POLICY NETWORK ANALYSIS*

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'Tis all in pieces, all cohærence gone.'

(John Donne [1611], 'The First Anniversary. An Anatomy of the World', 1985 edition, 335 line 213)

INTRODUCTION: THE UBIQUITY OF NETWORKS

Network analysis comes in many guises. It is common to all the social science disciplines. The vast literature ranges from social network analysis (Scott 2000) to the network society created by the information revolution (Castells 2000), from the actor-centred networks of technological diffusion (Callon, Law and Ripp 1986) to cross-cultural analysis (Linn 1999). This chapter focuses on that species of network analysis most common in political science - policy network analysis.

Few social science disciplines can ever agree on the meaning of an idea. So, a policy network is one of a cluster of concepts focusing on government links with, and dependence on, other state and societal actors. These notions include issue networks (Heclo 1978), iron triangles (Ripley and Franklin 1981), policy sub-systems or sub-governments (Freeman and Stevens, 1987), policy communities (Richardson and Jordan 1979) and epistemic communities (Haas 1992). I discuss these terms below. All are varieties of networks, so I use 'policy network' as the generic term.

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This buzzing, blooming confusion of terms has not detained us for long. Defining policy networks will take no longer. Policy networks are sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared if endlessly negotiated beliefs and interests in public policymaking and implementation. These actors are interdependent and policy emerges from the interactions between them. There could be many qualifications to this definition, but it will do as a starting point for my exploration.

Part 1 of this chapter reviews the literature on policy network analysis, distinguishing between descriptive, theoretical and prescriptive accounts. It identifies three descriptive uses of the term; networks as interest intermediation, as interorganizational analysis and as governance. It then summarises the two main theoretical approaches - power-dependence theory and rational choice – before looking at the instrumental, interactive, and institutional approaches to managing networks. Part 2 looks at the debates and challenges in the literature. It focuses on the difficulties of synthesizing the findings from the proliferating case studies, and on the critics of the 'new governance. It reviews the various answers to the question of why do networks change, looking at the advocacy coalition framework, the dialectical model, strategic relational theory, and the interpretive turn. It concludes with the observation that the study of policy networks mirrors general trends in political science in its concern with ethnographic methods and the impact of ideas. Finally, it looks at the problems of managing the institutional void, especially the difficulties posed by mixing governing structures, the diffusion of accountability, enhancing coordination, and devising new tools.

Part 1 – THE LITERATURE ON POLICY NETWORK ANALYSIS

The term policy network is used in three main ways in the literature: as a description of governments at work, as a theory for analyzing government policymaking, and as a prescription for reforming public management.

Networks as description

When describing government policy-making, the term policy network refers to interest intermediation, interorganizational analysis, and governance.

Networks as interest intermediation

The roots of the idea of a policy network lie, in part, in American pluralism and the literature on sub-governments. For example, Ripley and Franklin (1981, 8-9) define sub-governments are ‘clusters of individuals that effectively make most of the routine decisions in a given substantive area of policy’. They are composed of ‘members of the House and/or Senate, members of Congressional staffs, a few bureaucrats and representatives of private groups and organizations interested in the policy area’. The emphasis in this literature is on a few privileged groups with close relations with governments; the resultant sub-government excludes other interests and makes policy. Some authors developed more rigid metaphors to characterise this relationship. Lowi (1964) stressed the triangular nature of the links, with the central government agency, the Congressional Committee and the interest group enjoying an almost symbiotic interaction. This insight gave birth to the best-known label within the sub-governments literature, the `iron triangle' (see Freeman and Stevens 1987, 12-13 and citations).

The literature on policy networks develops this American concern with the oligopoly of the political marketplace. Governments confront a multitude of groups all keen to influence a piece of legislation or policy implementation. Some groups are outsiders. They are deemed extreme in behavior and unrealistic in their demands, so are kept at arms length. Others are insiders, acceptable to government, responsible in their expectations and willing to work with and through government. Government needs them to make sure it meets its policy objectives. The professions of the welfare state are the most obvious example. Over the years, such interests become institutionalised. They are consulted before documents are sent out for consultation. They don't lobby. They have lunch. These routine, standardised, patterns of interaction between government and insider interests become policy networks.

There are many examples of the use of policy networks to describe government policymaking.[1] Marsh and Rhodes (1992) define policy networks as a meso-level concept that links the micro-level of analysis, dealing with the role of interests and government in particular policy decisions, and the macro-level of analysis, which is concerned with broader questions about the distribution of power in modern society. Networks can vary along a continuum according to the closeness of the relationships in them. Policy communities are at one end of the continuum and involve close relationships; issue networks are at the other end and involve loose relationships (and on the influence of this approach see Börzel 1998, Dowding 1995, LeGales and Thatcher 1995, Richardson 1999).

A policy community has the following characteristics: a limited number of participants with some groups consciously excluded; frequent and high quality interaction between all

members of the community on all matters related to the policy issues; consistency in values, membership and policy outcomes which persist over time; consensus, with the ideology, values and broad policy preferences shared by all participants; and exchange relationships based on all members of the policy community controlling some resources. Thus, the basic interaction is one involving bargaining between members with resources. There is a balance of power, not necessarily one in which all members equally benefit but one in which all members see themselves as in a positive-sum game. The structures of the participating groups are hierarchical so leaders can guarantee compliant members. This model is an ideal type; no policy area is likely to conform exactly to it.

One can only fully understand the characteristics of a policy community if we compare it with an issue network. McFarland (1987, 146), following Heclo's (1978) use, defines an issue network as ‘a communications network of those interested in policy in some area, including government authorities, legislators, businessmen, lobbyists, and even academics and journalists … [that] … constantly communicates criticisms of policy and generates ideas for new policy initiatives’. So, issue networks are characterised by: many participants; fluctuating interaction and access for the various members; the absence of consensus and the presence of conflict; interaction based on consultation rather than negotiation or bargaining; an unequal power relationship is which many participants may have few resources, little access and no alternative. The study of interest groups understood variously as issue networks, policy sub-systems and advocacy coalitions is probably the largest American contribution to the study of policy networks. They are seen as an ever-present feature of American politics (and for surveys of the literature see Baumgarten and Leech 1998 and Berry 1997).

Obviously the implication of using a continuum is that any network can be located at some point along it. Networks can vary along several dimensions and any combination of these dimensions; for example, membership, integration, resources. Various authors have constructed continua, typologies and lists of the characteristics of policy networks and policy communities (see for example,Van Waarden 1992). This lepidopteran approach to policy networks – collecting and classifying the several species – has become deeply uninteresting.

Networks as interorganizational analysis

The European literature on networks focused less on sub-governments and more on interorganizational analysis (see for example Rhodes (1999 [1981]). It emphasises the structural relationship between political institutions as the crucial element in a policy network rather than the interpersonal relations between individuals in those institutions. At its simplest, interorganizational analysis suggests that a 'focal organization attempts to manage its dependencies by employing one or more strategies, other organizations in the network are similarly engaged.' A network is 'complex and dynamic: there are multiple, over-lapping relationships, each one of which is to a greater or lesser degree dependent on the state of others' (Elkin 1975, 175-6).[2]

The most impressive attempt to apply this variant of network analysis to politics and policymaking is the several collaborations of David Knoke, Edward Laumann and Franz Pappi (see especially Knoke 1990, Knoke et al 1996, Laumann and Knoke 1987). Their 'organizational state' approach argues that 'modern state-society relationships have increasingly become blurred, merging into a mélange of interorganizational influences

and power relations'. These interorganizational networks 'enable us to describe and analyze interactions among all significant policy actors, from legislative parties and government ministries to business associations, labor unions, professional societies, and public interest groups' (Knoke et al 1996, 3). The key actors are formal organizations, not individuals. In their analysis of national labor policy in America, Germany and Japan, Knoke et al 1996 compiled the list of key actors by, for example, searching public documents such as the Congressional Information Service volumes for the number of times they testified before the relevant Congressional or Senate Committee, including only organizations with five or more appearances. The individuals in these organizations responsible for governmental policy affairs were then interviewed on such matters as the informant's perception of the most influential organization, the communication of policy information, and participation in the policy area. Knoke et al then use the techniques of network analysis to map the links between organizations, employing classic network measures such as centrality and density (for an introduction to such techniques see Scott 1991 and for a compendium see Wasserman and Faust 1994).

Knoke et al argue their data not only describes the power structure of their chosen policy area but also explains the different policy outcomes. The value of this species of network analysis lies in its use of the structural properties of networks to explain behavior and outcomes. Unfortunately, little work in this idiom is explanatory. Instead, it describes power structures and network characteristics. Moreover, 'it has not yet produced a great deal that is novel' (Dowding 2001, 89-90 and n. 2). It is hard to demur from this judgment when Knoke et al (1996, 210, 213) conclude that 'the state clearly constitutes the formal locus of collective decision making that affects the larger civil society within

which it is embedded', or that 'the more central an organization was in either the communication or the support network, the higher was its reputation for being influential' (see also Thatcher 1998, 398-404).

Networks as governance

The roots of policy network analysis lie, finally, in the analysis of the sharing of power between public and private actors, most commonly between business, trade unions and the government in economic policymaking (Atkinson and Coleman 1989, Jordan 1981). Initially, the emphasis fell on corporatism, a topic worthy of an article in its own right (see Cawson 1986, Schmitter and Lehmbruch 1979). There was also the longstanding and distinctive Scandinavian analysis of 'corporate pluralism' (Rokkan 1966, Heisler 1979), which continues under such labels as 'the segmented state' (Olsen 1983, 118) and 'the negotiated economy' (Nielsen and Pedersen 1988). Latterly, the main concern has been with governance by (and through) networks, on trends in the relationship between state and civil society government rather than policymaking in specific arenas. Thus, governance is a broader term than government with public resources and services provided by any permutation of government and the private and voluntary sectors (and on the different conceptions of governance see Kjær 2004, Pierre 2000).

There are several accounts of this trend for Britain, continental Europe and the USA. Thus, for Britain, there has been a shift from government by a unitary state to governance by and through networks. In this period, the boundary between state and civil society changed. It can be understood as a shift from hierarchies, or the

bureaucracies of the welfare state, through the marketization reforms of the Conservative governments of Thatcher and Major to networks and the emphasis on partnerships and joined-up government.[3]

There is also a large European literature on ‘guidance’, 'steering' and ‘indirect coordination’ which predates both the British interest in network governance and the American interest in reinventing government. For example, Franz-Xavier Kaufmann’s (1986) edited volume on guidance, steering and control is truly Germanic in size, scope and language. It focuses on the question of how a multiplicity of interdependent actors can be coordinated in the long chains of actions typical of complex societies (see also Bovens 1990, Luhmann 1982, Van Gunsteren 1976).

For the USA, Osborne and Gaebler (1992, 20 and 34) distinguish between policy decisions (steering) and service delivery (rowing), arguing bureaucracy is a bankrupt tool for rowing. In its place they propose entrepreneurial government, with its stress on working with the private sector and responsiveness to customers. This transformation of the public sector involves 'less government' or less rowing but 'more governance' or more steering. In his review of the American literature, Frederickson (1997, 84-5) concludes the word ‘governance is probably the best and most generally accepted metaphor for describing the patterns of interaction of multiple-organizational systems or networks’ (see also Kettl 1993, 206-7, Salamon 2002). Peters (1996, chapter 1) argues the traditional hierarchic model of government is everywhere under challenge. He identifies four trends, or models of governance, challenging the hierarchic model - market, participative, flexible and deregulated governance. Fragmentation, networks, flexibility and responsiveness are characteristics of flexible governance. In sum, talk of the governance

transformation abounds even if the scope, pace, direction and reasons for that change are matters of dispute (and for a survey see Pierre 2000).

Policy networks as theory

There is a large theoretical literature on policy networks in Britain (see Rhodes 1988, 1997a, and 1999), the rest of Europe (see Börzel 1998, Kickert et al 1997), and the USA (see O'Toole 1997, Salaman 2002). There are two broad schools of thought, depending on how they seek to explain network behavior: power-dependence or rational actor.[4]

Power-dependence

The power-dependence approach treats policy networks as sets of resource-dependent organizations. Their relationships are characterised by power-dependence; that is, 'any organization is dependent on other organizations for resources', and 'to achieve their goals, the organizations have to exchange resources'. So, actors 'employ strategies within known rules of the game to regulate the process of exchange'. Relationships are a 'game' in which organizations maneuvre for advantage. Each deploys its resources, whether constitutional-legal, organizational, financial, political or informational, to maximise influence over outcomes while trying to avoid becoming dependent on the other `players'. So, behavior in policy networks is game-like, rooted in trust and regulated by rules of the game negotiated and agreed by network participants. Variations in the distribution of resources and in the bargaining skills of participants explain both differences in outcomes in a network and variations between networks. Finally, the networks have a significant degree of autonomy from government (Rhodes 1997a, chapter 2 and 1999 [1981], chapter 5).[5]

Rational choice

The rational choice school explains how policy networks work by combining rational choice and the new institutionalism to produce actor-centered institutionalism. The best example is the Max-Planck-Institut's notion of 'actor-centered institutionalism'. For Renate Mayntz, Fritz Scharpf and their colleagues at the Max-Planck-Institut, policy networks represent a significant change in the structure of government. They are specific 'structural arrangements' that deal typically with 'policy problems'. They are a 'relatively stable set of mainly public and private corporate actors'. The links between network actors serve as 'communication channels and for the exchange of information, expertise, trust and other policy resources'. Policy networks have their own 'integrative logic' and the dominant decision rules stress bargaining and sounding-out. So, as with the power-dependence approach, the Max Planck school stresses functional differentiation, the linkages between organizations, and dependence on resources (Kenis and Schneider 1991, 41-3).

To explain how policy networks work, Scharpf (1997, chapters 2 and 3) combines rational choice and the new institutionalism to produce actor-centered institutionalism. The basic argument is that institutions are systems of rules that structure the opportunities for actors (individual and corporate) to realise their preferences. So, 'policy is the outcome of the interactions of resourceful and boundedly-rational actors whose capabilities, preferences, and perceptions are largely, but not completely, shaped by the institutionalised norms within which they interact' (Scharpf 1997, 195).

Networks are one institutional setting in which public and private actors interact. They are informal institutions; that is, informally organised, permanent, rule-governed relationships. The

agreed rules build trust and foster communication while also reducing uncertainty; they are the basis of non-hierarchic coordination. Scharpf uses game theory to analyze and explain these rule-governed interactions.

In the UK, there have been vigorous exchanges between the two schools (see for example Dowding 1995 and 2001 versus Marsh 1998, 12-13 and 67-70, Marsh and Smith 2000). It is a case of 'ne'er the twain shall meet'. The two sides have irreconcilable differences of both theory and method. The disagreements are as basic as the deductive, positivistic, quantitative approach of economics versus the inductive, interpretive, qualitative approach of sociology. For insiders, harmony is not threatening to break out any time soon. To outsiders, the debate seems like a spat. The outsiders could well be right.

Policy networks as reform

The spread of networks and the recognition that they constrain government's ability to act has fueled research on how to manage networks. The goal is now 'joined-up government' or a 'whole-of-government' approach. Networks are no longer a metaphor or a site for arcane theoretical disputes but a live issue for reforming public sector management. Here I concentrate on the public sector literature.[6]

Kickert et al (1997, 46) identify three approaches to network management in the public sector: the instrumental, interactive and institutional. The instrumental approach focuses on how governments seek to exercise legitimate authority by altering dependency relationships. The key problem with the instrumental approach is the cost of steering. A central command operating code, no matter how well disguised, runs the ever-present risks of recalcitrance from key actors, a loss of flexibility in dealing with localised problems, and control deficits.

The interaction approach stresses management by negotiation instead of hierarchy. The trick is to sit where the other person is sitting to understand their objectives and to build and keep trust between actors. So, chief executive officers in the public sector must have 'strong interpersonal, communication and listening skills; an ability to persuade; a readiness to trade and to engage in reciprocal rather than manipulative behavior; an ability to construct long-term relationships' (Ferlie and Pettigrew 1996, 88-89). The key problem of the interactive approach is the costs of cooperation. Network management is time-consuming, objectives can be blurred, and outcomes can be indefinite Decision making is satisficing, not maximising.

The institutional approach focuses on the institutional backcloth, the rules and structures, against which the interactions take place. The aim is incremental changes in incentives, rules and culture to promote joint problem solving. The institutional approach has one major, even insurmountable, problem; incentives, rules and culture are notoriously resistant to change because networks privilege a few actors, who equate their sectional interest with the public interest. They are well placed to protect their sectional interests.

The literature specifically on managing networks grows apace in both America and Europe. Salamon (2002) provides a comprehensive review of the tools available for America's new governance, covering the 'classic' instruments such as grants, regulation and bureaucracy but laying great emphasis on the collaborative nature of modern governing and the need to switch from hierarchy and control to enabling and the indirect management of networks.[7]

What do you do if you have to run a network? Painter et al (1997, 238) provide specific advice on game management. They conclude local authorities should: conduct an audit of

other relevant agencies; draw a strategic map of key relationships; identify which of their resources will help them to influence these other agencies; and identify the constraints on that influence. As with all new trends, there is an upsurge of advice from both academics and consultants. So the ten commandments of networking include: be representative of your agency and network, take a share of the administrative burden, accommodate and adjust while maintaining purpose, be as creative as possible, be patient and use interpersonal skills and emphasise incentives (Agranoff 2003, 29). It is certainly not 'rocket science' (Perri 6 et al 2002, 130) and this list of lessons gives credence to that claim. Wettenhall (2003, 80) reviews the literature on partnerships, joined-up government and the new governance. He concludes these terms have 'become the dominant slogan in the turn-of-the-century discourse about government' (see for example, Cabinet Office 2000, Cm 4310 1999, MAC 2004). So any disapproving reader dismissing this literature should pause to note it is well on the way to becoming the new conventional wisdom in public sector reform. Those of more caustic disposition, having paused, might move on by noting that network management is an ephemeral mix of proverbs and injunctions.[8]

Part 2 - DEBATES AND CHALLENGES

Paralleling the earlier discussion, this section looks at the debates and challenges that confront policy network analysis. In turn, I examine some descriptive, theoretical and prescriptive pitfalls.

Describing Governance

The notion of a policy network can be dismissed as mere metaphor. It is not a metaphor because there is no analogy. Policymaking <u>is</u> a set of interconnected events and

communicating people. It is no more a metaphorical term than bureaucracy. The term's resonance and longevity stems from the simple fact that for many it represents an enduring characteristic of much policymaking in advanced industrial democracies.

In his review of British studies of pressure groups and parties, Richardson (1999, 199) claimed that Dowding's (1995) critique of policy networks marked the 'intellectual fatigue' of the approach. The sheer number and variety of articles published since this 'watershed', including Richardson's (2000) own prize-winning paper on networks and policy change, testifies to the continuing utility of the term. Not only are there innumerable case studies of British policy networks but casting the net wider, beyond the confines of political science, policy networks are staples in, for example, criminology (Loader 2000, Ryan et al 2001). The international relations literature on networks expanded, with Haas's (1992) notion of epistemic communities influential. They are transnational networks of knowledge-based experts with an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within their domain of expertise. The distinguishing features of these networks are their shared beliefs and professional judgments. Directly analogous to Haas's network of experts are Keck and Sikkink's (1998, 1) transnational advocacy networks of activist. For example, the UN, domestic and international nongovernmental organization, and private foundations form an international issue network to counter the 'forgetfulness' of governments. The network is an alternative channel of communication that argues, persuades, lobbies and complains to inject new ideas and information into the international debate on human rights (see also Risse et al 1999, Sikkink 1993).

Transnational networks are also a feature of policymaking in the European Union (EU). For Peterson (2003, 119, 129), 'policy network analysis is never more powerful as an

analytical tool than when it is deployed at the EU level' and 'few … would deny that governance by networks is an essential feature of the EU'.[9] Policy network analysis has also colonised intergovernmental relations in and between states, most notably federal-state relations (Galligan 1995, Rhodes 1988, Wright, 1978).

Finally, there is governance in a globalising world. It comes in several varieties. Keohane's (2002, 204, 210-12, 214) version of global governance is one of 'networked minimalism'. In other words, there is no hierarchy but a network of nation states, private firms, NGOs and subunits of government, which pursues 'minimal rather than ambitious objectives'. The nation state will remain the 'primary instrument of domestic and global governance' but 'it is not the only important actor' (see also Slaughter 2003). Rosenau (2000, 172-3) provides a more dramatic vision of a 'multi-centric', world composed of diverse transnational collectivities that both compete and cooperate and do not lend themselves to hierarchic control or hegemonic coordination. The world is a network and networks are the world.

In short, I doubt there could be clearer example of 'have theory will travel' and, therefore, there is a problem. There is no synthesis of the findings of this diverse literature. Indeed, a synthesis may not be possible. The key question would be, 'what type of network emerges in what conditions with what policy outcomes?' There have been many willing to tell us how to answer this question (Dowding 1995, Thatcher 1998). Only a few brave souls have tried to give an answer, and even then they confine their analysis to either comparing several policy sectors in a single country or a single policy sector in several countries (see for example Considine 2002, Marsh 1998).

When seeking to compare policy networks across countries, the problems are probably insurmountable. Policy networks are but political science writ small. The problems that bedevil comparative government also plague policy networks. They were devastatingly summarised by MacIntyre (1972, 8):

> There was once a man who aspired to be the author of the general theory of holes. When asked 'What kind of hole – holes dug by children in the sand for amusement, holes dug by gardeners to plant lettuce seedlings, tank traps, holes made by roadmakers' he would reply indignantly that he wished for a general theory that would explain all of these. He rejected an initio the – as he saw it – pathetically commonsense view that of the digging of different kinds of holes there are quite different kinds of explanations to be given.

Such 'modernist–empiricism' (Bevir 2001, 478) treats policy networks as discrete objects to be measured, classified and compared. It may not be one of 'the more dangerous kinds of practical joke' (MacIntyre 1972, 26) but it is only one way of studying networks.

The story about the rise and rise of governance raises a second issue. This 'new orthodoxy' does not carry all before it. Marinetto (2003) disputes the 'Anglo-Governance School's' claim there has been a loss of central control. He suggests that it exaggerates the ruptures in history, arguing there has been a long-standing tension between centralisation (government) and fragmentation (governance) in Britain. In a similar vein, Holliday (2000) insists Britain still has a strong core executive, the center has not been hollowed-out, networks have not spread and the center can and does exercise effective control. Whether the Anglo-Governance School has 'to undergo an intellectual crisis wrought by the growing weight of criticism' and the extent to which this 'critical

response is underway, albeit gradually' will become clear over the next few years (Marinetto 2003, 605). I too expect to see 'alternative ways of conceptualising the institutions, actors and processes of change in government', to listen to a new generation of stories about governance, and to ponder another round of debate about whether changes are epiphenomena of present-day government policy or more deep-seated ruptures. Stick around long enough and the aphorism 'what goes around comes around' sounds like a balanced summary of fads and fashions in the social sciences rather than irony or even cynicism.

Explaining change

The most common and recurrent criticism of policy network analysis is that it does not, and cannot, explain change (for a summary of the argument and citations see Richardson 2000). So, policy network analysis stresses how networks limit participation in the policy process; decide which issues will be included and excluded from the policy agenda; shape the behavior of actors through the rules of the game; privilege certain interests; and substitute private government for public accountability. It is about stability, privilege and continuity.

There have been several attempts to analyze change and networks but I must make two preliminary points. First, it is no mean feat to describe and explain continuity and stability in policymaking. Second, the analysis of change may be a recurring problem but, and this point is crucial, it is not specific to the study of networks. Just as there are many theories of bureaucracy, so there many theories of policy networks. There is no consensus in the political science community about how to explain, for example, political change, only competing epistemological positions and a multitude of theories. Students of policy

networks can no more produce an accepted explanatory theory of change than (say) students of bureaucracy, democracy or economic development. Debates in the policy network literature mirror the larger epistemological and ontological debates in the social sciences.

Of the several efforts to build the analysis of change into policy networks, three have attracted attention: advocacy coalitions, the dialectical model, and decentered analysis.

The advocacy coalition framework (ACF) has four basic premises. First, ‘understanding the process of policy change ... requires a time perspective of a decade or more’. Second, the most useful way to think about policy change... is through a focus on "policy subsystems"’. Third, ‘those subsystems must include an intergovernmental dimension’. Finally, public policies... can be conceptualized in the same manner as belief systems, that is, sets of value priorities and causal assumptions about how to realize them' (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, 16). Sabatier argues that coalitions try to translate their beliefs into public policy. Their belief systems determine the direction of policy. Their resources determine their capacity to change government programs. Resources change over time, most commonly in response to changes external to the subsystem. Most distinctively, Sabatier distinguishes between core and secondary beliefs and argues that coalitions have a consensus on their policy core that is resistant to change. In sharp contrast, secondary aspects of the belief system can change rapidly (paraphrased from Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, pp. 25-34). Moreover, these beliefs are central to understanding the actions of policy makers who are not necessarily motivated by rational self-interest. However, as Parsons (1995, 201) succinctly points out the model works well

for the federal and fragmented government of America but there is little evidence that it travels well.

The dialectical model proposed by Marsh and Smith (2000) suggests that change is a function of the interaction between the structure of the network and the agents operating in it, the network and the context in which it operates, and the network and policy outcomes. They see networks as structures that can constrain or facilitate action but they do not determine actions because actors interpret and negotiate constraints. Exogenous factors may prompt network change but actors mediate that change. So we must examine not only the context of change but also structure, rules and interpersonal relationship in the network. Finally, not only do networks affect policy outcomes but policy outcomes feedback and affect networks. This dialectical model provoked heated debate and lectures on how to do political science, but little convergence and a mere tad of insight (compare and Marsh and Smith 2000 and 2001 with Dowding 2001).

Grappling with the same issues as the formation, evolution, transformation and termination of policy networks, Hay and Richards's 'strategic relational theory of networks' is a sophisticated variation on the dialectical theme. To begin with, they avoid the ambiguities of, and controversies surrounding, the term 'dialectical'. They argue individuals seeking to realise certain objectives and outcomes make a strategic assessment of the context in which they find themselves. However, that context is not neutral. It too is strategically selective in the sense that it privileges certain strategies over others. Individuals learn from their actions and adjust their strategies. The context is changed by their actions, so individuals have to adjust to a different context. So a networking is 'a practice – an accomplishment on the part of strategic actors … which

takes place within a strategic (and strategically selective context) which is itself constantly evolving through the consequences (both intended and unintended) of strategic action' (Hay and Richards 2000, 14; see also Hay 2002).

A different challenge comes from those who advocate an interpretive turn and argue that policy network analysis could make greater use of such ethnographic tools as: studying individual behavior in everyday contexts; gathering data from many sources; adopting an 'unstructured' approach; focusing on one group or locale; and, in analyzing the data, stressing the 'interpretation of the meanings and functions of human action' (paraphrased from Hammersley 1990, 1-2). The task would be to write thick descriptions or our 'constructions of other people's constructions of what they are up to' (Geertz 1973, 9, 20-21; and for a similar recognition that the political ethnography of networks is an instructive approach see: Heclo and Wildavsky 1974, McPherson and Raab 1988).

Bevir and Rhodes (2003, chapter 4) argue for the decentered study of networks, for a shift of topos from institution to individual and a focus on the social construction of policy networks through the ability of individuals to create meaning. Bang and Sørensen's (1999) story of the 'Everyday Maker' provides an instructive example of a decentered account of networks. They interviewed 25 active citizens in the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen to see how they engaged with government. They identify the 'Everyday Maker', who focuses on immediate and concrete policy problems at the lowest possible level. Thus, Grethe (a grassroots activist) reflects that she has acquired the competence to act out various roles: contractor, board member, leader. There has been an explosion of 'issue networks, policy communities, ad hoc policy projects, and user boards, including actors from "within", "without", "above", and "below" traditional institutions of democratic government'. So the task of the 'Everyday Maker' is 'to produce concrete

outcomes' (Bang and Sørensen 1999, 332). Political activity has shifted from 'formal organizing to more informal networking' (Bang and Sørensen 1999, 334). Politics is no longer about left and right but 'dealing with concrete problems in the institutions around which … everyday life … is organized' (Bang and Sørensen 1999, 336). In short, they draw a picture of Nørrebro's networks through the eyes of its political activists, constructing the networks from the bottom up.

This discussion highlights two points. First, the trend in the study of policy networks to ethnographic methods mirrors general trends in political science. Fenno (1990, 128) observed 'not enough political scientists are presently engaged in observation'. That was then. Now there is a growing interest in the interpretive turn in political science. Any discussion of this turn would take us too far afield. However, it is worth noting that the origins of network analysis lie in social anthropology, which examines who talks to whom about what in (say) a Norwegian village. So this point is perhaps best expressed an overdue return to roots.

Second, all three approaches to network change are part of a broader trend in political science to exploring the impact of ideas on policymaking. Again, it would take us too far afield to cover this topic but Sabatier's (1993) work on advocacy coalitions stands alongside that of, for example, Kingdon (1984) on policy ideas and policy agendas. The link between changing policy networks, new ideas, and setting policy agendas is exploited to great effect in Richardson (2000).

Managing the institutional void

If we live in a world of ‘polycentric networks of governance’, then the task facing politicians, managers and citizens is to manage ‘the institutional void’, that is, to make and implement policy when there are no generally accepted rules and norms for conducting policymaking (Hajer 2003, 175). Hajer’s vivid metaphor may overstate the extent of change but it does dramatise the problems of managing the network state. Four such problems recur: the mix of governing structures, the diffusion of accountability, enhancing coordination, and devising new tools.

Managing the mix

In a world of policy networks where every service is a mix of bureaucracy, markets and networks, we need to understand when these governing structures for allocating resources work. We need to be clear about what we mean when we call for effective service delivery because the criteria of effectiveness vary. For example, the competition that characterises markets conflicts with the cooperation so characteristic of networks. Flynn et al. (1996, 136-7) argue that trust became important in British National Health Service because of the difficulties in specifying contracts and participants' experience of assertive purchasers whose style 'engenders or exacerbates suspicious attitudes and feelings of mutual distrust'. So, market relations had 'corrosive effects' on 'professional networks which depend on cooperation reciprocity and interdependence'. I would belabor the obvious if I gave examples of bureaucratic failures. The apt conclusion is not that contracts or bureaucracies or networks fail, but that they all do (Jessop 2000). Not every day or every week or for every policy. The key is to understand the conditions under which each works and a core lesson of that analysis is, ‘it is the mix that matters’. We not

only need to know how to manage each governing structure but also the relationship between them.[10]

Diffuse Accountability

Conventional notions of accountability do not fit when authority for service delivery is dispersed among several agencies. Bovens (1998, 46) identifies the 'problem of many hands' where responsibility for policy in complex organizations is shared and it is correspondingly difficult to find out who is responsible (see also van Gunsteren 1974, 3). He also notes that fragmentation, marketization and the resulting networks create 'new forms of the problem of many hands' (Bovens 1998, 229). For example, Hogwood, Judge and McVicar (2000) show that agencies and special purpose bodies have multiple constituencies, each of which seeks to hold them to account. There is no system, just disparate, overlapping demands. In a network, the constituent organizations may hold the relevant officials and politicians to account but to whom is the set of organizations accountable. As Mulgan (2003, 211-14) argues, buck-passing is much more likely in networks because responsibility is divided and the reach of political leaders is much reduced. However, all is not doom and gloom. Following Braithwaite (2003, 312) policy networks can be see as an example of 'many unclear separation of powers' in that the several interests in a network can act as checks and balances on one another. However, it is more common for networks to be closed to public scrutiny, a species of private government. The brute fact is that multiple accountabilities weaken central control (Mulgan 2003, 225).[11]

Enhancing Coordination

Weakened accountability is not the only consequence of networks. The spread of networks also undermines coordination. Despite strong pressures for more coordination, the practice is 'modest'. It is 'largely negative, based on persistent compartmentalisation, mutual avoidance and friction reduction between powerful bureaus or ministries'; 'anchored at the lower levels of the state machine and organised by specific established networks'; 'rarely strategic, so almost all attempts to create proactive strategic capacity for long-term planning … have failed'; and intermittent and selective in any one sector, improvised late in the policy process, politicised, issue-oriented and reactive (Wright and Hayward 2000, 33). And that it is before we introduce networks into the equation. Networks make the goal ever more elusive. As Peters (1998, 302) argues 'strong vertical linkages between social groups and public organizations makes effective coordination and horizontal linkages within government more difficult'. Once agreement is reached in the network, 'the latitude for negotiation by public organizations at the top of the network is limited'. However, these remarks presume hierarchy is the most important or appropriate mechanism for coordination. Lindblom (1965) persuasively argued many years ago that indirect coordination or mutual adjustment was messy but effective. The San Francisco Bay Area public transit system is a multi-organizational system (or network) and Chisholm (1989, 195) shows that only some coordination can take place by central direction and so 'personal trust developed through informal relationships acts a lubricant for mutual adjustment'. In sum, coordination is the holy grail of modern government, ever sought, but always just beyond reach and networks bring central

coordination no nearer. However, they do provide their own messy, informal, decentralised version.

Devising New Tools

The mainstream literature (for example Salamon 2002) encourages a tool view of how to manage networks, if learning the skills of indirect management is itself a major challenge, it is not the only one confronting would-be network managers. The epistemological debate extends to the question of how to manage networks. An interpretive approach encourages us to replace the toolbox approach with storytelling. Although the label varies – the argumentative turn, narratives – there is now a growing literature on storytelling as a way of managing the public sector.[12] Van Eeten et al (1996) make the important point that this latest intellectual fashion has its feet firmly on the ground because managers use stories not only to gain and pass on information and to inspire involvement but also as the repository of the organization's institutional memory. In sum, as Hummel (1991, 103-4) argues, 'managers communicate first and foremost through stories'. He asks 'how could it be otherwise?' When mangers confront a problem, their people tell them what is going on. So, managers 'could do worse than hone their skills in story-telling and story-validating'. Management is just as much about interpretation as rational calculation.

CONCLUSIONS

In the 1970s, debate raged about the future of public policymaking and policy analysis. Was it a distinctive field of study or just good old public administration under a new and fashionable label? It staked a claim to be a distinct field of study. Now we no longer

discuss the question. Policy analysis is established. In this sense, there is no longer a debate about the future of policy networks. The story of policy networks follows the same trajectory as public policy making. The subject is here to stay – a standard topic in any public policymaking textbook (Parsons 1995) or textbooks on British government (Richards and Smith 2002).

What was all the excitement about? It is not just the story of the rise of an idea. It is about a new generation of political scientists. 'Young – well youngish - Turks' carved out a reputation for themselves by challenging their elders and betters. Sound and fury are essential to such uprisings. In Britain, added edge came from the challenge to the Westminster model, which had run out a steam as a way of understanding the changes in British government. The debate was not only about networks but also about how to study British government. It should be no surprise, therefore, that the recurrent problems of the policy network literature, for example in explaining change, mirror issues in broader political science. The rise of governance was our story of how British government had changed. It was not the story in the graduate and postgraduate texts on which we were raised. We abandoned the eternal verities of the British constitution. In sharp contrast to the fuddy-duddies, we could explain both continuity and change. Of course, we were wrong but we weren't about to admit it. Anyway the spats were fun!

The story of policy networks is a story of a success. The 'Young Turks' won their elevation to the professorial peerage, ran out of steam, and moved on. A flood of doctorates and case studies followed. It is no longer an innovative idea but a commonplace notion in almost every nook and cranny of both political science texts and British government textbooks in particular. It is ripe for challenge. Controversies in

policy network analysis now parallel controversies in political science, whether they are about how to explain political change or the uses of ethnographic methods.[13] Policy network analysis has become one more locus for the endless debates about how do we know what we know in the social sciences. I doubt the founders could have hoped for more. I am sure their expectations were less.

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Notes

[1] On Australia see Considine 1994, Davis et al 1993; on Canada see Coleman and Skogstad 1990, Lindquist 1996; on the UK see Rhodes 1988, Richardson and Jordan 1979; on continental Europe see LeGales and Thatcher 1995, Marin and Mayntz 1991; on the USA see Mandell 2001, O'Toole 1997.

[2] See also Benson 1975, Crozier and Thoenig 1976, Hanf and Scharpf 1979, and Thompson 1967.

[3] See for example Ansell 2000, Bevir and Rhodes 2003, Rhodes 1997a, 2000, Stoker 2004, and for a review of the literature and citations see Marinetto 2003.

[4] Bob Goodin pointed out correctly that theories of complexity are also relevant to the study of network (personal correspondence). See, for example, La Porte 1975, Luhmann 1982, Simon 1981[1969]. Such ideas exercised some influence on the 'governance club' research programme at Erasmus University, Rotterdam (see for example Kickert et al 1997). They have not been a major influence on the rest of the network literature.

[5] The analysis of 'power-dependence' is not limited to the study of networks. More generally see: Blau 1964, Emerson 1962, Keohane and Nye 1977 and 1987, and Pfeffer and Salancik 1978.

[6] On the private sector see Child and Faulkner 1998, chapter 6, Ford et al 2003, and Pfeffer and Salancik 1978.

[7] See Agranoff 2003, Kettl 2002, Kickert et al 1997, McGuire 2002, Mandell 2001, O'Toole 1997, Osborne 2000, and Perri 6 et al 2002.

[8] The literature may be pre-occupied with adducing lessons for would be managers but it also analyses network management as, for example, brokerage. See: Bardach 1998, Carpenter et al 2004, Fernandez and Gould 1994, and Taylor, 1997.

[9] See also Ansell 2000, Andersen 1990, Josselin 1997, Kassim 1993, Mazey and Richardson 1993, and Rhodes et al 1996.

[10] See for example Considine and Lewis 1999, Thompson et al 1991, Powell 1991, Rhodes 1997b, and Simon 2000.

[11] On the need to rethink accountability in the nation-state see Behn 2001 and on accountability in a globalizing world see Keohane 2002: 219-44 and 2003.

[12] See Bevir et al 2003, Hummel 1991, Rein 1976, Van Eeten et al. 1996, and Weick 1995.

[13] Of course, we also respond to debates and problems in the 'real' world. Much of the literature reviewed in this chapter sees networks as an effective way of managing complex problems in health and education. However, Al Qaeda and the war on terror have focused attention on 'dark networks' (Raab and Milward 2003), a term that also encompasses drug smuggling, the arms trade and failed states. Fieldwork may not be an option but the problems of policing dark networks cannot be ignored.