

Network governance and the contemporary opium problem in northern Thailand

Patamawadee Jongruck

*Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration,
Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand*

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the current approach that the Thai Government has employed to manage “wicked problems,” using the case of opium in northern Thailand, and analyzing how the network governance approach can contribute to sustainable upland community development.

Design/methodology/approach – A case study was employed for this research. The data collection was based upon a qualitative research approach, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation and document research, were all conducted.

Findings – The study found that the strategy of the Thai Government to manage the opium problem in the upland periphery has changed over time. The recent approach could be illustrated as a form of network governance albeit solely within the governmental realm, which was found to be different from the network governance stratagem currently defined in the dominant literature. This paper suggests that in order to achieve a sustainable solution for upland community development, the mode of network governance should shift toward self-governing networks. In other words, non-state stakeholders should be actively engaged in the network and empowered to manage their problems for sustainable upland community development.

Originality/value – This paper contributes to the current corpus of network governance literature by introducing an empirical case study from Thailand. In terms of policy implication, this paper provides policy suggestions for governments, especially in Asia, who are actively seeking to resolve “wicked problems” and achieving sustainable community development.

Keywords Network governance, Thailand, Community development, Wicked problem

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The government has always played a significant role in community development; however, the form and the extent of this involvement has changed overtime. The network approach has marked a new way of public management in recent years and it is believed to be the best form of governance to deal with “wicked problem” in the society. Drugs problem is one of the “wicked problems” for Thailand. Four decades ago, opium was a critical problem in the upland communities of northern Thailand. Among the world’s most productive sources of heroin, the “Golden Triangle” of contiguous land along the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Lao PDR have plagued Thailand for decades with its illicit drug production and trafficking. Thailand has worked on and successfully eliminated cultivation through several approaches, resulting in the removal of Thailand from the United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) list of opium-producing nations in 2008 (UNODC, 2008). Although overall, poppy cultivation in Thailand had decreased dramatically, production in a particular district of the northern region, Omkoi district, has rebounded. The cultivation in Omkoi accounted for 75 percent of the country’s production in 2014 (ONCB, 2015). In response, the government has launched a new approach to resolve the growing problem. This paper examines the recent approach of the state to manage the contemporary opium problem in the upland area in northern Thailand and proposes how network governance can contribute to sustainable upland community development.



Study design and methods

This research drew upon an empirical case study of the opium problem in northern Thailand, using a qualitative research approach. Data were gathered during June–September 2017. The primary data derived from semi-structured interviews with 34 stakeholders, including government officers, representatives from non-governmental organizations, local leaders and opium users. Participatory observations were conducted by participating in key meetings of the Centre for Resolution of Security Problems in Omkoi (CRSPO). Analysis of documents—namely meeting minutes, the Office of Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) reports, and the Opium Cultivation and Eradication Report for Thailand, were the main sources for secondary data.

Changing the art of the state to manage “wicked problem”

The dominant public management approach for most of the twentieth century was bureaucracy characterized by a hierarchical structure (Hughes, 1998). Until the late 1970s, the long-standing paradigm of traditional public management was criticized for its many flaws, for example, its rigidity and inflexibility, the monopolized public services provision, the lack of responsiveness to people’s needs and its inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Olsen, 2005).

New public management (NPM) (Hood, 1991) was a term that represented a new approach to public management that intended to resolve the traditional bureaucratic problems. NPM is based on marketization and managerialism mechanisms. Many public services were contracted out to organizations outside of the governmental realm. Consequently, governmental organizations were forced to coordinate with other organizations: not only public ones, but also those outside the public sector, to deliver public services. Therefore, the nature of public management has changed to networks of public, private and third sectors. Public–private partnerships (PPPs) became a dominant mode of governance in the 1990s (Osborne, 2002).

The nature of modern society has become more complicated and the public services can hardly any achieve by a single organization, neither public nor private. Thus, the latest form of governance becomes network of governmental and non-governmental organizations. Several terms have been coined to refer to the networked public management. “Governance network” (Klijn, 2008) refers to public policy making and implementation through a web of relationships between government, business and societal actors. “Collaborative governance” (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Emerson *et al.*, 2011) refer to a collective public policy-making process that engages stakeholders from across the boundaries of public agencies, private and civic spheres to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished.

Among these terms, “network governance” (Rhodes, 1997) has been one of the most influential terms to refer to the network nature of public management (Kjaer, 2011). Rhodes (1997) defined network governance as a new mode of governing by and through networks. According to him, network governance is self-governing and characterized by an interdependence between organizations which are broader than government; continuing interactions between network members; game-like interactions rooted in trust and agreed rules of the game; and a degree of autonomy from the state.

Network governance has been perceived as the most effective way of handling “wicked problems” (Ferlie *et al.*, 2011; Head and Alford, 2015). Rittel and Webber (1973) referred to “wicked problem” as problematic social situations where there is no obvious solution, many individuals and organizations are involved, there is disagreement among stakeholders about a solution and agents require behavior changes as part of the solution. “Wicked problems” go beyond the scope of one agency and require networking across boundaries and the engagement of citizens and stakeholders in policy making and implementation.

This study takes five contingencies of network governance from Rhodes (1997) as a framework of study namely: actors in the network; interdependency among actors; interactions

among actors; trust; and goal congruence to examine how the Thai Government employed the network approach to manage the “wicked problems.”

The traffic of illicit drugs is an example of a “wicked problem” that requires resolution through the network approach. Thailand was recognized for its strong bureaucracy and was thus labeled a “bureaucratic polity” (Riggs, 1966). Although some recent studies have shown Thailand’s attempts to embark on governance reforms, the role of the bureaucracy seems undiminished (Painter, 2006).

Thus, this paper examines the recent attempts of the Thai Government to manage the “wicked problem,” using the contemporary opium problem in the upland area in northern Thailand as a case study.

Background of the opium problem in Thailand

Large-scale opium cultivation in Thailand did not begin in earnest until the early 1950s when the Thai–Myanmar–Laos border area, colloquially known as the “Golden Triangle,” became a manufacturing area for heroin for worldwide distribution. With limited access to basic infrastructures and the hard conditions of living, the hill-tribes in northern Thailand were encouraged to grow opium extensively. During that time, Thailand was largely affected by opium in terms of being the place of production and the place of distribution for the international market.

In the 1960s, opium production from Thailand was estimated at nearly 200 metric tons (ONCB, 2011). The problem became so critical that it subsequently attracted international attention. Several international aid programs poured into the region (Rutherford *et al.*, 2005). These projects aimed at promoting “alternative development” which involved several means to end opium production other than armed force (Rutherford *et al.*, 2005). In 1969, the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej initiated the Royal Project, which sought to solve the problems of deforestation, poverty and opium production in the highland area through the promotion of alternative crops. Although alternative development programs brought several improvements to the upland communities, the overall cultivation did not significantly decrease.

The dramatic drop of opium cultivation only became evident in the mid-1980s after the Thai Government began to use the eradication approach after 1984; 15 years after the use of the alternative development approach (Anderson, 2018). The ONCB, the governmental agency directly in charge of the illicit drugs problems of the country, coordinated eradication with the Thai army and the border patrol police. This policy had an immediate impact, between 1984 and 1985, Thailand’s area under cultivation dropped about 50 percent from 8,290 to 4,126 ha (Renard, 2001).

The Thai Government also dealt with the demand side of the opium problem. The Government Opium Treatment Centre was found in 1958 and later became Thanyarak hospital, a specialized public hospital for drugs treatment, in 1966. Several treatment approaches were conducted including the Therapeutic Community and the Harm Reduction approach, which helped reduce the demand for opium use.

It was clear that the alternative development, the eradication and the treatment approaches since the 1960s have been led by government agencies, with support from international organizations. The result was efficient, as it dramatically decreased the opium cultivation area, from 8,777 ha in 1984 to 129 ha in 2003. After two decades of these attempts, the situation seemed to be under control when the cultivation area was no longer over 300 ha from 2003 onwards. (ONCB, 2011).

Consequently, since 2008, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has removed statistics on Thailand’s opium in its World Drugs Report. This officially marked the end of the opium era in the international market for Thailand.

Omkoï: an outlier of Thailand's opium problem

Despite Thailand's success in eliminating the bulk of opium poppy cultivation, small-scale cultivation has stubbornly remained, especially among subsections of the rural population in the highland area of northern Thailand.

Omkoï is one among 25 districts of Chiang Mai province. Located 170 kilometers from the province's center, Omkoï lies close to the border shared by Myanmar. Omkoï is an important watershed with 90 percent of its area situated in a highland national forest reserve area. Among the district's population of approximately 6,200,080 percent are hill-tribe and mainly Karen ethnic (Anderson and Jongruek, 2017; Anderson, 2018). Anecdotaly, most of the indigenous population living in the remotest areas of Omkoï lack Thai citizenship. Omkoï is considered among the poorest districts in Thailand, according to a quality-of-life survey conducted by the Ministry of Interior in 2013 (Department of Community Development, 2013).

While opium has diminished in other areas, the cultivation in Omkoï reverses the trend. The statistics from ONCB (2015) show that the opium cultivation area in Omkoï was 99.35 ha in 2012 – accounting for 47.63 percent of the countrywide cultivation and increased to 142.3 and 246.37 ha in 2013 and 2014, which accounted for 53.55 and 75.12 percent accordingly.

Despite the increase in opium cultivation, Omkoï did not historically benefit from the alternative development programs because the opium production in this area was not to the extent that it attracted the attention of international development agencies. The Royal Project, through the Highland Research Development Institute, became aware of the cultivation issues in Omkoï in 2009 and began an "extension" project in the district in that same year (Anderson and Jongruek, 2017; Anderson, 2018). However, the data from the interviews revealed that the opium users gained few benefits from the alternative development programs because the participant selection in the extension of the Royal Project program was on a voluntary basis, which the opium addicts generally lacked motivation and capability to start new crop-cultivation.

The actual level of addiction in Omkoï was unclear due to the lack of information amongst relevant agencies. It was estimated that there were approximately 5,000 opium users, accounting of about 12 percent of the district population (Northern Substance Abuse Centre, 2013; Anderson and Jongruek, 2017; Anderson, 2018); however, from the interviews conducted with local leaders it was believed that the number could be much higher. The interviews with opium users revealed that opium was mainly cultivated and used in the household – not for commercial trade. The main purpose of the use was largely for medical reasons since the villages are situated far away from healthcare centers and hospitals. It could take up to seven hours to travel by car on the poorly conditioned dirt road in the rainy season. Opium thus became an effective medicine that the villagers could instantly access and afford. While smoking is still the most common way to use opium, injection has become more popular in some areas because of the scarcity of opium and price increase in response to eradication. The villagers believed that injection uses less amount of opium and has stronger effects. This phenomenon has recently led to several health problems, such as HIV infection and hepatitis.

Opium eradication in Omkoï has been carried out by the armed forces led by the army, police, and ONCB. It has been reported that nearly 100 percent of the opium fields have been eradicated every year. This has led to the question of how there is still the opium production left in Omkoï if all opium poppy fields were eradicated and there was no report of opium smuggling from neighboring provinces (Anderson and Jongruek, 2017). The interviews with ONCB officers indicated that the opium cultivation has changed from single crop rotation to multiple crops within a year. The poppy fields that were marked as eradicated might later re-grow and the officers would not re-visit the fields because they were marked as already eradicated and had no budget for re-visiting. The eradication thus did not get rid of all the opium supplies, but it made the opium scarcer and the price became higher.

Given the fact that people in Omkoi, who are from ethnic minority groups and lack almost every opportunity to maintain a good standard of living quality (e.g. lack of citizenship, no land ownership, poor infrastructures, limited access to healthcare and education, limited occupational choices, unreached by the government agencies, etc.), opium cultivation is the only means for them to earn money and improve their quality of life. The opium problem in Omkoi is thus a symptom caused by several underlying socio-economic problems with no obvious solution and it goes beyond the ability of single organization to solve, thus it can be regarded as “wicked problem” (Rittel and Webber, 1973). The Thai Government has recently concerned about this problem and began to take more action in Omkoi.

Contemporary approach for opium solution in Thailand: network governance?

Increasing opium cultivation in Omkoi has been catching the attention of the Thai Government since 2009; as it was that period where Omkoi’s opium statistics were presented in the Opium Cultivation and Eradication Report for Thailand: 2009–2010 (ONCB, 2011). In September of 2012, the Office of the Prime Minister declared Omkoi a “special area” which was a military-controlled area and exceptional rules and regulations were applied. It required a board of commission to devise an area-based approach to deal with the area’s security problems. That year, the Government established the Centre for Resolution of Security Problems in Omkoi (CRSPO). The CRSPO’s mandate was planning, directing, coordinating and integrating all activities relating to opium reduction and other security-related issues, such as human trafficking, illegal logging and deforestation, in Omkoi district.

In creating the CRSPO, the intention of the Thai Government was to address Omkoi’s opium problem in a different way. The approach aimed at solving the problem was based on an experimental network structure. The expected shift was from a traditional bureaucratic approach to network governance, or from government to governance (Rhodes, 2007).

In 2016, the CRSPO launched the five-year master plan (2017–2021) for opium, narcotics and security in Omkoi. The plan consists of six committees according to the strategies of the plan. The board chaired by the Thai third army and the ONCB Region 5 acted as the board secretariat. Some key members of the CRSPO and their responsibilities according to the master plan strategies are summarized in Table I.

This research examines the characteristics of this newly established body to manage the “wicked problem” in Omkoi, by examining five contingencies of network governance namely:

- (1) actors in the network;
- (2) interdependency;
- (3) interactions;
- (4) trust; and
- (5) goal congruence.

Actors in the network

Actors in network governance include organizations which are broader than government agencies (Rhodes, 1997). Narcotics control in Thailand has generally been state-led and the management of the opium problem has been no exception. The examples of participating organizations under the CRSPO mentioned above illustrated that participating organizations were all from governmental agencies. These agencies were mandated by the parent ministries to help solve the opium problem at the peripheral level. Over time, the number of participating organizations has increased, from 17 in 2012 to more than 23 organizations within five years. Yet, the expansion of the network was still within the governmental realm. Neither private nor third sector organizations were included in the

Master plan strategy	Mission	Key organizations
Intelligent database	Developing and maintaining an up-to-date database in terms of opium cultivation areas and other relating socio-economic data	ONCB Region 5 Narcotics Crops Survey and Monitoring Institute Chiang Mai University
Effective control of opium cultivation, trade and use	Effective suppression, eradication, and law enforcement	The third army The ranger force area 35 and 36 Chiang Mai Police Office
Holistic and easy access treatment	Reach out to more opium users and create alternative forms of treatment, as well as enhancing the effectiveness of post-treatment monitoring	ONCB Region 5 Omkoï Hospital Thanarak Hospital
Comprehensive prevention	Extending opium prevention to youth, both inside and outside schools, as well as adults in the area	Office of fundamental education, Chiang Mai area 2 Office of non-formal and informal education Local Administrative Organizations in Omkoï
Active community	Enhancing livelihoods and food security; promoting alternative crops with complete market mechanisms and linkages; encouraging sustainable natural resource conservation in reserve areas; local leadership capacity building	Highland Research and Development Institute Omkoï District office The 3rd army Local Administrative Organizations in Omkoï
Modern management	Promoting flexibility and focusing on result-based management, together with constant performance evaluation	Internal Security Operations Command (3rd Area) ONCB Region 5

Source: Author's construct

Table I.
Mission and key
organizations
of CRSPO

official structure of the CRSPO, not to mention the ordinary villagers, who are an ethnic minority group and undereducated. The interviews with government officers revealed that the state agencies did not want to include non-state actors in the board, because solving the opium problem involved several confidential and security issues, and it was more convenient for them to work with those agencies within the public sphere. Therefore, the non-state actors were absent at the policy level. However, some recent evidence has shown that non-state actors took part at the implementation level. For example, there was the involvement of villagers in the opium poppy field eradication. An alternative opium treatment was also conducted by the well-respected village shaman. This was a good sign that the network was increasingly open to the involvement of non-state actors.

Interdependency among actors

Most researchers agree that interdependency is the core factor that initiates and sustains networks (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004; Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Rhodes, 1997). The possibility of collaboration will be higher in a situation of mutual dependence where one organization needs resources from another and vice versa (Lundin, 2007). In the case of the CRSPO, actors who came into the network were mandated by the government. Member agencies of the CRSPO operate on a budget provided by the annual fiscal plan, plus the budget specifically granted to the CRSPO to undertake the work in Omkoï. Most of the interviewees believed that even without the CRSPO budget they could still work on the opium issue with the budget provided by parent ministries. However, they could achieve better performance with the support from the CRSPO funding. Most of the interviewees also viewed that they could accomplish most of the tasks by their own organization, however, when support was needed,

they could ask other members of the CRSPO for assistance and they had received good responses so far. This indicated the low interdependency among governmental actors within this network. The absence of non-state actors in the CRSPO network could also be explained by the low level of interdependency between governmental agencies and non-state organizations. The interviewees were hardly aware of the resources they required from the counterpart sector and the benefits they could gain from the involvement of non-state actors.

Interaction among actors

Interactions in network governance are often based on a loose structure, decentralized power and informal relations among participating actors. However, the structures and processes of government administration often constrain the flexible interactions which network requires (Head and Alford, 2015). Participatory observation and interviews with the CRSPO members found that the structure of the CRSPO was relatively rigid. For example, the CRSPO structure was divided into six committees and each participating organization was assigned to work as part of each sub-committee. The observation revealed that the participating organization rarely had a chance to work across the boundaries of the respective working groups. The coordination mechanism was carried out mainly through official meetings and reports. The annual meeting of the CRSPO was a platform for all network participants to report their respective organizational activities instead of simply being the platform to plan and act together.

The interactions and activities of the CRSPO were guided by the five-year master plan. Although the plan had helped in setting a clear direction for the network members, it hindered the flexibility of the network since the participants had to follow the activities and the amount of budget advised in the plan and needed to go through regular bureaucratic processes. This allowed little room for new initiative. In terms of power structure, the CRSPO has a military-led structure, especially during the time of which this study was undertaken, which was when Thailand was under a military government; the power of the military actor was exceptionally high. Other actors were mandated, if not ordered, to collaborate in this network. The interaction among actors was characterized by the hierarchy within the military-led bureaucratic culture, while personal and informal relations were suppressed under formal ones.

Trust

Scholars agree that trust is an important fundamental for networks (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2012). Yet, this is hard to establish and build in the public sector (Head and Alford, 2015). Trust can be built upon continuous interactions and communication. Through participatory observation, it was found that trust was a challenging issue for the CRSPO network. Trust is built upon long-term relations and based upon personal relationships. The fact that the CRSPO has often changed its structure and frequently rotated its in-charge officers, has affected the trust-building process. Trust can also be noticed from the extent to which they risk of disclosing important information to each other (Head and Alford, 2015). Limited information sharing among all involved agencies was an example of low trust within the CRSPO network. Each organization possessed useful information but hardly shared with other agencies, given that it was confidential information and needed formal approval for disclosure. Even when the information had been shared with other agencies, the accuracy and validity was questioned. Trust was not only a problem occurring among the government agencies in the CRSPO network but also among external stakeholders, such as the villagers. An interview with the village leader revealed that the villagers stopped cultivating opium with the hope that they would gain better infrastructure and services from the government. However, the government officers could not keep promises due to several bureaucratic barriers that required approval from

the central government. Thus, the villagers lost trust in the governmental officers and started to cultivate opium again. Building trust, both with the state agencies and the non-state actors, was obviously a key challenge for the CRSPO.

Goal congruence

Mutual trust alone cannot enhance cooperation. Trust and goal congruence must exist simultaneously (Lundin, 2007). The official goal of the CRSPO was stated in the Master Plan: "Omkoï will be an opium and illicit drug-free area and apply the sufficiency economy principles for living." This vision statement clearly demands prioritization of the leaders in the network—the military and the ONCB. They performed traditional leadership style that leaders frame the vision and encourage others to pursue the goal. However, this is not the case for "wicked problem" that leader knows best and there is no clear solution that agreeable for everyone (Head and Alford, 2015). The CRSPO faced challenges of goal congruence among participating agencies because each organization had different priorities. While zero opium in Omkoï was the definite goal for the military and the ONCB, the community development and treatment teams focused more on the well-being of the people in Omkoï. Opium reduction was the byproduct of an improved quality of life, according to the latter groups. Therefore, the network goal was not based on a consensus of the participating agencies and even conflicted with that of the villagers. The villagers did not perceive opium as a problem; it was the state's problem – not theirs. Thus, there was no incentive for the villagers to participate in the CRSPO. Consequently, it was a big challenge for the CRSPO to expand and sustain the network.

In summary, the analysis of the contingencies of the network above shows that the Thai Governmental network established to deal with the contemporary opium problem differed from the characterization of network governance in the dominant literature of Rhodes (1997). Participants in the CRSPO were entirely governmental, whereas actors in network governance should include organizations which are broader in range than simply governmental stakeholders. While interdependence is a fundamental condition for voluntary networks, interdependence among actors in this case was relatively low; each could accomplish the task with their resources. The main incentive for the actors to join this network was the mandate from the superior organizations. Whereas the interactions within network governance are often complex and based on the agreed rules of the game, the interactions in this case were mainly based on hierarchical and bureaucratic interactions. The five-year master plan controlled the rules of this network; however, it operated under bureaucratic regulations which were rigid and allowed little room for adjustment and negotiation. Moreover, trust is important for networks. However, the evidence of trust among all stakeholders, appeared to be low. Lastly, the goal congruence among actors in this case was also unclear; with disagreements about prioritized and overall network goals; thus, posing a challenge for network sustainability and network expansion to include the non-state stakeholders.

Discussion

It could be concluded from the empirical evidence that governance in this case was not "network governance" according to Rhodes's (1997, p. 15) definition, which is "self-organizing, inter-organizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource-exchange, rules of the game, and significant autonomy from the state." (Kjaer, 2011); however, argued that Rhodes' definition of network governance referred to a set of "specific" governing structures which might not be able to apply to every context. The case being studied was clearly not fit Rhodes's rubric. This was not "governing without government" (Rhodes, 2007) but "governing within the network of government agencies."

The characteristics of the CRSPO could be considered as a hybrid form of bureaucracy and network mode of governance. The network members were “mandated” to join the network to deliver the national objectives. Similar evidence is also found in the study of Ferlie *et al.* (2011), who studied the policy network in the UK’s National Health Service. They suggested partial rather than radical change from hierarchical to network form. Although remarkable transformation was not apparent in the case of Thailand, this approach changed the way of the Thai officers to deal with “wicked problems” like narcotics issue, which has generally been under bureaucratic structures and procedures, by encouraging them to work across the boundaries of different ministries for the same official goal.

This transformation marked a significant change for governance in Thailand. In 2018, the year of which this paper was written, the opium cultivation in Omkoi was significantly reduced to lower than 10 ha (CRSPO, 2017). It showed that the bureaucratic network that the Thai Government employed was relatively effective. However, whether this type of network would be a sustainable solution to the “wicked problems” and the highland community development in the long run is still questionable. Government agencies might achieve their goal of zero opium, while the Omkoi people would still face social hardship as the root causes of the opium problem could not be resolved merely by the governmental agencies.

Thus, this study suggests that in order to achieve a sustainable solution, the approach after this stage should move toward self-governing network, in which the ordinary villagers, NGOs, or private sector, come together in the network. Key conditions for self-governing network in this case are proposed. First, goal alignment between the state and non-state actors should be established; in other words, opium should be a common problem for everyone in the community not just the governmental agencies. Second, current situation suggests that trust between the state and the local community is absent. Trust-building is, therefore, needed in order to expand the network to incorporate the non-state actors. Third, community capacity building is specifically necessary in this case since the highland community has rarely received opportunities for capacity development. The highland people should have equal access to education and basic infrastructures so that their capacity can be enhanced. Lastly, government agencies should reduce their interventions and act as facilitators by empowering the local leaders to be able to lead the network. The community should not merely be a passive subject of the government. To summarize, opium problem is indeed a “wicked problem” that requires resources and efforts beyond governmental sphere.

Conclusion

Literature suggests that a network form of governance is the most effective approach to deal with “wicked problems.” This paper examines the approach that the Thai Government manages the “wicked problems” -in this case opium problem in Omkoi, where the majority of contemporary opium cultivation and usage occurs. The study found that the characteristics of the network in this case were a hybrid form of bureaucracy and network, which was a network of government agencies that worked toward their goal of opium reduction. Although this form of governance is effective in opium reduction in the current context, it might not be a sustainable approach. The paper suggests that in order to achieve sustainability of community development, self-governing network governance should be encouraged by reducing the role of government and empowering non-governmental stakeholders. This study contributes to the corpus of knowledge of network governance and “wicked problems” that although in theory self-governing network is the best form of governance to manage “wicked problem,” in reality-especially in the context where the role of bureaucracy is strong and the capacity of the local community is low-the self-governing network takes time to occur and thus the “wicked problems” takes time to sustainably be resolved.

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Corresponding author

Patamawadee Jongruck can be contacted at: patamawadee.j@cmu.ac.th

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