



Concept and Elements of A Network Model for Effective Management

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Abstract

This article reviews social networking concepts, network element patterns, and network assessment. The review found that social networks can explain human behaviors and relationships, such as activities and behaviors, communication, cooperation, dependency, exchange, and sharing within various kinds of structures and forms of networks. Evaluation of network effectiveness, as defined by Provan and Milward is extremely complex and has generally been neglected. Their model focuses on evaluation of networks at three broad levels of analysis: community, network, and organization/ participants. Concept of Social Network is the linking up of direct and indirect relationships between social units. It is a natural phenomenon in human society and bring together all the agencies that benefit common policies. Networking concepts can help to manage resources in an appropriate and worthwhile way. An effective management model requires recognition and cooperation from all parties doing the work.

Keywords: Network Model, Effective Management, Elements



1. Introduction

Complicated and uncertain situations must rely on management by multiple agencies in order to produce effective output. Network models are a vital form of organization, as they encourage all parties to cooperate in the work and in policy-related processes, such as policy making, implementation, and decision making. These processes all rely on the knowledge and skills of many personnel in order to handle significant issues or problems.

Problems are often caused by overloading and are likely to signal the need for additional assistants so that the situation can improve and be more efficiently managed. Network management requires mutual understanding among all actors of coherent policy, operations, and capacities, allowing situations to be managed in such a way that coordination and cooperation is carried out cohesively and in the same direction. In emergency situations, collective actions toward a mutual goal of managing the emergency and returning to normalcy require an effective network of collaboration (Kamolvej, 2014: 105).

Various situations and issues within Thailand, such as problems related to poverty, disasters, and matters relevant to management of public goods and services, suggest that a hierarchical management style is inadequate. It is a format that is suitable for situations that are uncomplicated and directly accessible. Problems such as those listed above, however, are complex, and many stakeholders with access to a network model would allow more thorough distribution of comprehensive information. A network model would thus facilitate more inclusive decision making, policy implementation, and problem solving. This article presents social networking concepts, network element patterns, and network assessment.

2. A Network Model: Concept and Elements

2.1 Concept of Social Network

A social network is the linking up of direct and indirect relationships between social units. It is a natural phenomenon in human society. When a network is set up, people in the network are connected via some form of relationship, whether a close-knit unit (families, relatives), a more distant one (colleagues, neighbors, people around us), or something in between. Each type of relationship leads to different activities with different levels of participation (Phromlert, 2005: 34).

Social networks involve human relationships in society, including at the individual level, as well as individual-group, group-group, and group-network combinations. Social networks and the different forms they take can explain human behaviors and relationships as they occur in various kinds of structures, including activities, communication, cooperation and dependency, exchange, sharing, and other phenomena. Human social networks encompass all units, from the societal to the individual level. Various kinds of relationships and resulting influences occur in social networks: individuals in a network can influence its behavior, while an individual may also be influenced by various networks, for example. Social networks inspire a process of shared



activities, interactions, and close relationships between the units as members (Apakaro, 2004: 6). Wasserman and Faust (1994: 6) explain that the most distinguishing feature of social network analysis (SNA) is its focus on relationships among social entities and on the patterns and implications of these relationships. Rather than analyzing individual behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, social network analysis focuses its attention on social entities', or actors', interactions with one another and on how these interactions constitute a framework or structure that can be studied and analyzed in its own right (Dempwolf and Lyles, 2012: 6).

Networks may be modeled using dots or “nodes” to represent actors in the network and lines between the dots to represent the relationships or “ties” between actors. SNA is both a theoretical perspective on how the interactions of individual autonomous actors form the social structures of community and a set of analytical tools to analyze those interactions and social structures as networks of nodes (actors) and ties (relationships) (Dempwolf and Lyles, 2012: 4). Newman (2003, cited in Dempwolf and Lyles, 2012: 5) identifies four “loose categories” of network analysis, including: 1) Social networks, such as forms of contact or interactions between individuals; 2) Information networks, such as links on the World Wide Web and academic citation networks; 3) Technological networks, such as water, transportation, and energy systems; and 4) Biological networks, such as food webs with predators, prey, and decomposers. Planners routinely face six types of problems where SNA may prove especially useful. These include problems related to: 1) coordination, cooperation, or trust; 2) the sources and uses of power and influence; 3) multiple levels of organization; 4) informal organization; 5) flows of information and/or transaction costs; and 6) dynamics of community (network) development (modified from Heaney and McClurg, 2009, cited in Dempwolf and Lyles, 2012: 9).

Network management brings together all the agencies that benefit common policies. Trust is essential in order to reduce performance gaps (Simo and Bies, 2007: 125). If work by the local authority or the government has failed, whether the partnership has a formal or informal structure, the level of trust between parties will be affected (Simo and Bies, 2007: 137). Therefore, for example, development of sustainable flood management should involve changing the culture (values, attitudes, and behaviors) to foster readiness for emergency situations (McEntire, Fuller, Johnson and Weber, 2002: 270).

2.2 Social Structures

All social structures can change depending on the form of the group and relationship. Resource exchange is based on specific exchanges. Social structures encompass public sectors, private sectors, and civil society (Phromlert, 2005: 25).

A governing body can be compared to a machine that is driven by society to proceed systematically. The government sector in Thailand has evolved over many years, allowing for powerful relations to form. Meanwhile, integration among sectors is difficult to implement due to

the top-down form of management. Policy put into place by the authorities can cause problems in the coordination of social networking with other sectors, including private and public sectors.

The key mechanism in social network coordination has always been the government (Phromlert, 2005: 28). Figure 1 shows the government structure.

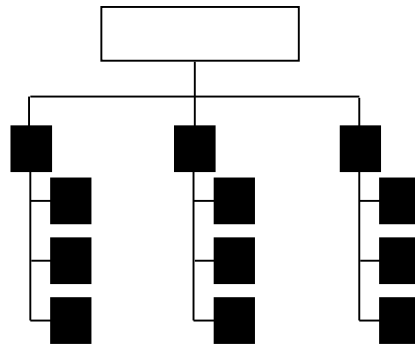


Figure 1: Government structure

Source: Phromlert, 2005: 27.

The private sector, meanwhile, is an important component of social development, as a significant part of this sector has evolved from humanitarian assistance. Members of the private sector work from various angles, cultivating self-reliance by pushing for the resolution of social problems, creating a consciousness among collective groups, and producing publications that describe the processes involved in their work. Operations carried out by the private sector constitute an ongoing social movement. A key aspect of this sector is to coordinate and share knowledge with other networks (Apakaro, 2004: 80-81). In summary, strengths of the private sector are its commitment to offering choices for social development, supporting people to become self-reliant, and taking part in solutions. However, a limitation is its limited budget for conducting activities. In addition, there is a lack of awareness of certain interest groups, and private sector activities as a tool for social development work do not necessarily fit the context of Thai society. Figure 2 shows the private structure.



Figure 2: Private structure

Source: Phromlert, 2005: 29.

A more horizontal working model is represented by the public sector, which centers community and civil society, who play a role in resolving social problems and creating a sustainable environment. The interface of various groups can lead to co-operation in planning, sponsoring, promoting, and training, as well as holding demonstrations and conducting public relations. They can also offer co-operational support, such as through a joint public relations campaign, training which may be conducted together with the government, or other collaborative activities.

The public sector, as a structure, is a combination of people in an area constituting a cultural community. Procedures are carried out through cooperation with other participants in the sector. The integration of people in this sector transpires from learning and relaying experiences together via a natural process. The public sector, however, can be strengthened with support from the government sector or other sectors, which can benefit from a stronger civil society. This kind of support can prevent latency in self- and community development. Figure 3 shows the public structure.

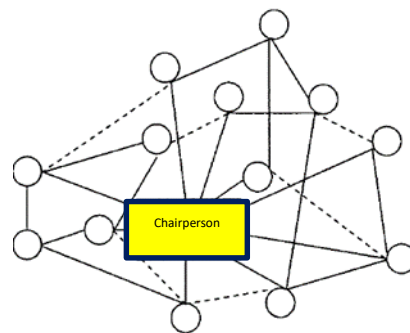


Figure 3: Public structure

Source: Phromlert, 2005: 30.

Public structures are similarly horizontal, with directional integration contributing to learning. This occurs so profoundly by nature that rules to regulate them or to define mechanisms for their dependence are unnecessary. Public sector work can be divided into two main levels. The first level of work intends to strengthen the community by transforming learning and self-management. The second level aims to create opportunities and strengthen the capacity of the network, expanding connections to other networks. Integration helps to enhance self-reliance through learning inherited wisdom and adapting it to the present-day community, including participation in local development with an emphasis on interoperability to achieve alignment at the higher levels. However, restrictions on public sector activities include budget constraints and a lack of certain resources and attributes, such as learning skills, adaptability, self-management systems, knowledgeable and capable leaders, and network management systems (Phromlert, 2005: 31).

Characteristics of each structure are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Characteristics of Each Structure

Structure	Characteristics
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hierarchical - Regulated - Uses formal communications - Oriented toward public interests - Responsive to simple problems
Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible - Clear working style - Oriented toward benefiting the organization - Organized as collective groups - Horizontal structure
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverse membership - Unclear command/expertise - Unclear orientation - Cooperative - Varied group formats

Network theory is a subcomponent of functional structure theory. While the latter is focused on the development of structures as they occur, network theory is focused on horizontal structures as they relate to behaviors, cultural norms, social learning processes, and collectivism. Patterns of structural change evolve over time. Connections occur according to the relationships between different actors, which may differ in direction and is linearly related. Social networks are unique due to the relationships they encompass, from the micro to the macro level. The lowest level occurs at the individual level, followed by familial, group, district, provincial, national, and finally,



the global level. Social networks are a characteristic of modern society and have been significantly influenced by the information technology revolution (Phromlert, 2005: 35).

2.3 Elements of Networks include:

1. Scale: Refers to the number of social groups in a society with related individuals. Scale may depend on several factors, such as age or geographic remoteness.

2. Character of relationships: In terms of mutual membership in a social group, whether commitment and quality of the relationship is substantial.

3. Period: The period of contact from when individuals initiate and a relationship with each other and for as long as it is continued. A consecutive period indicates a steady relationship. A strong affinity for the group and being known for a longer period of time will affect social support and people's willingness to help each other.

4. Frequency of contact: Refers to the regularity of conversing. A higher frequency of contact indicates a more stable group.

5. Contact methods: There are many ways to communicate, such as letters, telephone conversations, or talking in person. The best method is talking in person, as such conversations are usually easier to understand than those had via other methods (Tumornsunthorn, Empradit and Sangkhawan, 1998: 23).

2.4 Evaluating Network Effectiveness

Although cooperative, interorganizational networks have become a common mechanism for delivery of public services, evaluating their effectiveness in a way which is consistent with a multiple stakeholder perspective is extremely complex and has generally been neglected. The model described by Provan and Milward (2001: 414) focuses on evaluation of networks at three broad levels of analysis: community, network, and organizational/participant.

An important issue in the delivery of publicly funded health and human services at the local-community level is the integration and coordination of organizational providers into service-delivery networks. The development and utilization of these networks have been a focus of organizational and public policy scholars since at least the 1960s. Recently, focus has broadened from a concern with individual relationships among organizations to an examination of the multiple interactions that comprise full networks, including discussion of how public policy is implemented through networks of cooperating service providers (Provan and Milward, 2001: 414) (see Table 2).

Table 2 Summary of Network Evaluation Relationships

Level of network analysis	Key stakeholder groups	Effectiveness criteria
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Principals and Clients - Client advocacy groups - Funders - Politicians - Regulators - General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost to community - Building of social capital - Public perceptions of problem being solved - Changes in the incidence of the problem - Aggregate indicators of client well-being
Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Principals and agents - Primary funders and regulators - Network administrative organization - Member organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Network membership growth - Range of services provided - Absence of service duplication - Relationship strength (multiplexity) - Creation and maintenance of network administrative organization (NAO) - Integration/coordination of services - Cost of network maintenance - Member commitment to network goals

Table 2 (Cont.)

Level of network analysis	Key stakeholder groups	Effectiveness criteria
Organization/ Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agents and clients - Member agency board and management - Agency staff - Individual clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agency survival - Enhanced legitimacy - Resource acquisition - Cost of services - Service access - Client outcomes - Minimal conflict among multiprogram agencies with multiple networks

Source: Provan and Milward, 2001: 416.

3. Conclusion

Explaining complex social phenomena and problems that governments cannot deal with alone and limitations of bureaucratic administration. As a result, social networking is a concept that all parties should be able to use in dealing with those that cannot be handled by either party, such as flooding, Covid-19 epidemic situation. All sectors should work together to resolve the situation in a participating manner.

Considerations for implementing are: 1) engagement, 2) network level, 3) number of stakeholders, 4) structure, 5) social context, 6) administrative resources, 7) roles and relationships of individuals and organizations. This article attempts to review the concepts and principles to apply and create social learning. The benefits of a social network are 1) increasing management efficiency, 2) reducing operating costs, 3) building social capital, 4) promoting participation, and 5) cooperation at each level of the network.

The network model is a model that reflects the participation of many people coming together, allowing for systematic documentation and review and identifying the cause of various problems. However, the cultural diversity of personnel determines whether management will be effective. Therefore, the use of networking concepts in management is absolutely necessary in



order to understand the context, place, knowledge, abilities, and openness of the people involved and their ideas. Networking concepts can help to manage resources in an appropriate and worthwhile way. An effective management model requires recognition and cooperation from all parties doing the work. Future research should focus on network elements, including scale, character of relationships, time periods, frequency of contact, and contact methods.

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