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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Considering the Responsiveness, Accountability and Transparency Implications of Hybrid Organization in Local Governance: A Comparison of Public Service Provision Approaches in Myanmar and Thailand

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**Abstract:** Urban areas around the world face challenges in public service production and provision to respond to complex expectations of their diverse publics. In response to these problems, organizationally complex solutions that involve inter-sectoral collaboration and cooperation among public, private for-profit, and nonprofit organizations are frequently “engineered” to create hybrid-organizational arrangements. The current article is premised on a prior assessment that there has been an inadequate application of organizational variables to understand how these organizationally complex forms of local governance emerge and operate. It uses its hybrid organization model in descriptive and analytic assessments of two organizationally complex local public service approaches in urban settings of Southeast Asia. For descriptive purposes, the hybrid approach assists in understanding why and how organizationally complex arrangements emerge in urban governance. For analytic purposes, it considers the consequentiality of these arrangements, particularly in terms of concerns raised by Stoker regarding the challenges that organizational complexity poses to the good governance dimensions of responsiveness, accountability, and transparency. The study finds that hybrid organizational approaches can contribute to good governance in urban areas. It also asserts the importance of assessing contextual factors in making inter-local comparisons in terms of good governance impacts.

**Keywords:** Local governance, good governance, hybrid organization, public service, Southeast Asia

The contemporary usage of the concept of new public governance (NPG) has been applied to public action from the global to local levels (Stoker, 1997). Analysts have emphasized a variety of governance characteristics. Some have focused on power, authority,

control, and accountability relationships among participants in governance arrangements (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1997; Institute on Governance, 2002; Vodden, 2009). Others have emphasized organizational forms, organizational

relationships, and patterns of institutionalization (Gibson, 2011). The cultural context of governance has received attention from other scholars (UNESCO, 2017). Although NPG does not call for the replacement of hierarchy, the coordination that it emphasizes involves inter-organizational collaboration among two or more organizational entities (Bevir, 2011; Rhodes, 2007; Stoker, 1997, 1998). Unitary governmental decision-making is supplanted by collaboration among multiple inter-sectoral interests that share a public policy and management space (Hirst, 2000). Collective action and multi-directional patterns of authority to make and implement decisions supplant unidirectional lines of power and control. The interests of multiple stakeholders are synthesized beyond those of government to create shared visions among multiple stakeholders (Gibson, 2011).

The international literature on governance offers a variety of ways to conceptualize, describe, and analyze governance (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998). Stoker (1998) summarized the characteristics of governance in set propositions that involve organizational complexity. Multiple organizations and many different sorts of organizational arrangements are required to accomplish the ends of governance. However, as Lowatcharin and Crumpton (2019) assessed in their development and application of the hybrid organizational conceptual and analytic approach to the local governance, the organizational “engineering” that takes place in creating organizationally complex governance responses on the local level have not been adequately conceptualized and analyzed in terms of their processes, forms, and consequences. Furthermore, they have not been considered in terms of their good governance consequences. The current study embraces the Stoker and Lowatcharin/Crumpton assessments and seeks to analyze how organizational engineering in governance on the local level takes place and its implications on the good governance dimensions of responsiveness, accountability, and transparency (RAT). It also addresses concerns raised by Stoker (1998, p.19) regarding the challenges that organizational complexity found in governance poses to the analysis of accountability and power.

There is extensive international literature concerning the organizational complexity of governance. Wilson (2000) argued that inter-country contextual differences must be considered in the analysis of governance approaches. Although the Lowatcharin and Crumpton

conceptual and analytic approach is largely built on evidence from North America, the current study seeks inter-contextual understanding by applying it to the developing world and the Southeast Asian region. The study also goes beyond what might be viewed as normative descriptions and prescriptions from the international literature to introduce diagnostic tools that will support the production of useful inter-contextual empirical evidence and the value of these tools to diagnose inter-organizational hybridization and consider its good governance implications.

The current study applies the model of hybrid organization in local governance developed by Lowatcharin and Crumpton (2019) to the cases of the Yangon Heritage Trust in Myanmar and Khon Kaen Transit System in Thailand. These hybrid organizational forms include collaboration among local government, the business community, nongovernmental organizations, and other interests to respond to specific public service problems in local governance. The evidence collected on these cases reflects the complexity in inter-organizational arrangements for the production and delivery of local public goods and services that Lowatcharin and Crumpton found in the intergovernmental relations work of Parks and Oakerson (1993). The organizational arrangements that have been made in these two cases involve source organizations from different sectors in the local governance landscape that combine multiple purposes, resources, and structures. Based on the analytical approach utilized in this study, it is argued that these two urban governance approaches represent a form of organizational complexity: “hybrid organization.” The current study also builds on the Lowatcharin/Crumpton framing to consider the consequentiality of inter-organizational hybridization on the good governance dimensions of RAT.

## **Literature Review and Conceptual Framework Governance Challenges**

Governance can be seen as responses to meet public demands for evolving public service needs and desires. According to Saito (2008, p. 3), the reasons for the evolution of governance include: (a) demands from the public have diversified and government can no longer meet all of them; (b) financial resources for the government have become

insufficient to meet these demands, resulting in gaps between supply and demand; (c) the effectiveness of the state to manage exchanges among citizens and the services and goods they seek has been reduced by the effect of globalization; and, (d) alternative public service providers have emerged that represent more competitive and collaborative means of production and delivery than by government. Complex arrays of different actors have emerged to address social problems in a continuously urbanizing world. This framing of complex forms of governance emerged to address complex demands for public services, supports the framing of this study that contemporary challenges in local public goods and services production and delivery to which response to governance approaches is a landscape of organizational complexity that involves public, private, and nongovernmental organizational actors. The study asserts that this organizational complexity associated with governance should be examined in terms of its implications for the RAT dimensions of good governance.

In highlighting challenges to understanding and improving governance, Wilson (2000) noted that local government had become only one of the multiple stakeholders in local governance. From an international perspective, the responsibilities of local government vary across countries. Competencies of local government also vary across nations. As a result, the types and forms of organizationally complex arrangements that form in the landscape of local governance involving two or more public or private organizations also vary across states (Lowatcharin et al., 2019). To fully understand the consequences of variations found in the inter-organizational engineering in local governance, analytic tools are required that assess the differential roles of local government and its governance collaborators on an inter-contextual basis in light of the local government's differences in competencies and responsibilities. An area in need of inter-contextual analytic attention concerns the RAT implications of organizationally complex arrangements among stakeholders in local governance. The current study addresses these needs.

The need to understand the RAT implications of organizationally complex forms of local governance are seen in Stoker's (1998, p.19) description of dilemmas associated with the proposition of governance. The reality of the organizational complexity reflected in inter-organizational decision-making found in local

governance is not in correspondence with simplistic normative explanations and justifications of local government responsibilities. Lack of clarity concerning the responsibilities of multiple stakeholders in local governance can lead to blaming avoidance or scapegoating in the implementation and operation of governance approaches. There is a lack of clarity in local governance regarding where power is held among governance stakeholders and how it is applied in policy and programmatic action. The emergence of self-governing inter-organizational arrangements (partially or entirely beyond governmental structures) for governance raises accountability difficulties. Even where government embraces flexible arrangements involving extra-governmental organizational stakeholders, governance approaches may fail to realize their objectives.

Although the governance perspective draws attention to the complexity involved in service provision and strategic decision-making in urban regions, the issues identified by Stoker (1998) indicate that there is a gap in the literature between theoretical work and operational research on governance. It shows a deficit in the analysis of organizational complexity and variables associated with organizational characteristics found in local governance (Lowatcharin & Crumpton, 2019; Crumpton, 2008). As Stoker (1998) further argued, too little consideration has been given to the RAT implications associated with extra-government arrangements that appear in governance. The current study is intended to address these gaps between theory and operational research by offering an approach to assess organizational complexity through the clarification and operationalization of organizational variables.

### ***Good Governance***

The concept of good governance has been identified as essential to effective public service delivery in urban regions. In developing countries, many public projects and service initiatives financed by international aid agencies and development partners have included reform requirements intended to build institutional capacity on the local level to encourage good governance. The goal of good governance is to create a productive and responsive mix of social, political, and economic development values that ultimately enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public service development on the local level. United

Nations Development Programme (1997) has framed eight principles of good governance: participation, responsibility, the rule of law, transparency, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and consensus orientation. Good governance involves the application of best practices for responsive, accountable, and transparent (RAT) sub-national public administration for sustainable development (Ekpe, 2008). This study considers the good governance dimensions of RAT to assess the consequentiality of organizational complexity in urban areas as exhibited in the processes and products of a hybrid organization. Thus, it is useful to clarify the concepts of RAT as they are applied in this study.

### ***Responsiveness***

Responsive provision of public goods and services recognizes and adapts to the diverse needs of citizens. Responsive public institutions and their service providers execute strategies based upon the citizens' needs. Citizens' needs and desires for public services are identified through the use of systematic strategies that proactively search for and take into account citizen's input concerning service production and delivery. Responsiveness means that public goods and services are developed in light of the needs of all stakeholders in the community in effective and timely ways. Consideration of service delivery time frame as a responsiveness indicator increases the public's confidence in public service provision capability Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013).

Vigoda-Gadot (2002) has argued that responsive public officials must be attuned to recognizing and responding to citizen needs and opinions. Because the demands and needs of society are diverse and dynamic, a scientific monitoring approach must be employed to understand them. He further argued that responsiveness is a product of a sound social contract between stakeholders and public institutions (Vigoda-Gadot, 2002). To this end, many studies have found that democratic institutions require public administrators who are responsive to citizens' expectations as communicated to them directly or through elected representatives (Stivers, 1994; Stewart & Ranson, 1994, as cited in Vigoda-Gadot & Mizrahi, 2014).

Responsiveness includes a commitment to the development of public policies, programs, strategies, and activities that takes into consideration public

expectations. Governments in many countries have sought to improve responsiveness through collaboration with the private for-profit and nonprofit sectors to respond to multiple challenges (United Nations, 2015). This often takes the form of the organizationally complex arrangements in local governance considered in this study.

### ***Accountability***

Accountability can be viewed as the connection between public officials and agencies and citizens in terms of a requirement that public officials and agencies are held to answer for their decisions and actions. Accountability includes organizational and structural characteristics, short- and long-term strategies, actions, and legal and reporting frameworks that ensure that public organizations are doing governance work in terms of their obligations to the public. The structures and processes of public institutions must be built to be accountable. Accountability means that public officials are bound by and act according to the requirements of these structures and processes.

On the local level, accountability means that public organizations that spend public resources and make decisions that affect their jurisdictions can be held responsible for their actions. Accountability in the public sector cannot be implemented by a single institution. It must be embraced as an inter-sectoral endeavor that involves the general public, the business community, nongovernmental actors, and the media. On the local level, these inter-sectoral interests monitor the extent to which public services are designed and operate to achieve their objectives to the benefit of stakeholders in complex urban settings (Provost, 2016).

Chandler and Plano (1988) described accountability as a condition in which persons or organizations who exercise power are controlled by external means and internal norms. The constraints by these forces can be described in terms of mechanisms that guide and adjust the behaviors of people with responsibilities in managing agencies for the good of the public in local jurisdictions. The current study considers the implications for accountability when multiple organizations are linked together for public service provision in local governance.

### ***Transparency***

Transparency is the ingredient of good governance needed to assure that public institutions are performing



in responsive and accountable ways. Transparency means that the processes and decisions made by institutions are implemented in a manner that follows existing laws and institutionalized public service norms. Information related to those processes and decisions must be freely visible and directly accessible to stakeholders, particularly those that are affected by the decisions. Ample information must be shared upon request by individuals or other interested parties. The information must be provided in easily understandable ways via devices such as printed documents, websites, and social media. Transparency assists the public in understanding how and why public actions are made and public programs are implemented (Kim et al., 2005).

Ekpe (2008) argued that transparency requires monitoring the truthfulness, openness, and straightforwardness of public administrators. Transparency can be seen as offering encouragement to the public to be involved in public policy formulation, either directly through participatory structures and processes or through their community representatives/leaders. Transparency provides platforms for the public to support the design and implementation of policies associated with social, political, and economic objectives. As a consequence of their involvement in the public policy process, the public will experience more trust in public institutions and public program implementation. Public trust is seen as the most important product of transparency.

Kim et al. (2005) argued that transparency in public service provision is strengthened through information sharing. Effective structures and processes of transparency result in the ability of interested stakeholders to measure the levels of responsiveness and accountability exhibited by public organizations in their application of public resources for public policy implementation. Provided with accessible and continuous opportunities, citizens can see inside public organizations and processes to assess the extent to which they are responsible, accountable, and act according to professional standards in pursuing efficient and effective local governance. Meaningful transparency represents ongoing interaction or two-way communication between public institutions and their many stakeholders. The current study considers the implications for transparency in cases where hybrid inter-organizational solutions emerge in the governance of urban settings.

### ***New Public Service Approach at the Local Level***

The concept of new public service (NPS) emerged as a citizen-oriented public administration approach. It focuses on democratic governance that builds on the idea of active citizens, communities, and civil society involvement, as well as a re-imagining of public manager accountability to citizens. This shift directly challenges the rationalist and clientelist paradigm of the new public management (NPM). NPS posits that public administrators serve as brokers between citizens and their governments in public service provision and delivery processes (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011). Robinson (2015) argued that this approach highlights the need for collaborative models and solutions that involve multiple actors outside the government to collectively respond to challenges for public service provision and delivery.

According to NPS, public managers need skills to collaborate with diverse societal interests in pursuit of public policy solutions. In complex urban settings, this is seen in negotiation, brokering, and complex problem-solving in collaboration with cross-sectoral interests. NPS values correspond with those of good governance wherein public agencies must be responsive, accountable, and transparent to address societal needs, develop solutions, and operate public services in a manner that is consistent with the public interest in complex urban settings. The NPS approach emphasizes the importance of a public service ethos that emphasizes the importance of the public official's dedication to effective and efficient public service provision and delivery that also reflects a RAT orientation (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000).

A central contemporary challenge for public servants relates to their responsibility to serve and empower societal stakeholders representing multiple sectors in collaboratively designing and implementing public policy. In increasingly complex urban settings, the NPS approach posits that consideration of democratic values and citizenship in public service provision benefits society in terms of building community unity, engaging citizens, and making local governance work more effectively (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

The current study is intended to make use of the NPS lens on public service provision to assess the consequences of the application of hybrid organizational solutions in local governance. The analytic tools applied in the current study will offer evidence whether and to what extent hybrid

organization in local governance supports NPS objectives in local governance.

### ***Model of Hybrid Organization in Local Governance***

The study utilizes the conceptual and analytic groundwork of Crumpton (2008), and Lowatcharin and Crumpton (2019), built on the foundation of organizational study, institutional theory and research, and hybrid organization theory and research. This novel conceptual framework assists in understanding the hybridization that occurs when inter-organizational governance approaches on the local level emerge to address public service problems. Lowatcharin et al. (2019) introduced this approach to the international discourse concerning intergovernmental relations and multi-level governance. They contend that inter-organizational engineering is frequently involved in organizationally complex public economics of urban settings. Their model of the hybrid organization identifies and describes the mechanics involved in inter-organizational problem-solving responses to unstable local governance settings. These responses range from informal networking arrangements to formal and highly stable forms that result in the formation of organizational entities that involve hybridizing the characteristics of the public and private organizations—the “source organizations”—that create them. These hybrid organizational responses represent blends of the purposes, processes, structures, and resources of the participating source organizations. Lowatcharin and Crumpton (2019) presented their conceptual and analytic framework through a set of 10 propositions regarding the nature of inter-organizational hybridization that occurs in organizationally complex urban governance settings. In support of the current study, these propositions regarding hybrid organization in local governance have been operationalized to assess cases in the Yangon Region of Myanmar and the largest urban area of Khon Kaen Province in Thailand. The study intends to assess the evidence concerning two cases of hybrid organizational responses to public service provision in local governance in terms of the RAT characteristics of good governance and NPS.

### ***RAT Analysis for Impact of Hybrid Organization on Public Service Provision***

The hybrid organization conceptual framework, as translated into an analytic framework, provides

a platform on which organizationally complex approaches to local governance can be assessed on the RAT dimensions of good governance that also reflect the NPS orientation to governance. Utilizing the evidence gathered on cases in Myanmar and Thailand, the hybrid organization analytic framing will be used to analyze the data on RAT according to the following terms.

#### ***Responsiveness***

The cases will be assessed as to whether they were designed in light of the needs of organizational stakeholders that reflect the needs of citizens in their urban areas. They will be considered in terms of the extent to which the services provided by the subject organizations to citizens are more effective and timelier than pre-existing service provision approaches. The extent to which citizen demands and expectations for service provision are taken into account in the formation and operation of the subject organizations—their NPS orientation—also will be considered.

#### ***Accountability***

The subject organizations will be considered in terms of the extent that they are held to account for their decisions and actions from three perspectives: directly to citizens, to their source organizations, and to citizens via their source organizations. Whether strategies, structures, and processes have been developed and implemented to encourage and support accountability will also be assessed. Again, this assessment will contribute to a summary assessment of the extent that the subject organizations reflect an NPS orientation.

#### ***Transparency***

The cases will be assessed in terms of which citizens can view their decisions, policies, operations, financial information, and source organization relationships. Mechanisms available to citizens to discern how the subject cases pursue their responsibilities also will be identified and considered in terms of their adequacy to the end of transparency. As with the responsiveness and accountability assessments, the examination of the subject cases in terms of transparency will support a determination of whether they embrace NPS.

## Methods

### *Case Study Approach*

The study employs a two-case research approach (Yin, 2014) in two distinct urban settings of developing countries. In that, the study seeks to utilize a novel analytic approach in an exploratory examination of its capacity to build evidence on RAT in organizationally complex urban settings; this approach is particularly appropriate. Case study designs are found in many areas of research in which researchers seek an in-depth understanding of subjects such as public organizations. Schein (1985, 1993) argued that the case study approach is uniquely useful and applicable for the examination of a multiplicity of issues found in complex organizational settings. Yin (2014) contended that the two-case study approach combines the logic of replication of conceptual framework testing in two distinct settings to offer immediate confirmatory evidence. This method has been effectively and widely used in research on the organization unit of analysis (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018, 2012).

### *Case Selection*

Yin (2018) argued that the logic of replication could be further strengthened if the cases involved share the theoretically central characteristics of interest to the research but also offer potentially useful variations between the case settings. If the variations in case settings are assessed to be typical of the universe of interest to the research, the variations might usefully contribute to the generalization of findings from the research. The cases selected for the proposed study offer what was anticipated to be interesting and useful variation in their settings. The cases are located in different countries, Thailand and Myanmar. They address different functional issues in local governance: one is involved in historic preservation, whereas the other is essentially involved in addressing urban transportation problems. One case is located in one of the largest urban regions of Southeast Asia (Yangon), whereas the other case is located in a small metropolitan area (Khon Kaen). One case involves public policy and service provision in a small, relatively economically and socially homogeneous geographic area, whereas the other case involves

service to the entire metropolitan area with the diversity of economic and social activity that might be expected.

Because the cases are located in different countries in settings of local governance that have very different characteristics means they offer excellent opportunities to test the study's propositions and answer its questions. It also means that the comparative findings of the study have an interesting and useful general application on an inter-contextual basis and thus offer generalization value.

### *Data Collection*

The data collection spanned an eight-month period between March and October 2019. Qualitative methods were the primary means of acquiring data. They included in-person structured and semi-structured interviews with 20 knowledgeable persons familiar with the subject cases and field observation. Secondary data was acquired from organizational archival records and online and print media sources. The sampling strategies employed are a combination of purposive, opportunity, and snowballing among and within the stakeholder interests involved in the subject organizations. The study used a qualitative triangulation approach to demonstrate the value of the hybrid organization analytic framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All acquired data were analyzed to support the production of evidence needed to measure the "hybrid-ness" of each case and the implications of such. The analysis found that both cases reflected characteristics of hybrid organizations according to the terms described by Lowatcharin and Crumpton (2019).

### *RAT/NPS Assessment Grid*

As a heuristic exercise in translating the evidence on the RAT/NPS characteristics of the subject cases, the results of the analysis described under sub-section 2.5 were translated into ordinal rankings. KKTS and YHT were ranked on seven indicators of these three dimensions of good governance as low, medium, or high based on the extent to which we assessed they reflect the characteristics represented by the indicators. This interpretation of the assessment results will be represented in Table 1.



**Table 1***Approach for Assessing the RAT/NPS Characteristics of the Subject Cases*

Dimension/Indicator	Case	
	KKTS	YHT
Responsiveness		
Addresses public service needs	low, medium, or high	low, medium, or high
Addresses public service need better than existing approaches	low, medium, or high	low, medium, or high
Accountability		
Directly to citizens	low, medium, or high	low, medium, or high
To source organizations	low, medium, or high	low, medium, or high
To citizens via source organizations	low, medium, or high	low, medium, or high
Transparency		
Decisions and actions can be viewed by source organizations	low, medium, or high	low, medium, or high
Decisions and actions can be viewed by citizens	low, medium, or high	low, medium, or high
Convenient mechanisms for transparency are provided for citizens	low, medium, or high	low, medium, or high

## Description of The Cases

### *Khon Kaen Transit System (KKTS)*

In the 2010s, local government, business, higher education, and other community interests in Khon Kaen, Thailand, have collaborated to identify and address public service challenges related to the Khon Kaen urban area's economic development and promote sustainable development. In the late 2010s, this collaboration has been framed by Khon Kaen's ambition to institute the smart city model of urban planning, management, and development. The first problem that these community interests identified was Khon Kaen's traffic congestion.

Through a multi-year process involving interaction across local, provincial, and national levels of government, and extensive research conducted by the local public university, an inter-sectoral consensus was reached that embraced the idea of mass transit in the form of an inter-jurisdictional light rail (LRT) system was the best solution to meet the transportation needs of the urban areas and support sustainable residential and commercial development. The LRT solution was proposed to form the "smart mobility" component of the Khon Kaen smart city strategy. Among the problems

that emerged in this solution-seeking exercise involved lack of institutional capacity to finance, plan, construct, and operate an inter-municipal LRT. Neither Khon Kaen Municipality or the other four municipalities that would be served by the LRT possessed the financial capacity or the expertise and capability needed to take on this sort of project. This situation was exacerbated by the nature of the Thai public administration that involves Bangkok-centric top-down dominance of local governance by the national Ministry of Interior (MoI) and its Department of Local Administration (DLA; Lowatcharin et al., 2019).

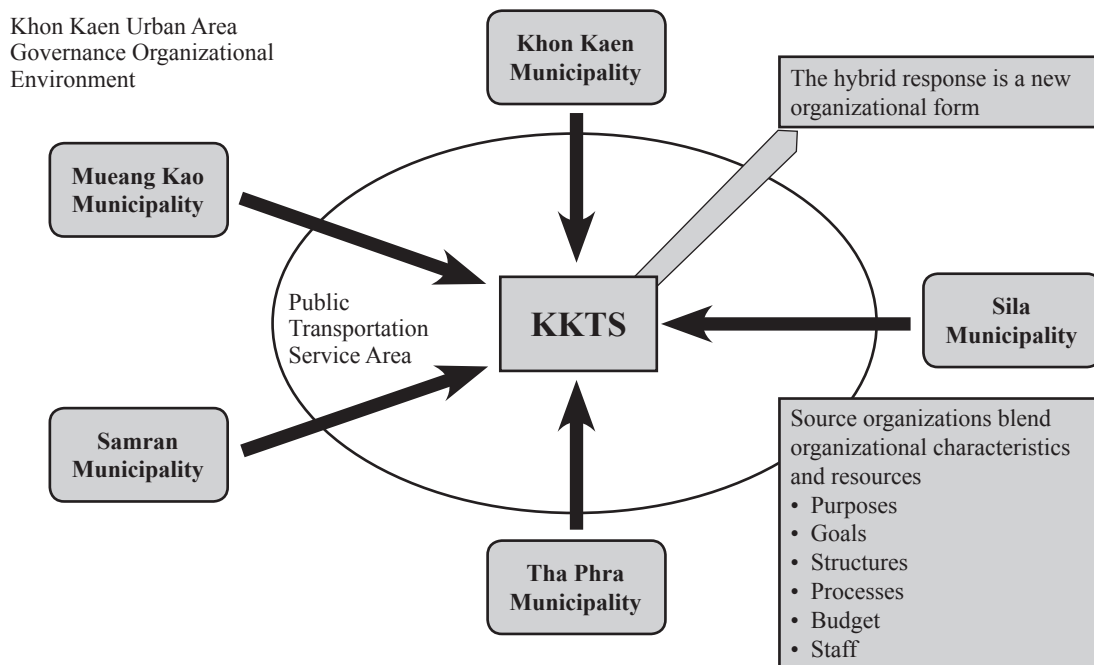
With the blessing of MoI/DLA, local interests identified an innovative set of solutions to overcome the institutional weakness barriers to implementing the regional LRT approach. In order to overcome the financing capacity limitations, the local stakeholders, informed by feasibility research performed by Khon Kaen University (KKU) and supported by the national and provincial government, identified the provincial investment fund (PIF) mechanism as a mechanism for capitalizing on the development of the LRT system. Regarding the barrier of inadequate management capacity and capability among the municipalities that would be served by the LRT, the five subject

municipalities agreed to join together to form a quasi-public corporation to plan, construct, and operate the new transit system. The product of this inter-jurisdictional agreement is one of the organizations considered in this study, Khon Kaen Transit System (KKTS). According to the Lowatcharin and Crumpton (2019) framing, the five cooperating municipal organizations serve as KKTS's source organizations.

KKTS was incorporated under terms of Thai municipality and corporation law. The five participating municipalities contributed funding to capitalize KKTS's initial operating requirements. A board of directors for KKTS was formed, comprised of representatives of the five participating municipalities. The KKTS management team was selected by the board from its members. In addition to its role in planning, constructing, and operating the LRT, KKTS was designated with the lead role for guiding land development related to the new transit system. In response to the financing capacity issue, the transit agency was given authority to access financial markets and to collect service fees to pay for debt service and operating cost requirements (Theparat, 2018).

According to the terms of the Lowatcharin and Crumpton (2019) conceptualization of hybrid

organization in local governance, KKTS demonstrates that it represents the characteristics of a hybrid organization that, while it blends purposes, structures, processes, and resources from its source organizations, it operates as an independent organizational entity in the operating environment of local governance in the Khon Kaen urban area. KKTS is a hybrid organizational entity that was created as a response to a particular public service provision problem in local governance. It was created as an inter-organizational response to what was identified by inter-sectoral interests as the most difficult challenge in its organizational setting. It functions as a resource exchange mechanism among its source organizations to overcome institutional weaknesses in its organizational environment. It was formed to perform tasks that its source organizations could not perform either as efficiently or effectively separately. Although it performs tasks associated with its source organizations (transportation management), it goes beyond their "business as usual" purposes in this policy area to a broader set of tasks (planning, constructing, and operating a mass transit system). It also goes beyond their business as usual bureaucratic structures and processes to operate according to terms associated with the private sector in the form of a quasi-



**Figure 1.** Applying the Model of Hybrid Organization in Local Governance: The Organizational Environment, Public Service Problem Area, and Source Organizations of Khon Kaen Transit System (KKTS)

public corporation. As it has created its own operating policies and procedures, it exhibits operational independence from its source organizations.

Although KKTS blends financial and human resources from its source organizations, it has the corporate status and institutional capacity to generate financial resources independent of its source organizations. Its potential for occupying a stable and durable place in its operating environment of local governance has been reinforced by legal sanction that it has received through national development policy, municipal and corporate law, in addition to legislative action by the local jurisdictions involved. Figure 1 represents a graphic representation of KKTS's relationship with its operating environment of local governance and its source organizations.

The Lowatcharin and Crumpton (2019) hybrid conceptual and analytic approach provided a useful tool in describing and assessing how the processes and products associated with KKTS emerged and operated in local governance. The application of the model of a hybrid organization also assists us in assessing how KKTS's "hybrid-ness" impacts the RAT dimensions of good governance and NPS. Below we will utilize the evidence from the hybrid organizational analysis to assess KKTS according to RAT.

### ***Yangon Heritage Trust (YHT)***

After decades of internal conflict and isolation from the international economic community, Myanmar is moving on a pathway of political and economic reform. Yangon, as Myanmar's former capital and largest city, serves as the nation's gateway to international trade and tourism, and as its hub of domestic economic development. As a result, it has experienced rapid growth, particularly in the center city area. With one of Southeast Asia's most extensive and unique collections of colonial architecture, the city's colonial quarter is a key asset both for Yangon's tourism and urban quality of life aspirations. However, a problem in local governance has involved the tension between the pressures of rapid development and protection of the city's unique heritage assets. This problem has been exacerbated by the lack of governmental capacity and capability at all levels to balance these concerns. In response, a diverse group representing cross-sectoral interests identified the need for action to protect Yangon's heritage assets. In 2012, a group of architects,

local and international historical preservation experts, business leaders, nonprofit groups, and residents of the colonial quarter collaborated for collective action to address this problem (YHT, 2019).

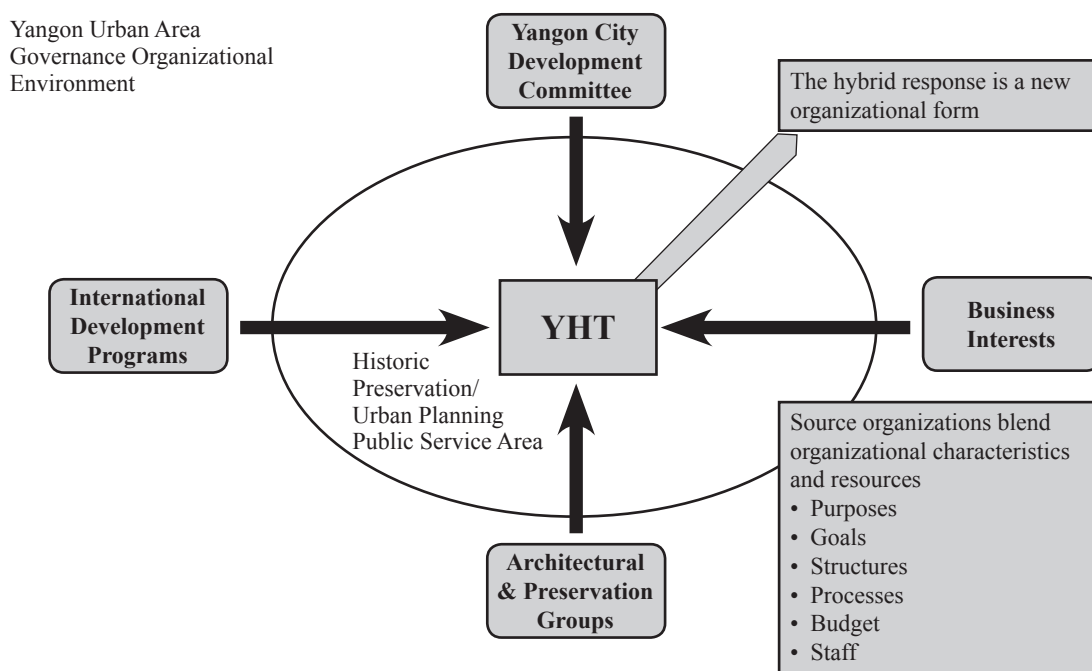
This diverse group focused on the creation of an organizational response in the form of an agency that could raise public awareness, contribute to policy development, and develop programs to protect and preserve Yangon's heritage assets. The group consulted with regional and national government agencies with responsibilities in planning and development and ultimately formed the YHT as a nongovernmental organization under Myanmar's national law. Once YHT was established, it demonstrated its importance to not only address the immediate problem of heritage protection but also contribute to local governance in broader terms as it addressed urban planning and development policy. This was most dramatically demonstrated in its development of the Yangon Heritage Strategy (YHS). The strategy incorporated the protection of the city's heritage assets into its urban planning and development regulation regime. This linkage with governmental responsibility for planning and development regulation supports an assessment that YHT functions as a quasi-governmental entity as described by Laslo and Judd (2006). Within two years, YHT further institutionalized its place in the landscape of local governance in the Yangon region by the attraction of governmental and private sector source organizations to provide financial and human resources, as well as technical assistance. International governmental stakeholders and Yangon business interests became YHT sources by making financial contributions to the organization and providing members of its board of directors and management staff. Private firms also provided technical assistance resources to support YHT preservation projects and programs.

According to the results of the application of the Lowatcharin and Crumpton hybrid organization analytic approach, YHT clearly exhibits characteristics of a hybrid organizational form operating in the organizational environment of local governance. The organization expressly operates as a distinct entity in local governance. Its operation involves substantial relationships with a number of source organizations on the local and international levels. It was formed to address a distinct set of heritage preservation and risk-laden development challenges

in local governance. The set of problems concerning heritage protection could not be addressed by either of YHT's individual source organizations alone. YHT clearly functions as a resource exchange mechanism that transforms resources provided by its source agencies to pursue public functions more efficiently and effectively than alternative approaches. Although the functions performed by YHT correspond with governmental responsibilities on the municipal and regional governmental levels, they go beyond them to address problems for which Yangon City and regional government lack the institutional capacity or capability. Thus, although YHT represents a blend of purposes of its source organizations, its operational purposes extend beyond those of the source organizations. In terms of operational objectives and the means to accomplish them, YHT plays a role in local governance that is largely independent of its source

organizations. In short, YHT has a blended purpose, structural, process, resource, and other characteristics of its source organizations to pursue organizational objectives that none of its source organizations could as effectively or efficiently alone. Figure 2 represents YHT's relationship with its operating environment of local governance and its source organizations.

As with KKTS, the Lowatcharin and Crumpton hybrid conceptual and analytic approach supported describing and assessing how YHT emerged and operated in local governance. Table 2 summarizes the similarities and differences between the two cases. It also assists us in assessing how the hybrid characteristics of the organization impact the RAT characteristics of good governance and NPS. Below we will utilize the evidence from the hybrid organizational analysis to assess YHT according to RAT.



**Figure 2.** Applying the Model of Hybrid Organization in Local Governance: The Organizational Environment, Public Service Problem Area, and Source Organizations of Yangon Heritage Trust (YHT)

**Table 2***Comparative Analysis of KKTS and YHT's Characteristics*

Characteristics	KKTS	YHT
Public service area	Public transportation	Heritage conservation and advocacy
Source organizations	Neighboring municipalities	Local and international preservation groups, business leaders, and nonprofit organizations
Challenges to which the organization responds	Public transportation coordination and infrastructure problems	Development threats to the architectural, cultural, and environmental heritage
Autonomy to independently design its purpose	Free to establish goals, policies, rules, and procedures Subject to oversight by source organizations	Free to establish goals, policies, rules, and procedures Subject to oversight by source organizations and other stakeholders
Resources provided by source organizations	Human and financial supports	Human, financial, and in-kind supports
governance structure	Top executives appointed by the board of directors	Board of trustees members serve as the executive team
Independence to conduct financial transactions	Free to seek financial resources	Free to seek financial resources
Legal status	Private entity	Nongovernmental organization

## Results

### *Assessing Cases of Hybrid Organization in Terms of Local Level Good Governance and NPS*

The good governance dimensions of responsiveness and accountability have both internal (vertical) and external (horizontal) aspects. This study focuses on external responsiveness and accountability involving the relationship between the subject organizations and external interests. It also considers the responsiveness and accountability of hybrid organizational forms in local governance on organizational and individual levels of analysis. On the organizational level of analysis, hybrid organizational forms, such as KKTS and YHT, should be assessed as to whether they are responsive to the effectiveness and efficiency needs of their organizational stakeholders and then are accountable to these stakeholders for their performance. On the individual level of analysis, these organizationally complex responses to public service problems in local governance should be assessed in terms of whether they address the public's needs and then held accountable as to how well they perform to

do so. The study also considers evidence produced by the hybrid organization analysis in terms of the good governance dimension of transparency. Transparency represents the procedural arrangements that support the substantive good governance objectives on both the organization and individual levels of analysis.

### *Responsiveness*

In the context of governance, responsive public service provision approaches on the local level are intended to meet the diverse needs and expectations of citizens and organizational stakeholders in effective and timely ways. The evidence produced by the application of hybrid organizational analysis in this study indicates that KKTS and YHT were formed to respond to challenges in their organizational environments associated with political, economic, and social development transitions.

KKTS was established by five local municipalities in the Khon Kaen urban area to address its traffic congestion problem. It was also established to address institutional capacity problems in Thai local governance. Neither the Khon Kaen provincial



government nor either of the municipalities in the urban area possessed the capacity to finance, plan, construct, and operate the LRT solution that was identified as the most desirable public service solution to the transportation problem. KKTS represents an approach that could serve the innovative provincial investment finance (PIF) approach that was identified as the feasible means to develop and operate the LRT system. The ultimate framework of five municipalities joining together to form KKTS as a quasi-public corporate entity (Koppell, 2003; Moe & Kosar, 2005) was an inter-governmental response to activism led by business and civic leaders that engaged with the Thai central government to endorse the LRT regional transportation solution. KKTS and the LRT approach represent the first step in a broader effort to introduce the smart city concept to the Khon Kaen urban area. This first step responds to the smart city model's smart mobility dimension. On the organizational unit of analysis, KKTS can be seen as a clear response to its local jurisdictional stakeholders' inadequate institutional capacity to address a substantial urban regional public service problem. It is also responsive to public service priorities promoted by local public and private leaders. Whether it is responsive to citizens is less clear. There is little evidence regarding whether KKTS has been or will be embraced by the citizens of the Khon Kaen urban area.

Although KKTS is best characterized as a hybrid organizational form resulting from inter-governmental action, YHT can be described as an extra-governmental, grassroots initiative. However, like KKTS, YHT is a response to a lack of local institutional capacity and capability. YHT was initially formed by a group of extra-governmental interests, including a well-known historian, like-minded architects, business leaders, and other community interests concerned with protecting Yangon's heritage assets and promoting sustainable development in the urban region. The challenge in the organizational environment of local governance to which YHT was intended to respond is the threat that rapid development in Yangon poses to the city's distinct collection of colonial-era buildings in its central business area. YHT's founding interests were successful in incorporating the organization under Myanmar law and attracting international and Myanmar's public and private organizational support among entities that now represent its source organizations. The changing collection of source organizations over the eight years

of YHT's existence reflects the dynamic nature of the needs and expectations of stakeholders in the fast-changing Yangon urban region. YHT's leadership in producing the Yangon Heritage Strategy stands as remarkable evidence of an impactful response to the problem of balancing heritage preservation with economic development. Although KKTS can be assessed as more responsive to an organization-level imperative that indirectly reflects community needs, YHT more directly represents a response to community needs.

Both of the subject organizations were introduced to their operating environments as responses to institutional inadequacies in their local governance settings. KKTS was a response to a lack of financial capacity and operational competency among the public jurisdictions in its local governance setting. YHT was formed in response to Yangon municipal and regional governments' lack of organizational and regulatory commitment to heritage asset protection and sustainable development promotion. Although they are products of different sorts of stimuli, both KKTS and YHT represent innovative organizational engineering to respond to difficult problems of local governance. Although each may raise questions regarding their democratic pedigree, both of these examples of hybrid organizational action can be assessed as responsive to important public needs.

### *Accountability*

From the good governance perspective of accountability, the situation with both subject cases is more ambiguous than with responsiveness. In terms of formal, organization-level accountability, both organizations were formed in accordance with national statutes and under the supervision of agencies with purview over their activities. They are both subject to national reporting requirements. The subject organizations are guided by boards of directors that include representatives of their source organizations.

In terms of individual-level democratic accountability, less clarity is seen. In the case of KKTS, framed by the broader perspective of introducing the smart city model to Khon Kaen, a substantial amount of community engagement was pursued by the promoters of a public transit system as the smart mobility component of the prospective smart city. To a limited extent, the idea of entrepreneurs for what ultimately became the LRT proposal were held to account to

citizens in public meetings. With the formation of KKTS as an organizational entity, the accountability calculus changed. Although political representatives of the source organizations serve on the KKTS board of directors, they are not directly responsible to voters for the organization's performance. There is no evidence of direct participatory structures and processes that allow citizen engagement with KKTS decision-making. As a result, KKTS decision-making might best be assessed as at least one step removed from direct citizen accountability.

Compared to KKTS, YHT represents much more continuing community engagement that allows for individual-level accountability. In large measure, it is a product of activist interests in the geographic area that is most directly impacted by YHT, the colonial district of Yangon's city center. In addition to regular meetings of its board of directors that includes community representatives, YHT conducts consultation meetings with local residents, business groups, political leaders, and the nongovernmental sector regarding its heritage preservation and promotion activities. The organization actively engages the media. Its website includes user-friendly information regarding its purposes, projects, and accomplishments. YHT receives funding from a variety of Myanmar and international sources that require regular reports on its activities also contributes to its accountability.

### ***Transparency***

The evidence produced for this study indicates that both subject organizations demonstrate transparency in a formal, organizational level sense. They produce reports required by agencies that authorized their formation as corporate entities and by their funding sources. Knowledgeable informants reported that both organizations have sought to establish effective structures and processes of transparency to assure that they provide ample information to their stakeholders and the public to measure KKTS and YHT's levels of responsiveness and accountability. However, the nature of YHT's emergence and struggle to find an institutionalized place in the landscape of Yangon's local governance has required that it be more open and accessible than is the case with KKTS.

KKTS has made efforts to engage with the public regarding its LRT planning process through a variety of means. It has conducted public consultation meetings, made extensive use of social media, and has actively

interacted with the local and national media. An online search on KKTS reveals a substantial amount of information regarding the organization's activities. All information published by KKTS is in English and Thai. KKTS and the LRT system plans have also been promoted in the broader context of Khon Kaen's smart city initiative. Including political representatives from its source organizations (its five constituent municipalities) and regular meetings with its municipal stakeholders demonstrates KKTS's commitment to be transparent in a formal sense. However, KKTS's public engagement activities can be characterized more as promotional in nature than deliberative and inclusive. As KKTS has been framed as a quasi-commercial endeavor by its promoters that would ultimately look to selling shares in the commercial equities marketplace, its efforts have taken on the appearance of "selling" LRT as a commercially attractive endeavor as opposed to a policy initiative with deep democratic roots.

YHT also has used a variety of means to engage with its stakeholders and with the general public. It has established a strong online presence, with a sophisticated website and active use of social media. The organization has been open to extensive coverage by the Yangon news media. It has established a pattern of consultative meetings with local residents, business groups, public agencies, and its source organizations. YHT's diverse set of funding organizations, including international agencies, also have actively distributed information regarding the importance of heritage preservation and YHT's efforts in this direction. YHT's walking tours of Yangon's colonial quarter and the organization's blue plaque program that designates heritage properties and YHT's use of social media to promote these forms of engagement offer evidence of its commitment to transparency. Although YHT must be adjudged as an initiative of elite scholars, architects, and businesspeople, it has recognized the impact of heritage preservation and economic development on the colonial quarter by actively engaging with lower-income residents and street vendors in the area.

In summary, the evidence produced by the study demonstrates that the use of hybrid organizational solutions in local governance as demonstrated in the subject cases can have positive impacts on the RAT characteristics of good governance and NPS in the subject urban areas of Myanmar and Thailand. However, the differences in the evidence gathered on the two cases demonstrate the importance of assessing

contextual differences in making conclusions regarding case-by-case good governance impacts. Although KKTS generally utilizes transparent means accessible by the public to demonstrate its responsiveness and accountability, it is clear that its focus is on the organization level rather than on the individual level. It was engineered by organizational stakeholders as an organizational response to overcome their institutional weaknesses. Thus, it can be seen as focusing on its accountability to its organizational stakeholders. Its accountability to citizens is left less clear. Although YHT is the realization of a dream promoted by elite scholars, architects, and business people, it has established itself as a meaningful response to the grassroots need to protect the historic character of Yangon and its colonial quarter. It has done this through the readily accessible street-level engagement of all interests impacted by its activities.

Both cases studied demonstrated that hybrid organizational solutions are essential to respond to the complex and growing list of public service needs of Southeast Asia's urban areas. In light of the institutional capacity and capability weaknesses identified in the study, creative inter-organizational solutions that cross-sectoral boundaries are essential to making local governance responsive to public needs.

Applying the hybrid organizational analytic approach helps to produce evidence regarding the challenges that hybrid organizational solutions present to democratic accountability and the establishment of transparent means to gauge the responsiveness and accountability of extra-governmental, inter-organizational governance solutions. Table 3 summarizes these findings in terms of heuristic ratings of the RAT/NPS characteristics of KKTS and YHT in the format introduced above.

## Discussion

The intent of this study was to be an empirical response to the central argument that organizational variables have been inadequately applied to describe and analyze how organizationally complex forms of urban governance emerge and operate. To address this deficiency in the discourse on local governance, particularly in urban areas of Southeast Asia, the study applied a novel approach to conceptualizing and analyzing local governance in urban areas to produce empirical evidence that might assist in explaining the operation and consequentiality of hybrid organizational approaches to local governance. The successful test of the novel hybrid organizational conceptual and analytic

**Table 3**

*Rating KKTS and YHT on RAT Characteristics of Good Governance and NPS*

Dimension/Indicator	Case	
	KKTS	YHT
Responsiveness		
Addresses public service need	High	High
Addresses public service need better than existing approaches	High	High
Accountability		
Directly to citizens	Low	Medium
To source organizations	High	High
To citizens via source organizations	Low	Medium
Transparency		
Decisions and actions can be viewed by source organizations	High	High
Decisions and actions can be viewed by citizens	Low	Medium
Convenient mechanisms for transparency are provided for citizens	Low	Medium

approach in urban areas characterized by notable contextual differences on two distinct problems in local governance provides empirical impetus to expanding its use in other settings around the world.

The evidence also contributes to the study of good governance and NPS, particularly in developing settings. Through analysis on organizational variables, it demonstrated the value of hybrid organizational analysis to understanding how the emergence and operation of hybrid organizational approaches to local governance can impact responsiveness, accountability, and transparency. This study demonstrates how the organizational engineering that takes place in utilizing organizationally complex inter-organizational and inter-sectoral arrangements to solving public service problems on the local level has important consequences for RAT.

The empirical evidence produced by the study has responded to Stoker's arguments on the implications of inter-organizational complexity that emerges in the operation of governance. This study has demonstrated how hybrid organizational solutions utilize organizationally complex tools in challenging organizational environments of local governance to make them function more efficiently and effectively. In the cases considered, hybrid organizational approaches have been utilized to overcome institutional weaknesses in the local governance settings of interior Thailand and the largest urban region of Myanmar to make local governance more responsive to important public needs and thus contributing to good governance. The study has also shown that hybrid organizational approaches can be problematic on the accountability and transparency dimensions of good governance and assessment of an NPS orientation. For accountability and transparency to be realized in these organizationally complex solutions in local governance, they must be engineered into the hybrid organization design. This empirically driven response to Stoker's framing should be viewed as a useful contribution to the international discourse concerning inter-organizational arrangements in local governance.

Among the most important contributions of the study is that it offers an understanding of how organizationally complex arrangements emerge in two very different urban settings of Southeast Asia. Both nations involved are coping with rapid change in terms of political, social, and economic

development. In this context of rapid change, the study demonstrates how two urban areas seek to overcome institutional weaknesses to respond to political, social, and economic needs in their local public economies. Local drivers on the organizational and individual levels of analysis have led the way in building inter-organizational/inter-sectoral arrangements to find local public service solutions that also support national development policy in sustainable ways.

### **Implications and Limitations of the Study**

The application of the hybrid organization conceptual and analytic approach in this study that supports the description and analysis of inter-organizational/inter-sectoral arrangements found in local governance settings of developing countries has generated products of value to the study of local governance. The evidence produced by the study offers a substantive response to and correspondence with Stoker's arguments regarding the implications of inter-organizational complexity that appears in the operation of governance.

The study produced interesting evidence on the implications for the good governance of a hybrid organization in local governance and whether they might reflect the values of NPS. Its application of hybrid organizational analysis offered confirmatory evidence that hybrid organizational responses found in complex urban settings do indeed support the responsiveness objectives of good governance and NPS. However, it was also found that if hybrid organizational responses do not include adequate engineering to assure accountability and transparency, they may be problematic on these dimensions of good governance and to an assessment of an NPS orientation.

In terms of limitations of the study, the obvious first limitation is the small sample size: it includes only two local governance settings in Southeast Asia. Yet, because the cases include similarities and differences in terms of contexts, problems considered, organizational level actors, and other factors, they offer depth in understanding that at least in part overcomes this limitation. The ultimate value of the research approach used in this study will only be demonstrated through additional studies in other settings. Thus, it is strongly recommended that this happen. In addition, the focus on the good governance and NPS implications of



hybridized solutions in local governance also should be applied in research in other settings.

The second limitation of the study involves the use of a novel conceptual and analytic tool that has only been used on a limited basis in a much different empirical setting. The application of this approach in the study demonstrates that it offers great potential to generate robust understandings regarding the implications of complex organizational arrangements in local governance. To demonstrate the breadth and depth of its value, it must be utilized in the research in other settings.

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### Declaration of Ownership

This report is our original work.

### Conflict of Interest

None.

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