

**Name:** Marc Theuss

**Email:** marc.theuss@gmail.com

**Research title:** A comparison of two Afghan Badakhshani district borders: impact of the Opium-Poppy Economy and cross-border heroin trade on political outcomes

**Research locations:**

- Shughnan (Afghan Badakhshan)
- Wakhan (Afghan Badakhshan)
- Gorno-Badakhshan (Tajiksitan)

**Background**

The research process explored the following:

- Political-economic context of Shughnan and Wakhan
- The networks and actors associated with 'markets of addiction' and cross-border heroin trading, in both districts
- Strategies deployed by political actors to achieve objectives vis-à-vis 'markets of addiction' and cross-border heroin trade
- Changing nature of networks and strategies applied by networks/actors associated with narcotic trading
- Transforming institutional processes associated with narcotic trading
- Dynamic conflict processing-institutions and linkages with the Opium-poppy and heroin-trafficking business
- Gendered impacts of chronic addiction and cross-border trade
- Analysis of the politicised instrumentalisation of markets
- Drug-use trends and patterns
- Modern political history of all areas
- Livelihoods impacts (debt, land sale, asset depletion) as a consequence of drug-use and cross-border trade
- Power-structures and asymmetries associated with OPE & heroin trafficking
- Governance patterns in the studied areas (linkages and interactions between political entrepreneurs)

**Research outcomes**

Shughnan and Wakhan are remarkably similar contextually and from the perspective of parametric 'Independent Variables' (religion, ethnicity, geographical position, peripherality etc). However, the last 15 years of modern political history, has had very different impacts on the political outcomes of the two districts. This is traced back to the radically differential resources bases of the respective districts. Wakhan's political economic system is dominated by the resources of land and 'markets of addition' (or instrumentalised opium addiction). Shughnan's political economic system is dominated by positionality, (the international border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan), and cross-border heroin trade. Differential resource bases inform radically different configurations of actors, networks and categories of strategies, deployed by political entrepreneurs, in extracting benefit from the resource base.