1996), where the traditional accountability model would be virtually substituted. Here, traditional, vertical accountability is fundamental to public administration yet can be shortened by networked collaborations and supplemented by the horizontal accountability that makes local bureaucracies more reachable.

This study shows beyond a doubt the applicability of contingency logic to networked arrangements in order to reinforce public performance and accountability. This finding is intriguing for a couple of reasons. First, it casts doubt on the argument that some modes of collaborative efforts are superior to others, especially those of scholars that assert that 'the more collaborations, the better' (e.g. Austin, 2000; Graddy and Chen, 2006; Provan and Milward, 1995). The NEH, on the contrary, makes an explicit viewpoint that no one partnership type is inherently superior to others. Like McGuire (2002) and Smith and Wohlstetter's study (2006), this study shows that each partnership style has its own merits

and should be arranged to fit the particular situation. The internal consistency of network operating systems as well as external congruency with external network environments represent the core of fluidity logic as advanced by the NEH and should be arranged such that they match very well with one another.

Second, we make an explicit statement about the structural variations of network arrangements across circumstances. Fluidity does not imply serendipitous or unplanned collaborative efforts. Indeed, it is a rationally planned network structure and corresponds to network operating systems. We hope that the notion of the NEH will provide concrete ideas for public administrators to think forward when they have to adopt collaborative approaches in order to cope with today's complex tasks.

Third, we have promoted research in public administration networks from an eclectic perspective yet closely tied with a pragmatic world rather than from an isolated theoretical orientation. We expect to see a burgeoning body of literature and theory-building research concerning networked forms of organization that can be applied practically to real circumstances. We also expect to see increased research emphasizing the fluidity of networked structural arrangements as a trajectory to enhancing policy/program performance and democratic accountability in the public sector. To date, much empirical work focuses on a single form of networked relationship, or implicitly assumes a stable structural arrangement, so that they can examine determining factors on network performance (see e.g. the work of Meier and O'Toole, 2001, 2003; O'Toole and Meier, 2004). Nevertheless, the contingent arrangement of networks is the point of nexus between network performance and democratic accountability in various administrative circumstances. Since these two notions are crucial for

a democratic society, and we should, therefore, advance the investigation into the NEH in greater detail.

Last but not least, our study suggests that networked governance is a must for today's complex tasks. Public administrators need to consider the networked management as an important administrative tool for future success. The options for networking models are available and administrators should employ the model that is most suitable to the given task and circumstance. Public administrators can no longer spend most of their time running the office and using command-and-control leadership styles.

Although intriguing, these findings are only one step to understanding networked public management in our society. As already discussed, the cases selected here are subject to selection bias, over-representing the networks' success. The generalization of the results in this essay must be done with care. More studies or empirical work on network performance and accountability is, hence, warranted. Furthermore, the logic of the NEH presented in this essay is subject to test and verification. Given that certain conditions have been met, we believe that networked management is a necessary condition for promoting public performance and accountability. We would appreciate it if more work were carried out to confirm or to modify or even to reject our findings in the future.

In sum, as networks in real world settings proliferate, public administrators find themselves bound with webs of partnerships. Networked management, therefore, has become a more promising, bottom line in today's public administration. It is now the task of public administrators to employ the appropriate strategic choice of collaborative arrangements that seems to best fit and is most effective in solving the problems at hand and simultaneously promotes democratic accountability.

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