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in David Marsh (ed.), Comparing Policy Networks, Open University Press, 1998

The development of the policy network approach

David Marsh

Discussions of policy networks are becoming increasingly common in the analysis of public policy in Britain, the US and Europe. However, whilst there is general agreement that policy networks exist, operating as links between actors within a particular policy domain, there is much less agreement as to the explanatory utility of the concept or the broader significance of the growth of networks. In particular, there are significant differences in the way the concept is used in the US, the British and the German-inspired European literature. Of course, there is common ground. All authors see policy networks as a key feature of modern polities. In addition, there are authors within both traditions who treat the concept merely as a heuristic device, while others see it as having explanatory utility. The key difference, however, is that the European approach sees the growth of networks as having much broader significance; as marking a new form of governance, which they distinguish from two other forms, market and hierarchy. This book is located within the British tradition but acknowledges the importance of the German literature. As such, while this introduction concentrates upon the British approach, it also reviews the German literature. In addition, I shall return in the conclusion to this volume to the question of whether policy networks represent a new form of governance.

This introduction is divided into four sections. It begins with a brief review of the American, British and European literatures which suggests that the key question, in the American and British literature at least, is: do policy networks affect policy outcomes? The second section introduces this question, which is a key focus of this volume, through a consideration of two British approaches. My work with Rhodes (1992) stresses the importance of the

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structural aspects of networks and thus of structural explanation, while Dowling (1994a) emphasizes that networks reflect patterns of resource exchange between agents and, thus, he stresses intentional explanation. The third section considers a number of related problems: how to define policy networks; how to classify policy networks; and which methodology to adopt to study the effect of networks. Subsequently, the final section identifies the key questions focused upon in the later case studies in this volume.

The development of the policy network concept

A brief summary of the development of the British and American literature on networks will suffice here as the process has been well documented elsewhere (see Marsh and Rhodes 1992: Chapter 1).

The American literature

Jordan suggests that the idea of 'a policy network', although significantly not the term itself, emerged in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s (Jordan 1990b: 320). This American usage emphasized regular contacts between individuals within interest groups, bureaucratic agencies and government which provided the basis of a sub-government. The approach was a critique, sometimes implicit, of the pluralist model of interest group intermediation, that is of relations between interest groups and government. It had a significant number of advocates, but it never dominated. Indeed, as Peters argues in Chapter 2, there is considerable doubt whether the model ever really applied in the United States.

Ripley and Franklin effectively characterize the sub-government model which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s:

Sub-governments are clusters of individuals that effectively make most of the routine decisions in a given substantive area of policy . . . A typical sub-government is composed of members of the House and/or Senate, members of Congressional staffs, a few bureaucrats and representatives of private groups and organisations interested in the policy area.

(quoted in Jordan 1990b: 321)

Other authors, such as Cater (1964) and McConnell (1966), added an important strand to the position, arguing that the private interests involved in the sub-governments could become dominant. They could control, rather than respond to, their members and could capture the government agency which was supposed to regulate their activities – a phenomenon which became known as 'agency capture'.

The sub-government literature emphasized the role of a limited number of privileged groups with close relations with governments; the resultant sub-government excluded other interests and made policy. Some authors developed more rigid metaphors to characterize this relationship. Theodore Lowi

(1969) stressed the *triangular* nature of the relationships involved, with the central government agency, the congressional committee and the interest group enjoying an almost symbiotic interaction. This insight gave rise to the best known label within the sub-government literature: the 'iron triangle'.

Peters (1986: 24) characterizes an iron triangle as an exchange relationship:

Each actor in the iron triangle needs the other two to succeed, and the style that develops is symbiotic. The pressure group needs the agency to deliver services to its members and to provide a friendly point of access to government, while the agency needs the pressure group to mobilise political support for its programs among the affected clientele . . . All those involved in the triangle have similar interests . . . Much of the domestic policy of the United States can be explained by the existence of these functionally specific policy subsystems and by the absence of effective central co-ordination.

Faced with such a critique, it is not surprising that the pluralists hit back in the late 1970s. Hecló's (1978) defence of pluralism from attack by the proponents of the sub-government model plays down the restricted nature of access to policy making, emphasizing the importance of issue networks, defined by McFarland (1987: 146) as:

. . . a communications network of those interested in policy in some area, including government authorities, legislators, businessmen, lobbyists, and even academics and journalists. Obviously an issue network is not the same as an 'iron triangle'. A lively issue network constantly communicates criticisms of policy and generates ideas for new policy initiatives.

Hecló admits that iron triangles sometimes exist but asserts that, in general terms, fairly open issue networks have replaced 'the closed circles of control'.

Pluralist authors have generally not emphasized the significance of sub-governments and have pointed to a dramatic growth in the number of interest groups lobbying national government in the 1970s and emphasized the autonomy of the American executive institutions (see McFarland 1987: 135–6). McFarland's conceptualization contains a renewed emphasis upon two basic tenets of pluralism: the potential independence of government from the pressures of particular interests; and the existence of actual, or potential, counter-vailing power alliances which prevent the dominance of economic interests. He christened his rediscovery of pluralism a 'theory of triadic power'. Thus, sub-governments may exist but they are rarely exclusive. Characteristically, sub-governments will be based upon a triad involving a government agency, a producer or professional interest group and an *opposing* public interest group, either a consumer group or a social movement. It is noteworthy that this conceptualization keeps the idea that access to policy making is restricted. Indeed, it retains the triangle as an image, but emphasizes that economic groups

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no longer dominate. Their interests are opposed by powerful countervailing forces and an increasingly autonomous state.

Overall, the American literature has emphasized the micro-level, dealing with personal relations between key actors rather than structural relations between institutions. It initially focused upon the existence of sub-governments and often saw them as constraints upon the democratic orientation of the political system. More recently, however, a wide variety of authors criticized the sub-government thesis. They still recognize the existence of close relationships and accept that these networks can affect policy, but they deny that such arrangements pose a threat to democracy.

Two other points need emphasis, given that most of the case studies in this book deal with countries like Britain in which the legislature plays a minor role in policy making. First, neither the iron triangle model specifically, nor the sub-governments model generally, is directly applicable in such systems. So, in Britain it makes much more sense to talk of a relationship between the Department, the regulatory agency and the interest group(s), leaving out the legislative committee. Second, and this probably follows, the term 'policy network' was developed not in America, where, as we have seen, some variant on the term sub-government is adopted, but in Britain.

The British literature

Rhodes emphasizes (1990) that the British literature on networks owes a great deal to non-American sources. His own work in particular draws upon the literature on interorganizational theory, much of which is German (see, for example, Hanf and Scharpf 1978; Martin and Mayntz 1991a; Jordan and Schubert 1992). However, there is no doubt that both Richardson and Jordan (1979) and Wilkes and Wright (1987) were strongly influenced by the work of Hecló and Wildavsky (1974) on British public expenditure decision making within the Treasury, which emphasized that Whitehall operated like a village or a policy community.

Richardson and Jordan adopt Hecló and Wildavsky's idea of a policy community and suggest that such arrangements are the key to understanding most policy making in stable liberal democracies. They see policy making in Britain as taking place within sub-systems in which government agencies and pressure groups negotiate:

The policy-making map is in reality a series of vertical compartments or segments – each segment inhabited by a different set of organised groups and generally impenetrable by 'unrecognised groups' or by the general public.

(Richardson and Jordan 1979: 74)

Richardson and Jordan emphasize disaggregation; there are many divisions within government. Society is highly fragmented; a fact which is reflected in the growing number of interest groups. Policy making takes place within a

variety of policy networks characterized by close relations between particular interests and different sections of government. Moreover, Richardson and Jordan stress the interpersonal rather than the structural nature of these relationships within policy communities.

Rhodes (1981) takes a different approach, drawing on the European literature on interorganizational relations, rather than on the American literature on sub-governments. For this reason, he emphasizes the structural relationship between political institutions as the crucial element in a policy network rather than the interpersonal relations between individuals within those institutions. In addition, he concentrates on the existence of networks at sectoral rather than sub-sectoral levels.

Rhodes rightly claims that the British literature on networks is distinct, although that literature is disparate, with a variety of authors taking different perspectives. His work became the starting point of the majority of the British literature on networks. It was built on by Wilkes and Wright (1987), although their approach was different; they emphasized the interpersonal dynamics of networks and stressed that networks were located at the sub-sectoral, rather than the sectoral level. However, it is the work of Marsh and Rhodes (1992) which has probably been the most significant development of the Rhodes model and which provides the starting point for this volume. As we shall see in the next section, they emphasized the structural aspect of networks, suggested that networks existed at the sectoral as well as the sub-sectoral level and argued that networks affected outcomes. In addition, they developed a typology of networks which has been influential and is used in this book. The typology is discussed below in the third section of this chapter.

The European literature

The European approach to policy networks is most associated with the work of a number of German scholars concerned with public policy, notably Mayntz, Scharpf and Schneider, who all have associations with the Max Planck Institute. However, recently there has also been a growth of related Dutch literature in the area (see Kickert *et al.* 1997). Both 'schools' share significant similarities with the British approach. Modern society is seen as characterized by functional differentiation, with private organizations, which control key resources, having an increasingly important role in the formulation and implementation of policy. As such, most authors adopting either approach see policy networks as having a significant influence on policy outcomes, although they are seldom explicit about the causal mechanisms involved. In addition, many of the issues within the network literature, for example questions concerning the relative importance of the structural and the interpersonal dimension of networks, cut across the two approaches. For example, the authors in the Kickert *et al.* reader (1997) emphasize the importance of institutional structures in much the same way as do Marsh and Rhodes. So Klijn (1997: 33) argues:

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the policy network approach draws attention to the importance of the institutional context for the issue of governance. If policy processes take place within a certain institutionalised context (i.e. a stable relation pattern between organisations), it becomes important to understand that context.

However, the European and British literatures do have one fundamental difference. The German and Dutch scholars see policy networks as being of much broader significance. To British authors like Marsh and Rhodes (1992) or Smith (1993), policy networks are a model of interest group representation which is superior to, and indeed can subsume, pluralism and corporatism. In contrast, the Max Planck school and Kickert *et al.* view policy networks as a new form of governance. As Mayntz (1994: 5) puts it: 'The notion of policy networks does not so much represent a new analytical perspective but rather signals a real change in the structure of the polity.'

In this view, a key feature of the modern polity is the growth in the role of private sector organizations and the resultant decline in the capacity of the state; here the ideas have much in common with the British literature on the 'hollowing out' of the state (see Rhodes 1997). So, to quote Mayntz (1994: 5) again: 'Instead of emanating from a central authority, be this the government or the legislature, policy today is in fact made in a process involving a plurality of both public and private organisations.' Similarly, Klijn (1997: 33) argues: '(The policy network approach) leads to a different view of governance. Government organisations are no longer the central steering actor in policy activities.'

In the German literature, networks as a mode of governance are contrasted with hierarchy and markets. Hierarchy is a mode of governance characterized by a very close structural coupling between the public and private level, with central coordination, and thus control, being exercised by government. In contrast, markets as a form of governance involve no structural coupling and outcomes result from the market-driven interplay between a plurality of autonomous agents drawn from the public and the private spheres; there is no central coordination. In contrast, policy networks involve a loose structural coupling; interaction within networks between autonomous actors produces a negotiated consensus which provides the basis for coordination. Some authors see networks as representing an alternative to both hierarchies and markets (see Kenis and Schneider 1991). More authors see networks as a hybrid of the two (Mayntz 1994). Finally, some authors view networks as linked to hierarchy but not to markets (Benz 1995).

The German school argues that policy networks are the emerging form of governance because neither hierarchy nor markets are appropriate forms of governance in a world characterized by increasing interdependence between the state and the private sector; to put it another way, they suggest that the distinction between the state and civil society has been dissolved and this change necessitates a new form of governance. In this view, hierarchies fail as a

mode of governance because they produce 'losers' – actors who have to bear the costs of political decisions because hierarchy is based upon systematic exploitation, and who will, consequently, attempt to destabilize the system. Markets fail as a mode of governance because the absence of coordination makes it impossible to prevent, or overcome, market failure. In contrast, because networks involve a horizontal, negotiated self-coordination they can avoid the problems associated with the other modes of governance. The negotiation can produce a positive-sum outcome in which all benefit; it is argued that networks, because of the frequent interactions involved and the consequent development of shared values and trust, develop a problem-solving capacity in which actors do not narrowly forward their self-interests. At the same time, the network provides in effect a shadow hierarchy which can coordinate responses to market failure.

Borzel sums up the argument very well:

in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment, where hierarchical coordination is rendered difficult if not impossible and the potential for deregulation is limited due to the problems of market failure, governance becomes more and more only feasible within policy networks, in which public and private corporate actors, mutually dependent on their resources, are linked in a non-hierarchical way to exchange resources and to coordinate their interests and actions.

(1997:15)

The Dutch literature, in contrast, distinguishes between the policy network model and the rational central rule model as forms of governance. In the view of Kickert *et al.* (1997: 7–9) the dominant rational central rule model focuses on the role of the government which is seen as the point of departure for analysis and evaluation. The government is the key actor and the role of other actors in the policy-making process is neglected; there is a top-down view of decision making. Given that there are often a variety of actors involved in implementation, then this model implies effective coordination operated by government. Indeed, to Kickert *et al.* this is a major weakness because the model implies an almost omnipotent government, with perfect information, attention and control of other actors. It also denies the inevitably political and thus negotiated nature of policy making.

In contrast, the policy network model offers a more realistic, and indeed democratic, alternative (Kickert *et al.* 1997: 9–10). The government is no longer seen as in a superior, directive, role, but as one actor among a number with roughly equal power. Public policy making in networks is about cooperation and consensus building; it involves an exchange of resources between the actors. Policy failure may result from the absence of key actors, the lack of commitment to shared goals by one or more actors or insufficient information or attention. Thus, the key to effective governance is the effective management of the network.

This book's major focus is not on these wider questions; it is clearly located within the British approach. Nevertheless, as we shall see, some of the

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contributions here do touch on these issues and, in particular, Benington and Harvey discuss changes in broader patterns of governance in their chapter on transnational networking between local authorities. In addition, because it is an important issue I shall return to it in the conclusion in the light of the case studies examined here. However, two other observations are worth emphasizing before I move on.

First, as Borzel, among others notes, when the German school comes to explain the development of policy networks as a new form of governance, and particularly how they shape policy outcomes, it draws on actor-centred institutionalism which combines elements of institutional theory with rational choice. The argument is that the institutions, in this case the networks, are regulatory structures which constrain and facilitate actors who are striving to maximize their preferences. As we shall see, this approach shares a great deal in common with recent developments in the British literature. In particular, it throws up the same key questions about the relationship between networks as structures and as patterns of exchange between agents which are at the core of the better British literature.

Second, the Dutch literature is similar to the German literature in some ways but different in others. As we saw, both emphasize the importance of institutional structures, but there is probably less stress on the rational choice approach in the Dutch than in the German literature. Certainly, the Kickert *et al.* edited collection places significant emphasis on strategy, which implies calculating subjects acting in structured settings. This approach shares common ground with some of the authors in this volume, especially Hay. The major difference between the Dutch and the German literature results from this emphasis in the former on strategy. The contributions in the Kickert *et al.* collection concentrate mainly on questions to do with the management of the network.

Policy networks and policy outcomes

All the authors discussed to date imply, at the very least, that policy networks affect policy outcomes. Richardson and Jordan (1979) represent a partial exception; they are ambivalent on the issue. In contrast, Dowding (1994a) asserts that the concept of policy networks, as used by most of its proponents, has no theoretical basis and, thus, no explanatory power. In his view, the concept has been used merely as an heuristic device, a metaphor. Network structures *per se* have no influence on policy outcomes. Rather, networks reflect patterns of interaction and resource exchange between agents and it is those resource exchanges which determine outcomes: 'the explanation lies in the characteristics of the actors' (Dowding 1995: 142).

In essence the argument is about the relative importance of structures and agents in affecting policy outcomes. Some authors, for example Marsh and Rhodes, stress the structural aspect of networks while others, like Dowding, emphasize intentional explanation. It is important to analyse both of these

positions in some detail as the key question posed in this book is: to what extent, and in what ways, do policy networks affect policy outcomes?

Networks as structures versus networks as patterns of resource exchange

The Marsh and Rhodes approach

There are three key features of the Marsh and Rhodes approach which are relevant here. First, it is essentially structural; they downplay the importance of agents. Marsh and Rhodes see networks as structures of resource dependency and the contributions to their edited collections (1992) emphasize the structural links between the interests involved in the network. Read's conclusion (1992) is typical. He emphasizes that the basis of the British policy network dealing with the smoking issue is the shared economic interest between the Treasury, the tobacco industry and, to a lesser extent, the advertising industry. A more liberal policy on health warnings on cigarette packets or cigarette advertising is in the interest of all actors in the network; the companies will have larger sales, the Treasury greater revenue and the advertising industry more income.

Second, they argue that the structure of networks affects policy outcomes. For example, they suggest that the existence of a tight policy network constrains the policy agenda and tends to result in policy continuity. The best example in Britain is the way in which the very close relations between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the National Farmers' Union underpinned a policy of high production and high subsidies for over 50 years from the 1930s (see Smith 1992). While agriculture may represent the archetypal case, continuity, resulting to a significant extent from the existence and activities of a policy network, was also the hallmark of other policy areas considered in the Marsh and Rhodes book, notably smoking, nuclear power, diet and health, health services and sea defence (see Marsh and Rhodes 1992).

Third, while Marsh and Rhodes are less forthcoming on the way in which networks affect policy change, the basic outline of their view is clear. It is suggested that factors exogenous to the network lead to change in both the policy network and the policy outcome. So, policy continuity is the most likely outcome of tight networks, discontinuity is more likely in weaker networks, while policy change would be associated with network change. As such, the implication is that, to understand and explain policy change, we need to understand and explain network change. Marsh and Rhodes discuss network change at some length, although they don't directly relate it to the question of policy change. They argue (1992: 257) that:

most (network) change is explained in terms of factors exogenous to the network, although the extent and speed of the change is clearly influenced by the network's capacity to minimise the effect of such change.

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In their view then, the driving force for change in the network and the outcomes lies in broader economic and political change and changes in knowledge.

Overall, Marsh and Rhodes argue that a large number of the questions raised in the network literature are empirical questions which cannot be resolved by theoretical fiat and the tentative answers they give to these questions rest upon the results of the case studies in their book. However, their case studies do lack empirical detail on the actual exchange relationships involved. In Hay's terms (see below, p. 50) they are more about the network than about networking.

The structural approach has two distinct, if related, problems. First, while it does acknowledge the role of the structure and the agents, there is no doubt it privileges structure. It fails to recognize that the relationship between the two is dialectical; instead, it sees the effect as additive; structures shape outcomes but agents can ameliorate the consequences of this structural relationship. Second, in explaining change it privileges exogenous factors; indeed its explanation is based on a problematic distinction between factors exogenous and endogenous to the network. Clearly, the context within which a network is located affects the shape of the network and the behaviour of the agents in the network. However, it is the agents who have to interpret that context and their behaviour is not determined by that context. In addition, the behaviour of the actors affects both the structure of the network and the broader context within which the network operates.

The Dowding approach

Dowding argues (1994: 69) that network approaches:

fail because the driving force of the explanation, the independent variables, are not the network characteristics *per se* but rather characteristics of components within the networks. These components explain both the nature of the network *and* the nature of the policy process.

So, to Dowding, policy networks reflect patterns of interaction and resource exchange between agents. In his view, too much of the literature on policy networks deals in broad generalities, failing to establish any direct link between the bargaining which takes place within the policy network and policy outcomes. As such, he criticizes the case studies in Marsh and Rhodes's edited volume for failing to collect sufficient detail about the interactions within the networks analysed in order to allow for any formal, let alone numerical, treatment of the exchange relationships involved. In Dowding's view, such a method is essential because it is the bargaining between the actors which goes on within policy networks, which affects outcomes. While Marsh and Rhodes suggest that change in policy outcomes results from change which is exogenous to the network, although mediated via change in the network structure, Dowding argues it must be explained in terms of endogenous change in the pattern of resource dependencies within the network.

Unfortunately, Dowding is far from clear about his agenda for policy networks research. He certainly emphasizes the need to analyse and quantify the characteristics and preferences of network participants and the bargaining processes within the network. In his initial article (1994b) there was a considerable, but under-developed, emphasis on the utility of rational choice theory. Subsequently, he emphasizes (1995) that to use the network as a key explanatory variable we need to integrate a bargaining model and game theory.

The key problem here is that the rational choice approach privileges agents over structure and assumes preferences. Yet, networks involve structures as well as patterns of interaction between agents. Dowding focuses on the actions of agents and pays no attention to how the structure of relations between agents, that is the structure of the policy network, may affect the process of bargaining, who bargains and what is bargained over. This is a point which is developed in Chapter 4. However, it is important to emphasize here that explanations which exclusively stress either the structural aspects of networks or the interpersonal exchanges of resources within the networks when trying to explain policy outcomes are partial. In my view, the way forward is to acknowledge the dialectical relationships involved. More specifically, I shall suggest in the conclusion to this volume that there are three separate but related dialectical relationships: those between network structure and the pattern of resource exchange between agents; between network and context; and between network and outcome.

Key problems in policy network analysis

Any approach to networks which accords them a key role in explaining outcomes has clear conceptual and methodological implications. In particular, it necessitates: a schema for classifying networks; the integration of network analysis, which is a meso-level analysis, with macro-level and micro-level analysis; and the use of comparative analysis. If a dialectical approach is adopted there are additional implications. We need: a broader definition of networks; to focus on the origins and the development of the network; and the use of qualitative, rather than just quantitative, methods.

Classifying networks

We need to classify different types of networks, because, if policy networks are to be used as a key independent variable to explain change in policy outcomes (the dependent variable) then we must establish and characterize the variation between them; to put it another way independent variables must vary if they are to explain differences in outcomes.

There are a number of different ways of classifying networks. Indeed certain authors have adopted classificatory schema. Here, I adopt that developed by Marsh and Rhodes because the utility of the schema has been established in a series of case studies. Marsh and Rhodes treat policy networks

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as a generic term and posit a continuum which distinguishes between policy communities and issue networks (see Table 1.1). Policy communities are tight networks with few participants who share basic values and exchange resources. They exhibit considerable continuity in membership, values and outcomes. In contrast, issue networks are loose networks with a large number of members with fluctuating access and significant dispute over values. There is little continuity in membership, values or outcomes.

Various authors have highlighted different characteristics of policy networks and policy communities. Grant *et al.* identify three characteristics of policy communities: differentiation, specialization and interaction (1988: 55). In a similar vein, Rhodes (1988: 77–8) identifies four dimensions along which networks vary – interests, membership, interdependence (vertical and horizontal) and resources. In addition, networks may also be characterized according to the interest(s) which dominate them. It is clearly important not to conflate these dimensions. Nevertheless, the key point must be that the degree to which any one or set of characteristics is present is primarily a matter for empirical investigation, not definition.

Marsh and Rhodes's typology builds upon these points, treating policy communities, policy networks and issue networks as types of relationships between interest groups and government. The typology treats policy network as a generic term. Networks can vary along a continuum according to the closeness of the relationships within 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 (see Table 1.1).

A policy community has the following characteristics: it has a limited number of participants *with some groups consciously excluded*; there is frequent and high quality interaction between all members of the community on all matters related to the policy issues; its membership, values and policy outcomes persist over time; there is consensus, with the ideology, values and broad policy preferences shared by all participants; all members of the policy community have resources so the relationships between them are exchange relationships; the basic interaction thus 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 involved in a positive-sum game; the structure of the participating groups is hierarchical so leaders can guarantee the compliance of their members. This model is an ideal type. The actual relationship between government and interests in any policy area can be compared to it, but no policy area is likely to conform exactly to it.

One can only fully understand the characteristics of a policy community if it is compared with an issue network. The issue network involves only policy consultation, characterized by: the involvement of a large number of 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 of bargaining; an unequal power relationship in which many participants may have few resources, little access and no alternative. Obviously

the implication of using a continuum is that any network can be located at some point along it.

Levels of analysis

In my view, policy networks are a meso-level, as distinct from a macro-level or micro-level concept. However, it has little utility as an explanatory concept unless it is integrated with macro-level and micro-level analysis. These relationships are the main focus of Chapter 4.

The macro-level of analysis deals with two broad sets of questions concerning the broader structures and processes of government within which any network operates, and the relationship between the state and civil society – that is with state theory. Policy networks occur at the sectoral or sub-sectoral level; so, for example, there may be a sectoral network in industrial policy and/or sub-sectoral networks which are concerned with policy in particular industrial sub-sectors, perhaps chemicals or oil. However, these networks operate within the context of the broader political system which has particular features. For example, a given political system may be characterized by a strong or a weak state tradition; executive dominance or a strong parliamentary tradition; secrecy or openness. All of these factors are likely to shape the policy networks and the way they operate and affect policy. At the same time, state theory offers an explanation of the pattern of inclusion and exclusion in the network and a hypothesis about whose interests are served by the outputs of a network.

The meso-level deals with the pattern of interest group intermediation, that is with policy networks; it concentrates on questions concerning the structure of networks and the patterns of interaction within them. The micro-level of analysis deals with the individual actions and decisions of actors within the networks and must be underpinned by a theory of human behaviour, whether it be rational choice theory or some other.

The need for comparative analysis

In my view, comparative analysis is essential in order to establish both the effect of networks and, more specifically, the relative effect of networks and context, on outcomes. In fact, two different research designs are appropriate, although they may of course be combined. First, we could compare policy formation and outcomes across the same policy area in two or more countries. If the countries shared similar political and economic contexts, but had different types and structures of policy networks, and the policy outcomes were different, then this would suggest that, in this case at least, networks have a considerable effect on outcomes. Second, we could compare policy-making processes and outcomes in different policy areas in a single country over the same period. Using this research design we can hold at least some elements of

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Table 1.1 Types of policy networks: characteristics of policy communities and issues networks

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Policy community</i>	<i>Issue network</i>
<i>Membership:</i>		
No. of Participants	Very limited number, some groups consciously excluded.	Large.
Type of interest	Economic and/or professional interests dominate.	Encompasses range of affected interests.
<i>Integration:</i>		
Frequency of interaction	Frequent, high-quality, interaction of all groups on all matters related to policy issue.	Contacts fluctuate in frequency and intensity.
Continuity	Membership, values and outcomes persistent over time.	Access fluctuates significantly.
Consensus	All participants share basic values and accept the legitimacy of the outcome.	A measure of agreement exists, but conflict is ever present.
<i>Resources:</i>		
Distribution of resources within network	All participants have resources; basic relationship is an exchange relationship.	Some participants may have resources, but they are limited, and basic relationship is consultative.
Distribution of resources within participating organizations	Hierarchical; leaders can deliver members.	Varied and variable distribution and capacity to regulate members.
<i>Power:</i>	There is a balance of power among members. Although one group may dominate, it must be a positive-sum game if community is to persist.	Unequal powers, reflecting unequal resources and unequal access. It is a zero-sum game.

Source: Adapted from Marsh and Rhodes 1992a: 251.

the context constant, so that any evidence of different network structures and different outcomes would suggest that the network is having some effect on the outcome.

The structure and focus of this book

No one book could address all the questions raised in this introduction. However, this book advances policy network analysis in two major ways. First, it raises and answers some of the key theoretical questions. As such, Part One

includes three chapters which examine these issues. In Chapter 2 Peters reviews the American literature, concentrating on the question of how the policy network concept can be used as an explanatory tool. He also examines the utility of the concept for examining policy making in the United States. In Chapter 3 Hay develops a dialectical approach as a way of transcending the limitations of most existing network analysis. He places considerable stress on the dynamism of networks and, thus, the necessity of a longitudinal study of their development, which pays particular attention to their formation and termination. Finally in this section, in Chapter 4 Daugbjerg and Marsh examine some of the issues involved in integrating the meso-level analysis of policy networks with macro-level and micro-level analysis in order to explain policy outcomes.

Second, this book attempts to establish the utility of the policy network approach. Part Two presents a series of comparative case studies. In Chapter 5 Daugbjerg examines how the different networks in Swedish and Danish agriculture were able to influence policy outcomes when a new issue, the question of environmental pollution, came onto the policy agenda. Cavanagh, in Chapter 6, analyses the development of offshore health and safety policy in Britain and Norway. He pays particular attention to the origins and development of the policy networks in the two countries and indicates how they were both shaped by exogenous factors and influenced policy outcomes. In Chapter 7, McLeay considers the effect of the policy networks on policing policy in Britain and New Zealand. Her work is particularly interesting on how the broader political structures affect the shape of, and outcomes from, networks. Cole and John's concerns in Chapter 8 are different. They offer an analysis of the policy networks in two major European cities: Leeds and Lille. Their chapter shows the utility of the formal, sociometric-based method developed by Knoke and Laumann (1987). In Part Three, the final two substantive chapters deal with another key question in the literature: is the concept useful at the European Union (EU) level? In Chapter 9, Benington and Harvey examine transnational local authority networking within the EU. Subsequently, in Chapter 10 Bomberg considers the utility of the concept for explaining the development of EU environmental policy. The conclusion then reviews the theoretical and empirical contributions of the book before suggesting ways forward for policy network analysis.

Obviously, to an extent, all these case studies raise different questions, so the authors were not given a blueprint for their chapter. However, each was asked to address, where appropriate, the key questions raised in the literature and in the introduction:

- Is the concept a useful tool with which to understand policy making?
- Do the existence and activities of a policy network affect policy outcomes?
- How do networks change?
- How important are interpersonal as compared with structural links within the network?
- Do certain groups dominate the network?
- What methods are appropriate to study policy networks?