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Publication date:
2003

Document Version
Også kaldet Forlagets PDF

Citation for published version (APA):
Torfing, J. (2003). *Grasping governance networks*. Roskilde Universitet. Working paper (Centre for Democratic Network Governance, RUC Nr. 5 http://www.ruc.dk/demnetgov_en/working_papers/

WORKING PAPER SERIES

GRASPING GOVERNANCE NETWORKS

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WORKING PAPER 2003:5

Grasping Governance Networks

Summary

Governance networks play a significant role in the production of public policy at the local, national and transnational levels. This article helps us to better understand what governance networks are, how they function, and which kind of governance they perform. A comprehensive definition and typology of governance networks is a prerequisite for engaging in second-generation network research. In order to study the role, functioning, and democratic effects of governance networks it is necessary to explicitly define and operationalise the concept of governance networks and distinguish between different types of governance networks.

Thus, governance networks can be understood as horizontal negotiations amongst a group of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors. These negotiations transpire within an institutionalised framework containing regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary elements. The governance network is somewhat self-regulating, and a crucial characteristic is that governance networks contribute to the production of public purpose within a particular area.

Grasping Governance Networks

Steps beyond the first-generation network research

It has become fashionable amongst political scientists to discuss the transition from *government* to *governance* (Rhodes, 1994). Taken too literally, the idea of the abandonment of government rule and its subsequent replacement with new decentred forms of governance is flawed (Holliday, 2000). However, the catchphrase does not refer to a swift and fundamental change in the mode of governing of Western societies; rather, it indicates a gradual problematisation of the traditional focus on the sovereign political institutions that allegedly govern society top-down through enforceable laws and bureaucratic regulations. It is widely recognised that contemporary political decision-making is not confined to the formal structures of government. Public policy is formulated and implemented through a plethora of formal and informal institutions, mechanisms and processes commonly referred to as governance (Pierre, 2000; Pierre and Peters, 2000).

The term 'governance' has different meanings in different contexts. Business economists talk about 'corporate governance', basically referring to the accountability of private firms to their stakeholders rather than their shareholders. The World Bank speaks of 'good governance' to emphasise the role of democracy and the rule of law for socio-economic development in the Third World. In the public administration literature, governance usually refers to the call for public sector reform by means of an increasing use of privatisation, public enterprise, contracting out, quasi-markets, contract steering, partnerships, user boards, etc. (Rhodes, 1996). In other words, governance aims to capture the sense of an increasingly differentiated polity, i.e. a polity divided and fragmented into a variety of interdependent public, semi-public and private agencies.

Governance is here conjoined with the term 'network', thus giving rise to the notion of 'governance network'. The idea informing this notion is that governance often takes place in and through networks of social and political actors. Network is another popular metaphor spreading rapidly throughout the social sciences (Klijn, 1996; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). Hence, contemporary social scientists emphasise the role of social networks, professional networks, economic networks, communication networks, and even terror networks (Raap and Milward, 2003).

The network concept is not entirely new to political science. In a first generation of network research it has already been used in the literature on state-society interaction. The pluralists analysed how individual preferences were aggregated by spontaneously formed pressure groups competing to influence government without ever becoming a part of it (Dahl, 1961). However, pluralism was criticised by the theories of corporatism for overlooking how peak organisations were granted monopoly on interest representation and how they were subsequently integrated in the state through mechanisms of cooptation. Neo-corporatists later reformulated the corporatist model by emphasising the mutual exchange between state and interest organisations and by insisting that corporatist cooperation both includes policy making and policy implementation (Cawson, 1985; Schmitter and Lehmbruch, 1979). The neo-corporatist model of decision-making and policy implementation remained based on the idea of an institutionalised pattern of tripartite consultation and negotiation; however, although the image of the 'Iron Triangle' was fully justified in some policy fields, it could not capture the pattern of interaction in other policy fields, where a broader range of actors interacted in a loose and irregular manner. Hence, the emergence of theories concerning the negotiated economy (Nielsen and Pedersen, 1989; Campbell, Hollingsworth, and Lindberg 1991) and policy network theory (Marsh and Rhodes,

1992). The notion of policy network was developed in order to include both relatively tight policy communities and relatively loose issue networks in the analysis of state-society interaction (Rhodes, 1990). In both cases networks were formed on the basis of resource dependencies between different political actors.

The literature on governance networks is heavily inspired by the notion of policy networks. It readily adopts the network metaphor to account for the multi-dimensional patterns of interaction between political actors, but it shifts focus from the question of vertical interest representation to that of the role of horizontal networks in processes of societal governance (Kooiman, 1993, 2000; Scharpf, 1994). The vantage point is not the interest organisation and their attempt to gain influence on public policy through formal and informal contacts with the central decision makers. The basis for analysis is the production of public policy and the contribution of public and private actors in this respect.

An additional feature of public administration research in the 1990s was the erosion of traditional bureaucratic administration due to its inability to produce intended outcomes (Mayntz, 1993; Scharpf, 1988). This erosion took place in the wake of New Public Management-inspired reforms and other reform initiatives leading to a fragmentation of the state as an organisational unit, not only internally but also externally due to increased cooperation between public and private actors in administrative processes (Hirst, 1994; Milward et al., 1993; Pedersen et al., 1994; Rhodes, 1994; Rose and Miller, 1992; Stoker, 1997).

Governance networks beyond state, market and civil society

In the heated ideological discussions about how to govern society we are usually facing a

mutually exclusive choice between state, market and civil society. The hierarchical governance of society by the state is based on a substantial rationality. This means that political values and preferences of the government – intended to incarnate the will of the people – ideally are translated into more or less detailed legislation and regulations implemented and enforced by publicly employed bureaucrats. However, during the 1970s an increasing number of reports about government failure blamed the bureaucratic welfare state for excessive inefficiency and costliness. Public choice theorists made a career out of proving that state intervention cannot simultaneously be democratic, inexpensive and efficient (Arrow, 1951 [1963]).

This prompted neo-liberal politicians and policy advisers to opt for 'less state and more market'. The invisible hand of the market should not only ensure the allocation of private goods, but also help to regulate the production of public goods and services. The anarchic market regulation through individual profit maximisation is based on a procedural rationality. The common good is here redefined as a Pareto-optimal allocation of values obtained through the observation of procedures ensuring free competition between rent-seeking producers and consumers. In those countries where neo-liberal ideas caught on, increased reliance on market forces was criticised for the traditional vices of failing to prevent instability, externalities and inequality. However, it was also accused of depoliticising public governance and enhancing, rather than reducing, state control (Jessop, 1998).

Communitarian sociologists criticised state and market governance alike for being based on systemic resources of power and money, thereby undermining the social bonds and virtues of civil society. Alternatively, they recommended a normative rationality as the model for governing society. Social life should be governed in accordance with the common norms and values that, preferably, are developed and sustained through face-to-face dialogue in local

communities (Etzioni, 1995).

Some have pointed out that we are not always facing a clear-cut choice between state, market and civil society; these ideal typical governance mechanisms are often mixed (Evers, 1990; Rose, 1986). In the literature on welfare mix, for example, it is shown that welfare delivery is often procured by the state, produced by private market actors, and distributed with assistance from voluntary associations in civil society (Pestoff, 1995). However, this blending of different mechanisms of governance does not put into question the competing rationalities of governance; nor does it introduce a new rationality.

By contrast, governance networks provide a new and distinctive mechanism of governance based on what might be termed a negotiation rationality (Scharpf, 1994). Public policy is shaped and reshaped in and through negotiations between interdependent actors who have a rule and resource base of their own and tend to invoke, validate and bring into conflict the traditional substantial, procedural and normative rationalities in the course of negotiation. How policy problems are defined, discussed and responded to depend on the negotiated agreements amongst the actors in the network. These decisions are not necessarily enforced by legal measures, economic incentives, or normative control. Trust and obligation play a crucial role in ensuring compliance with common decisions. Network actors do not comply out of fear of legal sanctions, economic ruin or exclusion, but because they trust that the other actors will also play their part and feel an obligation to contribute to the realisation of common goals and objectives (Scharpf, 1997).

In order to further investigate the bold claim that governance networks provide a new and distinctive mechanism of governance beyond state, market and civil society, it is necessary to

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ascertain a clearer understanding of what governance networks are. Therefore, *the main objective of this article is to clarify the defining features of a governance network and, on that basis, develop a typology that can provide a sense of its empirical scope*. The first step in second-generation network research is therefore to provide a clear definition of the central features of governance networks. This will prepare us for the next step in which focus will be directed at the normative implications of governance by networks.

Defining governance networks

Our definition of governance should fulfil two conflicting demands (Deutsch, 1963). First, it must be economical in the sense that it should not include superfluous features, i.e. features not strictly necessary for defining governance networks; instead, such features could possibly be used as a means to distinguish between different forms of governance networks. Second, it must clearly delineate governance networks as a particular subset of the broader set of governance mechanisms and a particular subset of the broader set of networks. Governance networks represent a particular kind of governance and a particular kind of network.

We propose that governance networks can be defined as 1) a horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors; 2) who interact through negotiations; 3) transpiring within a regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary framework; 4) that to a certain extent is self-regulating; and 5) which contribute to the production of public purpose within a particular area.

Let us attempt to unpack this definition of a governance network by considering each of the defining features in turn:

First, governance networks articulate a number of private, semi-public and public actors who, on the one hand, are dependent upon one another to 'get things done', and, on the other hand, are operationally autonomous in the sense that they act independently, although with an eye to expectations regarding the other actors (Marin and Mayntz, 1991). The political actors included in a particular governance network must demonstrate that they have a stake in the issues at hand and that they can contribute with resources and competences of a certain value to the other actors. The network relations between the actors are horizontal rather than vertical (Jessop, 2000: 161). Asymmetric interdependencies can exist, i.e. some actors can be stronger and more central than other actors; however, the relations between the actors in the network are characterised by exchange rather than commands. Hence, there is no formal chain of command in the network, and the public authorities participating in a governance network are in this sense merely one amongst many actors.

Second, the political actors interact through *negotiations,* combining elements of bargaining with elements of deliberation. The actors may bargain over the distribution of resources in order to maximise their outcome. However, in order to ensure the production of trust and obligation this bargaining also takes place within a framework of deliberation that facilitates understanding, learning and joint action. Negotiations will not always lead to unanimous consensus (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000: 146-148). Since there are often disagreements, conflicts and antagonism, political decisions will be made on the basis of a 'rough consensus'; grievances are tolerable, but unavoidable.

Third, negotiations do not unfold in an institutional vacuum. Rather, they take place within a relatively *institutionalised framework* that is more than the sum of its parts, but not a

homogenous and completely integrated whole (March and Olsen, 1995). The institutionalised framework has a regulative aspect in the sense that it provides rules, roles and procedures; a normative aspect in the sense that it conveys norms, values and standards; a cognitive element in the sense that it generates codes, concepts and specialised knowledge; and an imaginary aspect in the sense that it produces identities, ideologies, common hopes and visions.

Fourth, the multi-dimensional, multi-layered and multi-tiered system of actors is, to a certain extent, *self-governing* in the sense that it is not part of a hierarchical chain of command and not subjected to the laws of the market (Scharpf, 1994: 36). Rather, it aims at regulating a particular policy field on the basis of its own ideas, resources and capabilities and does so within a regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary framework that is adjusted through negotiations and regular interaction between the participants in the network. Of course, governance networks operate in a particular environment that must always be taken into account, as it is both facilitating and constraining its capacity for self-regulation. Governance networks always operate in "the shadow of hierarchy," as public authorities aim to regulate the self-regulating networks (Scharpf, 1994: 41). However, if this external regulation of the network becomes too tight the network ceases to be a network and is reduced to an order-taking bureaucratic agency.

Fifth, governance networks contribute to the production of *public purpose* within a certain area (Marsh, 1998). Public purpose is an expression of visions, understandings, values and policies that are valid for and directed towards the public. The network actors are thus engaged in political negotiations about how to identify and solve emerging policy problems. Networks that do not contribute to the production of public purpose in this broad sense cannot be regarded as governance networks.

On the basis of this definition of governance networks we might venture a further step and attempt to distinguish between various kinds of governance networks to investigate the broad range of networks deployed as mechanisms of governance.

The functioning of governance networks

The first two dimensions of the definition (horizontal interdependency and negotiation) help us to distinguish between governance networks in terms of their different forms and functions. The point of interest concerns the action modes describing the relationship between actors in networks.

A continuum can be constructed upon which actors are irremediably dependent on one another at the one pole, and almost autonomous and self-sufficient at the other. The points between, but not on, these two extremes describe the relationships between actors in a governance network. Close to the end of complete dependency we can talk about relatively *tied governance networks* in which one actor automatically will react to impulses from other actors and vice-versa. Members of tied governance networks are knit together in an almost organic fashion. Close to the other end of the continuum it is more relevant to talk about *untied governance networks* in which all actors are functionally separated from each other. The borders of closely tied governance networks can be almost impenetrable for external actors. Access is strictly reserved to very specific actors who fit into the very close structures of dependency. Borders of untied governance networks can, however, be more porous, and access for external actors to the inner circles is more easily allowed, thereby providing them with opportunity to participate as veritable network members.

Likewise, patterns of internal interaction can vary immensely from one governance network to

another. Some networks are characterised by free, symmetric exchange of ideas with a view to develop new and common understandings of the social world. These are the so-called *deliberative governance networks*. Others are characterised by hard-nosed, zero-sum bargains based on predefined and narrow mandates. These are the so-called *bargaining governance networks*.

These distinctions allow for a dynamic typology of functioning modes of governance networks.

	Interdependency	
Patterns of interaction	Tied	Untied
Deliberation	Family mode governance networks	Profession mode governance networks
Bargaining	Corporatist mode governance networks	Market mode governance networks

Table 1: The functioning of governance networks

In some situations, actors within a governance network will interact in ways resembling the manner in which members of an arch- and ideal typical family will come together. Members are closely bound to one another in a relationship of mutual dependency and, ideally, communication is characterised by discussion and free exchange of ideas and opinions. In other situations, the negotiation mode within a governance network appears more like hard-nosed bargaining in a market place. As in a multiple actor situation with many suppliers and demanders, all members of the governance network aspire to achieve the best deal through bargaining and a give-and-take logic.

Negotiations among members of a profession may be research-based. They are characterised by

their use of a discipline-specific terminology and typically refer to a very narrow scientific state-of-the-art. However, expert negotiations are ideally open in the sense that scientific experts emphasise their own independence and engage in mutual learning through scientific dialogue. Finally, negotiations in an ideal-typical corporatist decision-making system are characterised by hard-nosed bargaining within the constraints of shared values and visions. Actors in a corporatist system aspire to maximise their own resource-position and bargaining powers, but they are all dependent upon one another to reach a deal.

Varying modes of negotiation over time, place and issue. The manner in which a governance network functions may vary over time, place and issue. With regard to time, it is possible that the early stage of a decision-making process, where main issues are defined and conceptualised, is most likely handled through family and professional modes of negotiation. In later stages of the decision-making process, when distributional and allocative issues are at stake, the market or corporatist mode may turn out to be the predominantly defining feature. In terms of place, it could be hypothesised that network forums that are shielded from the external world allow network actors to confer more deliberatively than in forums in which they are monitored and scrutinised by outsiders. External control and accountability might encourage actors to publicly demonstrate their positions and their willingness and capability to bargain. Finally, some issues are for various reasons considered to be apolitical, whereas other issues are regarded as high politics. The perceived saliency and importance of the matter can therefore have consequences for the internal functioning in a governance network.

Varying modes of negotiation over the life cycle of a governance network. It is also possible that governance networks that were very bargaining prone in the early stages of their life cycles eventually transform into deliberative forums later on in their life cycles. Mature and

institutionalised governance networks are perhaps less conflictual and more consensus-oriented than young and immature governance networks. Over time, repetitious bargaining processes and learning may foster mutual trust and predictability, enhancing the possibility that network participants confer through deliberation.

Network negotiation as a defining feature of governance networks. It could also be the case that the interaction mode in governance networks is quite stable over time. If this is the case, the mode of negotiation comes to characterise the governance network in question. For instance, there might be governance networks that are characterised by an almost corporatist relationship between their members. Should this be the case, all network members will be highly dependent on and linked to one another in a systematic fashion. When negotiating they seem to be in a constant bargaining situation of give-and-take. There might also be governance networks in which fully autonomous actors negotiate with a view of achieving knowledge of the social world. This functioning mode may be based on professional and discipline-specific understandings of reality, and negotiations are based on talk and deliberation rather than bargaining. Similarly, it is of course also possible that the family and market mode of negotiations serve as a defining feature of specific types of governance networks.

Institutionally shaped interaction within governance networks

Although negotiation modes within governance networks can adopt a variety of forms, they cannot take just any form in any network at any time. All negotiations in governance networks are shaped by the institutional rules of the game of that specific governance network. These institutional playing rules constitute the third defining element of the governance network.

To attain a better idea about the kind of network institutions we have in mind, it can be argued that governance networks contain regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary institutional elements. All these institutional elements constrain and enable the negotiation modes of network actors; however, the configuration of these various institutional elements might vary from network to network. *Regulated negotiation* is primarily shaped by the formal legislation and procedures that authorise some modes of interaction and prohibits other kinds of interaction. These institutional elements are thus typically quite explicit for network participants. *Norm-bound negotiation* is interaction that is primarily structured by collective rules of appropriateness. These norms assist network participants to interact in socially legitimate ways in various situations ("Given that I am who I am, how should I act appropriately in a situation like this?"). *Epistemic negotiation* is interaction prescribed by shared cognitive codes, scripts and schemes for the involved actors, thereby helping them to categorise, stereotype and simplify the complex social reality, typically through simple causal theories and assumptions. Finally, *identity-constructed negotiation* is interaction shaped by collectively held worldviews within the governance network. The imaginary institutional elements of a governance network help constitute actors and interaction, thereby assigning social identities, objectives and worldviews to the network. Imaginary network institutions can help network actors define who they are and what they are not. Through imaginary institutional elements, network actors receive an idea about their belongings, their history and their shared myths.

Different governance networks have different institutional bias. In all governance networks these institutional elements shape the way in which network actors negotiate. However, it might be the case that negotiation in some governance networks is shaped more by, say, regulatory institutional elements than, say, imaginary institutional elements.

It might be the case, for instance, that negotiation in governance networks is shaped by a set of very formal rules. Take many forums that are constituted by public-private partnerships whose purpose it is to implement public policies: interaction in these governance networks is typically regulated by contract, and detailed sets of externally imposed rules explicitly constrain the room for manoeuvre of the members of this particular kind of rule-governed governance networks.

Similarly, network negotiations may well tend to be shaped more by normative institutionalisation. Take negotiations among public and private parties in most corporatist settings: these settings carry with them a historical pattern of traditions, routines and informal norms. Personal relations also play an important role in the recurrent and regular corporatist negotiations. Governance networks of this corporatist type have traditionally been quite capable of producing consensus and agreement with an impact on societal stability.

Another example illustrating that one or another institutional element may shape negotiations within different governance networks concerns the interactions between members of a particular profession such as finance, law and medicine. Members of these professions, although formally associated to varying public and private organisations, have been socialised through long and standardised schooling processes. They work on the basis of precise criteria for correct and false knowledge within their respective fields of specialisation. Knowledge is developed in think tanks, shared at conferences and operationalised in expert commissions. In all these forums, cognitive institutions based on shared causal beliefs may ideally shape negotiations.

Finally, we may expect that negotiations regarding e.g. the field of charity be primarily based on imaginary institutional elements. In charity movements and coalitions, network participants believe in shared norms about minimum standards for human dignity, welfare and security. Most

importantly, however, they also believe that they are personally and collectively obligated to promote these standards. They identify with the problem at hand, and this identification is the primary drive for governing through networks in this case. This does not mean that other institutional elements - regulatory, normative and cognitive institutions - do not play a role for the voluntary provision of charity. All it means is that negotiations in such governance networks cannot be understood without also accounting for the imaginary institutional framework.

Different institutions shape network negotiations in different situations. It might be the case that there are different types of rules of the game depending on the issue dealt with by actors in a governance network. In day-to-day casework, interaction is probably primarily shaped by a combination of rules and norms. By contrast, in crisis situations in which defining and constitutive choices must be made, it might be the case that imaginary institutional elements concerning the identity of the governance network are being revoked. Finally, in situations of analysis and evaluation, the cognitive institutional elements probably play a much more important role. Overall, we will expect all institutional elements to have an important impact on negotiation modes within governance networks. That is why these institutional elements can be considered as the rules of the game that the network participants are bound to adhere to in order to be considered legitimate and law-abiding members of the network. However, not all institutional elements are necessarily equally important at all times.

The effects of governance networks

The fourth and the fifth elements of our network definition concern self-regulation and the production of public purpose. All governance networks are self-regulating to a certain extent. Internally, self-regulation concerns the continuous construction of 'rules of the game'. The

institutional structures that constrain and facilitate negotiations are themselves shaped by negotiations between network actors. Thus, the complex institutional structures enframing negotiations within governance networks, e.g. rules, norms, codes and identities, are not fixed once and for all. Rather, they are constantly being defined and redefined through negotiations between network actors. Internally, the function of self-regulation is to ensure mutual control and the creation of commonality and predictability.

Externally, self-regulation concerns the production of public purpose. All governance networks contribute to the production of rules, norms, knowledge and identity in the public sphere. Governance networks therefore supplement traditional modes of governing based on authority and competition, as they produce the same sorts of tasks, but in a different manner. The function of external self-regulation, i.e. the relatively autonomous production of public purpose, is to gain legitimacy and ensure protection, thereby strengthening the network.

The internal dimension of self-regulation. Negotiations between actors belonging to a governance network occasionally result in the formulation of formal rules meant to regulate interaction in networks. Self-regulation then refers to the fact that the network actors autonomously adopt these formal rules of procedure. Such *rule-guided negotiations* enhance predictability and guarantee rights as well as enforcing the duties related to governance network membership. When network actors negotiate, this may also result in the *formulation of norms* prescribing appropriate behaviour within the network. These norms may concern the scope and form of the collective actions undertaken by the network, but often they also concern less tangible aspects related to the status of network members and goal priorities. Negotiations between network members also result in the *generation of new knowledge*. Continuous discussion and analysis encourages learning in the network and cultivates the development of a

common understanding of the social world and of the role of the network within that world. Knowledge generation may be all about constructing cognitive schemes, categories, stereotypes and images of the social world enabling network members to grasp complexities through simplification. Finally, when network actors engage in negotiations, *network identities are being constructed*; however, identity-related network elements are not constantly up for discussion. We believe that identities are relatively sticky. It may require a situation of crisis and dislocation before these deep-rooted elements become objects for internal identity politics.

Sanctioning and enforcement of the 'rules of the game'. When self-regulating rules, norms, knowledge and identity are being produced through negotiations between network actors they are meant to have an impact on the behaviour, the beliefs and the social attachments of network members. Typically, a variety of sanctions are associated with these network-specific 'rules of the game'. Sanctions can concern anything from formal exclusion from the governance network, to direct suppression, threats, shaming, naming and blaming, but it can also simply take the form of ignorance or social exclusion of the concerned network member. Specifically appointed authorities within the governance network may enforce sanctions. If the governance network is only semi-autonomous from external parties, the sanctioning party may be an authority outside the governance network. However, sanctioning within the governance network can also be a collective endeavour where all network participants, through mutual control, participate in the enforcement and maintenance of the 'rules of the game'.

The external dimension of self-regulation. The fifth element of our network definition concerns the production of public purpose by networks. Governance networks are performing governance (politische steuerung) in the public/private sphere; however, governance networks perform different types of governance, i.e. they participate in the production of various kinds of public

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purpose. Much network governance contains regulative, normative, cognitive, as well as imaginary elements. Thus, all governance networks, to a more or less predominant extent, carry out all these different forms of governance. It is possible, however, to distinguish between governance networks that primarily undertake one or the other of the four mentioned modes of governance. For instance, governance networks that primarily make formal decisions and adopt laws and directives are *regulating governance networks*. Typical councils and commissions, constituted by a variety of actors with varying institutional affiliations, have been created and financed by public authorities to formally regulate an area, because it has been deemed necessary that a certain amount of expertise or interest representation ought to be present in the decision-making process. Decisions made in such councils and commissions often have direct and binding effects on citizens.

Governance networks that primarily articulate rules of appropriateness are *norm-formulating governance networks*. Thus, in close interaction with national and international public authorities, privately financed standard organisations develop technical as well as non-technical norms within a specified area. These norms and standards are not formally binding on citizens, but these norms will become effective, constraining parameters to be taken account of more generally if they are accepted by a large number of people.

Governance networks that primarily conceptualise problems and solutions are *knowledge-generating governance networks*. Experts who are considered by the broad public to possess authoritative knowledge within a technical field can, for instance, operate in think tanks, foundations and science associations. This particular kind of governance network is supposed to produce objective knowledge according to generally accepted scientific criteria.

Finally, governance networks that construct feelings of commonality are *identity-constructing governance networks*. Governance networks in the media world constituted by intellectuals, politicians and reporters shape news-stories, thereby categorising and ordering the complex social reality for the news consumer. Thus, directly and indirectly, the media governance networks frame sentiments, beliefs and feelings through identity politics. These established frames provide purpose and meaning to individuals by producing accounts of the past, the present and the future. These identity-constructing manoeuvres help situate individuals within certain in-groups and distance them from specified out-groups and significant others.

Sanctioning and enforcement of public purpose. A priori, it is impossible to say anything general about whether regulative governance, normative governance, cognitive governance or imaginary governance is most effective in terms of compliance. Compliance assumes very different forms, depending on the governance mode. Different evaluation criteria are therefore required to determine whether the performed governance in question can be deemed a success or failure. It might be the case that sanctions connected to compliance patterns are much more formal the more regulating the governance network is. Similarly, sanctions related to imaginary governance are much less formal and much more associated with the social position of individuals in relation to the network. Non-compliance with decisions made in councils and commissions can thus be brought before the court. Non-compliant behaviour is considered to be law-infringement. Governance networks dealing with the production of standards do not rely on a court system with a view to enhance norm compliance in their respective fields; they simply rely on market forces. When a sufficiently large number of producers have adopted the standard in question, the remaining producers will be forced to follow suit and adapt their product standards. The alternative becomes leaving business all together. Professions have their own criteria for methodological, empirical and theoretical truthfulness. Failure to respect these criteria has

consequences for the person concerned. Disrespect, shame and ridicule are some of the consequences of non-compliant behaviour; others include funding problems, difficulties gaining employment and being ignored. Finally, disregarding foundational myths and established stories about who we are can result in social exclusion. To ignore or even protest against identity-related commonalities can have psychological (am I really mad?) as well as social (am I alone?) consequences.

Dimensions of governance networks

A number of qualitative network characteristics have been discussed thus far. The basis for our network definition is economical and particularistic. It is economical in the sense that it only includes elements that are strictly necessary with a view to distinguish 'networks' from other institutional forms. It is particularistic since it discriminates between governance networks and other forms of networks.

The governance network concept focuses on the horizontal relations between network actors, rather than the traditional focus on vertical pluralistic and/or elitist relations typically associated with the production of visions, understandings, values and policies that are valid for the public writ large. Governance networks direct our attention towards the fact that public purpose is often produced by way of negotiation between relatively autonomous actors. Furthermore, the definition of governance networks and the network typology developed in this article helps us to realise that horizontal negotiation between operationally autonomous actors contributing to the production of public purpose transpires in a variety of shapes. Therefore, despite its economical and particularistic form, the definition is not narrow. On the contrary, it opens up for a number of network dimensions according to which governance networks can vary. Some of these

dimensions are more operational and practical than others.

Formality. Governance networks might involve formal interactions between formally organised actors, or they might involve informal contacts between actors that are not necessarily formally organised. Some governance networks will make plans for a series of formal meetings, send formal letters, agree on a common agenda, negotiate in accordance with clearly specified rules and send out minutes after the meeting. Other governance networks will primarily interact through informal conversation and circulation of information, ideas and propositions. Governance networks will often have a formal core and a more informal periphery. The degree of formalisation varies immensely and draws our attention to the multiplicity of networks contributing to the production of public policy.

Origin. The dimension with regard to the origins of governance networks includes networks with a basis in adopted legislation. These networks have been intentionally formed by authoritative political decisions to achieve a specific objective, to include specific actors in governance routines, or for mere symbolic reasons. However, governance networks may also result from the gradual emergence of stable patterns of interaction between a group of actors. Such self-grown governance networks might materialise in response to changes in the social, political or economic environment or as a result of a positive evaluation of sporadic contacts leading to the development of shared norms, perceptions and ideas. The legislated governance networks will often tend to have a formal character, but this is not always the case, as legislated governance networks might find that informal contacts between the network participants are more productive than formal meetings. Likewise, self-grown governance networks will often tend to have an informal character, although they might decide to create a more formal framework of rules and norms to stabilise their interaction and achieve their common objectives.

Scope. Governance networks contribute to the production of public purpose within a particular area. Negotiations between the members of a governance network might be limited to matters related to a single issue of common concern. However, the issue-specific character of these governance networks cannot necessarily be equated with a narrow scope. There are single issues that are highly salient and politicised, involve a large number of actors, and are closely interlinked to other issues. In fact, there might be cases where issue-specific governance networks are broader in scope than sectoral governance networks. In general, however, sectoral governance networks negotiate issues related to an entire field of actors who define themselves as belonging to the same functionally policy field, e.g. agriculture, environment and transport. The broadest type of governance networks is a society-wide network running athwart a number of sectors. A societal network is externally separated from other countries, though. State frontiers constitute the formal line of demarcation between outsiders and insiders. In practice, a clear differentiation of issues, sectors and societies is problematic. They are historical constructs and in modern societies they tend to overlap in all sorts of ways.

Duration. Some governance networks are short-lived while others tend to be almost permanent. Notions of 'short' and 'long' are naturally relative concepts and the factors explaining the shorter or longer tenure of governance networks may vary from network to network. Some have been planned as short endeavours and - after successful completion of a stated objective - they are terminated. The limited duration of other governance networks might, however, result from their failure to achieve anything at all. The almost permanent feature of some networks does not mean that they have been unequivocally successful, either. The life and death of governance networks depends on factors other than their functionality or dysfunctionality. Some networks, once created, assume a life of their own, become robust from external challenges, and survive for

decades. Other would-be networks never reach a tipping point, despite the fact that their governance is useful and even necessary.

Actors. Governance networks vary according to the kind of actors they are recruiting. The actors may be individuals belonging to the same organisation or individuals who are acting on their own behalf with little or no organisational support. In other cases the network actors might be formal organisations that provide their different representatives with a more or less clear mandate to act on their behalf. The network actors may even represent a cluster or group of organisations that constitute a particular system characterised by a particular rationality and a particular set of operative procedures. The distinction between interpersonal, interorganisational and intersystemic governance networks is blurred by the fact that institutionalised systems are often represented by particular organisations that are represented internally by particular persons. However, the form and function of governance networks will vary according to the relative importance of the systemic, organisational or personal interests pursued in the course of negotiation.

Sphere. The production of public policy is not reserved territory for public authorities. Governance networks might be constituted either by public or private actors. However, since the distinction between the public and private spheres becomes increasingly blurred, it is to be expected that governance networks in many occasions are mixtures of public and private actors. This is certainly the case in the much-celebrated attempt to establish public-private partnerships.

Level. Some of the authoritative decisions made in governance networks are emanating from, rooted in, and directed at levels of administration below the state. On other occasions it is possible to talk about regulation through network governance taking place at the level of the state

or the international level. In modern society, however, decisions confined to a particular level are increasingly rare. Governance networks are often tangled and run athwart various administrative and regulatory levels. This might be a permanent feature or a feature characterising a single decision made by a governance network.

In summary, the definition of governance networks presented in this article allows for variance on a large number of dimensions. The purpose has not been to present a definition with limited empirical usage in concrete studies of governance. On the other hand, governance networks distinguish themselves from other forms of networks by their deliberate attempt to contribute to the production of public purpose through horizontal negotiation.

Towards a normative agenda in second-generation network research

The *first generation* of governance network theorists has successfully raised our awareness and the role of governance networks. In the middle of the 1990s researchers began to employ the term 'governance' as a label for a specific new theoretical and empirical research agenda (Rhodes, 1996). The core issue on this agenda has been the uncovering of the role of networks in the governing of society, and the analysis of the extent to which, and under what forms and conditions, meta-governance (defined as a coordinated regulation of self-regulating networks) is possible in an increasingly complex and fragmented society. From that time on a considerable amount of research has been conducted regarding these issues at the national, local and transnational levels (Bogason, 2000; Henrich and Lynn jr., 2000; Jessop, 2000; Pierre, 2000; Rhodes, 1997, 2000; Scharpf, 1999).

Thus, new concepts and theories have been developed and explorative empirical studies of governance networks have been undertaken in a first generation of network research. Yet many unanswered questions as to the nature and forms of governance networks have arisen. This article has presented a definition and typology of a governance network with a view to deal with that problem. Such an exercise in conceptual development is, we believe, a necessary first step in *second-generation* network research in which the question about the democratic performance of governance networks is crucial.

Thus, a first step in second-generation network research requires that we define and operationalise the concept of governance networks and clarify how to distinguish between different types of governance networks. When these basic questions have been answered, a second step in second-generation network research can be taken by carefully addressing questions about the role, functioning, and democratic effects of governance networks. Adequate theories and methods for studying democratic network governance must be elaborated and standards for critically evaluating actual governance networks should be developed in order to create a basis for critically assessing their contribution to efficient and democratic governance.

Democratic theory has traditionally been divided into an abstract normative philosophy of little relevance for the understanding of actual political processes and institutions, and a descriptive theory praising the institution of representative democracy commonly known as the Westminster Model. The current transformation of societal governance undermines this model of representative democracy, and this prompts a normative and practico-analytical discussion of the democratic functioning of governance networks. New associative (Hirst, 1994), postmodern (Connolly, 1995; Mouffe, 2000), aggregative (Dahl, 1989) and integrative (Habermas, 1985) theories of democratic governance provide important elements for analysing democratic network

governance. The new theories are all liberal democratic theories in the sense that they aim to mediate between liberty and equality, but they have different ideas about how this mediation is provided.

Crucial areas of study in a second-generation of network research concerns the linkage between governance networks and traditional forms of representative democracy and the rethinking of the crucial democratic issues of access (inclusion/exclusion), representation (unified people/constructed constituency), legitimation (elite competition/participation of lay actors), equality (empowerment/disempowerment), and transparency (openness/closure) in relation to governance networks. Furthermore it becomes particularly important to draw on different theories of democracy to develop a new set of criteria for judging the extent to which governance networks are themselves democratic and whether they contribute to an efficient and democratic regulation of society. This will enable researchers and practitioners to evaluate current forms of network governance to improve their efficiency and democratic functioning.

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