

## Making governance networks democratic

Sørensen, Eva; Torfing, Jacob

*Publication date:*  
2004

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2004). *Making governance networks democratic*. Roskilde Universitet.  
[http://www.ruc.dk/demnetgov\\_en/working\\_papers/](http://www.ruc.dk/demnetgov_en/working_papers/)

### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact [rucforsk@ruc.dk](mailto:rucforsk@ruc.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

# CENTRE FOR DEMOCRATIC NETWORK GOVERNANCE

## WORKING PAPER SERIES

### MAKING GOVERNANCE NETWORKS DEMOCRATIC

EVA SØRENSEN  
AND JACOB TORFING

WORKING PAPER 2004:1

CENTRE FOR DEMOCRATIC NETWORK GOVERNANCE  
ROSKILDE UNIVERSITY, BUILDING 25, P.O. BOX 260,  
DK-4000 ROSKILDE, DENMARK  
[WWW.DEMNETGOV.RUC.DK](http://WWW.DEMNETGOV.RUC.DK)  
APRIL 2004

ISBN 87-92063-05-5

ISSN 1902-0058

## 1. Introduction

The standard image of politics as an activity that mainly takes place within and around the parliamentary assembly only captures the top of the iceberg. Both before and after MPs pass a particular bill, a series of important decisions are taken within complex governance networks that set the political agenda, frame and define the policy problems, and craft and implement the appropriate solutions. Often it is not even possible to identify a clear act of sovereign decision making as public policy making takes place next to or across different local, national or transnational polities (Hajer, 2003).

Political scientists have been worried about the hollowing out of the sovereign power of elected politicians. Public administrators, mass media, scientific experts, interest organizations and big business firms have been accused of stealing the power that rightly belongs to the politicians. Accordingly, governance networks have been written off as an illegitimate form of private interest government that puts sovereign decision making in the hands of strong pressure groups, unaccountable lobbyists and corrupted economic elites. Political scientists have warned us against the erosion of liberal democracy and popular sovereignty, and have called for a return to the traditional democratic values of transparent representation, elite competition, and accountability through regular elections.

Today we see, perhaps more clearly than ever, that the protection of parliamentary democracy against its constitutive outside of undemocratic network governance rests on the myth that the MPs are capable of making sound, just and democratic decisions without input and aid from a broad range of societal actors. The myth is dangerous, not only because it retains an unrealistic picture of the capabilities of the politicians, but also because it prevents an open and constructive debate of the democratic problems and potentials of network governance. Governance networks are not a democratic panacea, but no outright enemy of democracy either.

This paper *discusses the democratic aspects of the new forms of interactive network governance*. We start from the assertion that network politics is here to stay, and then pose the question of how we should assess the democratic functioning and contribution of governance networks. The goal is, ultimately, to get some ideas about how we can bring out the democratic potential of network governance, and link democratic network governance to the established institutions of liberal parliamentary democracy.

The paper begins with an attempt to clarify the notion of governance networks. It then calls for the development of a second generation of governance network research that focuses on the crucial issues of governance failure, meta-governance and democracy. Since governance network theory has not yet provided any elaborate account of the democratic problems and potentials of governance networks, we need to consult some of the liberal and post-liberal theories of democracy in order to enhance our understanding of the democratic norms that could and/or should be used in an evaluation of the democratic performance of governance networks.

In order to provide a more systematic overview of the different approaches to network governance and democracy we aim to create a stylized description of the theoretical positions according to their underlying theory of action and their conception of societal governance. Hence, we distinguish between theories that see social action as guided by a more or less rational *calculation*, and theories that argue that social action is governed by *culture*. In addition, we distinguish those theories that regard societal governance as *consensual* from those theories that emphasise the role of *conflict*. The mapping of the theoretical positions that we draw upon according to the four C's, results in an unfortunate simplification of complex theoretical fields. However, the theoretical mapping will hopefully be justified by the light that it sheds on the hidden differences between the theories involved.

## **2. Grasping Governance networks**

It has become fashionable amongst political scientists to talk about the transition from *government* to *governance* (Rhodes, 1994). Taken literally, the idea of the abandonment of government rule and its subsequent replacement with new decentred forms of governance is flawed. However, the slogan does not refer to a swift and fundamental change in the mode of governing of Western societies, but rather indicates a gradual problematization of the traditional focus on the sovereign political institutions that allegedly govern society top-down through enforceable laws and bureaucratic regulations. Today, it is widely recognized that 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 that are commonly referred to as governance (Pierre, 2000; Pierre and Peters, 2000).

The term 'governance' has different meanings in different contexts (Rhodes, 1996). Business economists talk about 'corporate governance' that basically refers to the accountability of private firms to their stakeholders rather than their shareholders. The World Bank talks about 'good governance' in order to emphasize the role of democracy and the rule of law for socioeconomic development in the Third World. In the public administration literature, governance usually refers to the call for public sector reforms by means of an increasing use of privatisation, public enterprises, contracting out, quasi-markets, contract steering, partnerships, user boards, etc. Hence, political scientists use the term governance in order to capture the sense of an increasingly differentiated polity, i.e. a polity which is divided and fragmented into a variety of interdependent public, semi-public and private agencies.

Governance is sometimes 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 which is dissipating quickly across the social science disciplines (Klijn, 1996; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). Hence, today social scientists emphasize 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. The pluralists analysed how individual preferences were aggregated by spontaneously formed pressure groups that competed to influence government without ever becoming a part of it (Dahl, 1961). However, pluralism was criticized by the theories of corporatism for failing to see how peak organizations were given 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 emphasizing the mutual exchange between state and interest organizations and by insisting that corporatist cooperation both include policy making and policy implementation (Cawson, 1985; Schmitter and Lehmbruch, 1979). The neo-corporatist model of decision making and policy implementation was still based on the idea of an institutionalised pattern of tripartite consultation and negotiation. But 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. This prompted the development of theories of the negotiated economy (Nielsen and Pedersen, 1989) and policy network theory (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). The

notion of policy network was introduced in order to include both the relatively tight policy communities and the 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 social and political actors.

The literature on governance networks is heavily inspired by the notion of policy network (Jessop, 2000; Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan, 1997; Kooiman, 1993; Pierre, 2000; Rhodes, 1997). It readily adopts the network metaphor in order to account for the multi-dimensional patterns of interaction between political actors, but it shifts the focus from the question of vertical interest representation to the question of the role of horizontal networks in processes of societal governance. The vantage point is not the interest organization and its attempt to gain influence on public policy through formal and informal contacts with the central decision makers. Rather, the focus is on the production of public policy and the contribution of public and private actors to it.

In the heated ideological discussions about how to govern society, we are usually faced with a mutually exclusive choice between state, market and civil society. The hierarchical governance of society by the state is based on a substantial rationality. The political values and preferences of the government - that is supposed to incarnate the will of the people - are translated into more or less detailed laws and regulations that are 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 being too inefficient and too costly. Public choice theorists made a career out of proving that state interventions cannot be democratic, inexpensive and efficient at one and the same time (Arrow, 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 an optimal allocation of private goods, but also help to regulate the production of public goods and services in a more efficient manner. The anarchic market regulation through individual profit maximization is based on a procedural rationality. The common good is here redefined as a Pareto-optimal allocation of values which is obtained through the observation of procedures ensuring free competition between rent seeking producers and consumers. In those countries where neo-liberal ideas caught on, the increased reliance on market forces was criticized for the traditional vices of failing to prevent instability, externalities and inequality. However, it was

also accused of depoliticising public governance and of enhancing, rather than reducing, state control (Jessop, 1998).

Communitarian sociologists criticized both state and market governance for being based on systemic resources of power and money that undermined 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 since these ideal typical governance mechanisms are often mixed (Evers, 1990; Rose, 1986). In the literature on the welfare mix, for example, it is shown that welfare delivery is often procured by the state, produced by private market actors, and distributed with help 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 for governing society.

By contrast, governance networks provide a new and distinctive mechanism of governance based on what might be called 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 among the actors in the network. These decisions are not 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 social exclusion, but because they trust that the other actors will also play their part and feel an obligation to contribute to the realization 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 which takes us beyond state, market and civil society, it is necessary to get a clearer understanding of what governance networks are. Our definition of governance should live up to two conflicting demands (Deutsch, 1963). First, it should be economical in the sense that it should not include features which are not strictly

necessary for defining governance networks and which perhaps instead could be used as a means to distinguish between different forms of governance network. 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. A governance network is a particular kind of governance and a particular kind of network.

In following this line of inquiry, we propose that a governance network can be defined as: 1) a relative stable horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors; 2) who interact through negotiations; 3) which take place 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 or across particular policy areas. This definition includes most of the features commonly ascribed to governance networks. As such, it does not pretend to be original, but rather aims to capture the essence of what is commonly referred to by the notion of governance networks.

Let us try to unpack this broad definition of a governance network by considering each of the defining aspects in turn. First, governance networks articulate a number of private, semi-public and public actors who, on the one hand, are dependent on each other in order to 'get things done', and, on the other hand, are operationally autonomous in the sense that they act independently, although with an eye to the expectations of the other actors (Marin and Mayntz, 1991). The political actors included in a particular governance network must show that they have a stake in the issues at hand and that they can contribute 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). There might be asymmetric interdependencies which mean that some actors are stronger and more central than other actors. However, the relations between the actors in the network are characterized by exchange rather than order giving. Hence, there is no formal chain of command in the network, and the public authorities that are participating in a governance network are in this sense merely one amongst many actors.

Second, the political actors interact through *negotiations* that combine elements of bargaining with elements of deliberation. The actors may bargain over the distribution of resources in order to maximize 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' where grievances are tolerable, but unavoidable.

Third, negotiations do not take place in an institutional vacuum. Rather, they take place within a relatively *institutionalised framework* which is more than the sum of the 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 specialized knowledge; and an imaginary aspect in the sense that it produces identities, ideologies, common hopes and visions.

Fourth, the multi-dimensional and multi-tiered network of actors is to a certain extent *self-governing* in the sense that it is not part of a hierarchical chain of command and does not submit itself 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 it 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 always operate in a particular environment which it must take into account since it is both facilitates and constrains its capacity for self-regulation. As Scharpf (1994: 41) insists, network governance always takes places 'in the shadow of hierarchy'. The attempts of the public authorities to regulate the self-regulating governance networks are ultimately backed by the threat of replacing the horizontal network governance with hierarchical rule. However, if the actual attempt to regulate a self-regulating 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. Thus, the network actors are 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 counted as governance networks.

Governance networks can take many different forms. They can either be self-grown networks emerging from below or legislated networks initiated from above. They might be dominated by informal contacts and relations or take the form of highly formalized networks. They can be intraorganizational or interorganizational, short lived or permanent, and have an issue specific or society wide scope. They can operate at the local, national, or transnational level, or cut across different scales. The multiple forms of governance networks attests to the broad relevance of the concept for describing the infrastructures involved in the governing of society.

Despite the recent surge in the research on governance networks, the phenomenon is by no means new. However, what is new is that governance networks to an increasing extent are seen as an effective and legitimate form of societal governance. Hence, central decision makers tend to praise governance networks for their ability:

- to identify new problems and provide a negotiated response that is both flexible and feasible
- to qualify the decision making process by means of providing the necessary information, arguments and assessments
- to establish a framework for consensus building or, at least, the handling and civilization of conflicts
- to create joint responsibility for new policies and thus reduce resistance against their implementation.

Of course, the central decision makers are also concerned with the negative aspects of governance networks in terms of the growing dependence on large interest organizations, the presence of endemic conflicts, the predominance of short-term interests, and the failure to form compromises that take us beyond the least common denominator. However, a recent Danish study shows that Danish politicians over the last 20 years have become less concerned with the negative aspects of governance networks while continuing to emphasise the positive aspects (Christiansen and Nørgaard, 2003: 190-92). Clearly, the political embrace of and

reliance on interactive forms of network governance vary a great deal between different countries, scales and sectors due to the path dependent impact of political cultures, traditions and institutions. However, it is our impression that governance networks in some countries have become a generally accepted and increasingly used mechanism of governance in our complex, fragmented and multi-layered societies.

### **3. Towards a second generation of governance network research**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the notion of ‘governance network’ gradually became the organizing metaphor in the studies of interactive forms of policy making and policy implementation. The traditional image of politics as a parliamentary chain of government, according to which the voters elect the politicians who instruct the bureaucracy about how to regulate society, was found inadequate. The formalistic and state-centred view of policy making and policy implementation failed to capture the sense of the increasingly differentiated polity in which a multiplicity of public and private actors engaged in the production of public purpose. New images of politics were needed and the notion of governance network has filled the gap. As Klijn (1997) shows, this development was also spurred by the intellectual development within different branches of the social sciences that all seemed to converge around the notion of governance networks. Likewise, different methodological reorientations also contributed to driving us further down the road from hierarchical government to new forms of interactive governance. The call for a backward mapping of the political actors responsible for the production of concrete policy outputs and policy outcomes (Elmore, 1985) and the increasing focus on the more or less inclusive processes of discursive policy deliberation (Fischer and Forester, 1993) broadened the scope of policy analysis beyond the narrow focus on central decision makers and street level bureaucrats.

Since the new research on governance networks was developed in a critical opposition to the traditional focus on government and top-down steering, the first generation of governance network research had to convince it self and others that there was something new going on. As such, the first generation was mainly preoccupied with demonstrating: the widespread use of governance networks in different countries, different policy fields and at different levels of aggregation; their qualities as mechanisms of governance; and their

distinctive features vis-à-vis the traditional forms of governance through the state or the market

A long series of studies successfully showed how different social and political actors interacted in the production of public policy (Marin and Mayntz, 1991; March and Rhodes, 1992). Other studies showed how the involvement of societal actors resulted in a flexible adjustment of public policy (Katzenstein, 1985). Finally, many efforts were made to distinguish network governance from state rule and market regulation (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996; Jessop, 2000).

Slowly, but steadily, the research agenda has moved beyond the preoccupations of the first generation of governance network research. Governance networks are no longer something new and exotic, but something we have to live with and make the best of. Hence, new and yet unanswered questions have come to the fore and today constitute the research agenda of what we might call a second generation of governance network research (Pierre, 2000). The formation of a new generation is neither a matter of new and younger researchers entering the field nor a matter of a clear break with the past. Rather, it is a matter of a gradual renewal of the research agenda to include at least three pressing questions:

1. What are the sources and mechanisms governance network failure and the conditions of success?
2. How can public authorities through different kinds of meta-governance regulate self-regulating governance networks?
3. What are the democratic problems and potentials of network governance?

Bob Jessop (1998, 2000) has called our attention to the fact that governance networks can fail. There has been much talk about state failure and market failure, but we should also analyse the conditions for governance network failure. Network governance relies on precarious social and political processes and there are many things that can go wrong and prevent the production of public purpose.

Other governance network theorists have emphasized the interaction between hierarchical government and interactive governance network and raised the question of how

public authorities can regulate networks (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan, 1997; Milward and Provan, 2000). It might be that the state cannot steer governance networks through the exercise of its hierarchical authority, but there are many other ways to govern self-governing networks. Although some work has been done in this area, there is much more to be done as we have not yet moved beyond the level of taxonomies of different instruments for direct and indirect regulation of governance networks.

Finally, an increasing number of people have raised normative issues about the democratic functioning and legitimacy of network governance (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997; Mayntz, 1999; Pierre, 2000). Whereas democratic legitimacy is an inherent feature of the rule of government, there is no guarantee that network governance will be democratic. It is not even clear how we construct relevant criteria for assessing the democratic performance of a governance network. Here lies a large challenge for the second generation of governance network theory: it might be possible to show that network governance is an efficient means for governing society, but if we cannot assess its democratic implications, we have a huge problem.

The distinction between the first and second generation of governance network research cuts across many of the individual researchers in the field. In the attempt to provide a preliminary answer to the research questions of the second generation, we might, therefore, consult the key contributions of the researchers associated with the first generation and see how far they get in answering the new questions of the second generation. Now, the problem is that most of the scholars in the first generation tend to borrow concepts and arguments from other scholars in the field, thus producing a somewhat eclectic and confusing theoretical landscape. Reference to related work by other scholars is an academic virtue, but when people refer to concepts and arguments developed in a different and even conflicting theoretical context, it is problematic. The theoretical contributions not only lose their clarity and rigour, but it also becomes difficult to see the productive differences between the theoretical positions. In order to solve this problem and enhance the theoretical self-awareness of governance network theory, we will try to reconstruct the different approaches to network governance by presenting a stylized description of their key ideas. We have divided the first generation of governance network theory into four basic theoretical positions. These vary according to their theory of human action that either stresses the importance of calculation or the importance of culture, and their conception of societal governance that either emphasise

conflict or the possibility of a smooth coordination. This produces the following mapping of the first generation of governance network theory:

Table 1: Four basic theories of network governance

	<i>Calculation</i>	<i>Culture</i>
<i>Conflict</i>	<p><b>Interdependence theory</b></p> <p>[Rhodes, 1997; Kickert, 1993; Jessop, 1995, 1998]</p>	<p><b>Governmentality theory</b></p> <p>[Foucault, 1991; Dean, 1999; Rose and Miller, 1992]</p>
<i>Coordination</i>	<p><b>Governability theory</b></p> <p>[Mayntz, 1993; Scharpf, 1994; Kooiman, 1993]</p>	<p><b>Integration theory</b></p> <p>[March &amp; Olsen, 1995; Powell and DiMaggio, 1983; Scott, 1995]</p>

What we see emerging in table 1 are four theoretical positions that we have named interdependence theory, governability theory, integration theory and governmentality theory. To give some impression of the key representatives of the four theories, we have added some names of leading theorists who typically, but not exclusively, furnish ideas and arguments associated with the various theories. We should like to stress that some of the people referred to in the table might not even see themselves as governance network theorists. Nevertheless, we think that they are all making important contributions to grasping network governance.

Let us briefly see how the four stylized theories define governance networks; explain their formation; and account for the forces that hold together the different actors in a governance network. *Interdependence theory* defines governance networks as an interorganizational medium for interest mediation between interdependent, but conflicting actors each of whom has a resource base of their own. Governance networks are results of strategic action of independent actors who interact because of their mutual resource

dependencies, and thereby counteract the institutional fragmentation caused by New Public Management. Governance networks are formed through incremental bottom-up processes, but are recruited as vehicles of public policy making by central authorities. The network actors seek to realize different interests through internal power struggles, but they are held together by interdependencies that facilitate negotiation and compromise.

*Governability theory* defines governance networks as a horizontal coordination between autonomous agents interacting through different negotiation games. The formation of governance networks is a functional response to increasing complexity and diversification of society that undermine the ability to govern society efficiently through the traditional means of hierarchy and market. Governance networks are formed through the construction of game-like situations that enhance horizontal coordination, and they are held together partly by the anticipated gains from resource pooling and joint action and partly by the development of mutual trust that helps the involved actors to overcome negotiators' dilemma that is the risk of contribution your share and then be cheated by other network members (Scharpf, 1994: 40).

*Integration theory* defines governance networks as an institutionalized field of interaction between relevant actors that are integrated in a community defined by common perceptions and goals. Governance networks are seen as a normative response to the twin problems of totalitarian over-integration and individualistic under-integration of social agency. They are formed through a bottom-up process whereby contacts that are established due to the recognition of interdependence, are evaluated and extended on the basis of sedimented logics of appropriateness. Over time governance networks develop their own logic of appropriateness (often influenced by isomorphic pressures) and the network actors become integrated through the construction of solidarity and common identities.

*Governmentality theory* implicitly defines governance networks as an attempt of an increasingly reflexive and facilitating state to mobilize and shape the free actions of self-governing actors. Governance networks are seen as a political response to the failure of neo-liberalism to realize its key goal of 'less state and more market'. The problematization of neo-liberalism leads to the formulation of a new governmentality programme that aims to shift the burden of government to local networks in which the energies of social and political actors are mobilized and given a particular direction in order to ensure conformity. Governance networks are held together and framed by common narratives that recruit social and political actors as vehicles of power.

There is a clear family resemblance between the four theories of governance networks: there are many overlaps, but also significant differences between them. Now, having spelt out the basic features of the four theoretical positions, we can move on to consider the answers they provide to the three crucial questions confronting the second generation of governance network research: governance network failure, meta-governance and the democratic problems and potentials.

As for the first question, *interdependence theory* tends to view governance network failure as a result of imbalanced solutions to the crucial dilemmas between the needs for cooperation and competition; openness and closure; governability and flexibility; and accountability and efficiency. *Governability theory* tends to see governance network failure as a result of the absence of rules that can serve to define acceptable compromises and ensure stability. *Integration theory* claims that governance network failure is mainly a result of the failure to civilize political conflict and to facilitate learning and adaptation. Finally, *governability theory* contends that successful network governance depends on making the social and political actors capable of governing themselves and others in ways that ensure that each and everybody are governed without excessive use of force and resources.

The second question concerns the object and means of meta-governance. *Interdependence theory* focuses on the regulation of the actions of network actors. Hence, meta-governance involves indirect regulation of the actors through the provision and distribution of resources, and facilitation of joint action through direct regulation of the patterns of participation and direct intervention in network conflicts. *Governability theory* focuses on the indirect regulation of the rules of the games that govern the actions of the network actors. Meta-governance involves the provision of incentives and the building of trust through the crafting of rules, norms and values. *Integration theory* focuses on the normative orientation and political empowerment of the network actors. Meta-governance involves the development of the identities and capabilities. The development of identities is mainly a result of story-telling and the shaping the normative and cognitive schemes and templates. The development of capabilities is a result of social redistribution, the building of political institutions and the enhancement of political participation. Finally, *governmentality theory* focuses on both the subjectification and subjection of the network actors. On the one hand, meta-governance involves the mobilization and empowerment of agency through story-telling.



On the other hand, it involves the setting and monitoring of norms, standards, benchmarks and other kinds of performance indicators.

Whereas the four theories of network governance are already struggling to provide tentative answers to the new and pressing questions about governance network failure and meta-governance, they have only begun to tackle the question of the problems and potentials of democracy. They all tend to see closure and the lack of accountability of governance networks as the main democratic problem. Where they differ is with regard to the democratic potentials of governance networks. *Interdependence theory* argues that inclusion of all stakeholders and openness with regard to arguments and decisions will help to make governance networks democratic. *Governability theory* emphasises the importance of compliance with democratic norms and see the stake-holders influence on policy output as a potential deepening of liberal democracy. *Integration theory* hopes that governance networks will contribute to the development of democratic empowerment, reasoned deliberation and new forms of narrative accountability. Finally, *governmentality theory*, which is generally quite pessimistic about the democratic potentials of governance networks, is concerned with the possibility of the network actors for contestation, opposition and dissent.

Clearly, the four theories of network governance have very little to offer when it comes to the question of the democratic problems and potentials of network governance. It is not even clear what the criteria for assessing the democratic performance of governance networks are. In order to compensate for this inherent weakness, we will have to consult theories of democracy in order to see how they can help us to come up with some better answers.

#### **4. Governance networks and traditional theories of liberal democracy**

Considerations about the democratic problems and potentials of governance networks must start with a definition of democracy. This is not an easy task since the concept of democracy is a heavily contested concept that – as described by David Held (1989) - has a long history and is used to describe a wide range of political institutions and processes. However, if we focus on the liberal perception of democracy that emerged in the wake of the French revolution in 1789 and its call for liberty, equality and brotherhood the conceptual complexity is at least somewhat reduced.

Barry Holden (1993: 23ff) argues that theories of liberal democracy are distinct from other

theories of democracy in sharing the view that democracy must be able to deal with a basic tension between collective decision making and liberty. The concept of 'democracy' denotes a collective form of decision making where the people rule, while the term 'liberal' stresses that this people consists of individuals who should be given the best possible conditions to govern themselves individually. C. B. Macpherson argues instead that the core tension that theories of liberal democracy seek to handle relates to the question of equality. In contrast to classical and communitarian theories of democracy, theories of liberal democracy take social inequality as the implicit starting point for defining the nature of democracy and the problems it faces (Macpherson, 1977: 8ff). Theories of liberal democracy see democracy as a way of sharing political influence equally in a society characterized by social inequality.

Although people define liberal democracy in slightly different ways, they agree on the body of theories that constitute the canon of liberal democratic theory. Furthermore, they agree that the core values of democracy are equality, liberty and brotherhood (or communality as it might be called in a more modern parlance). As described by Johan P. Olsen and James G. March (1989: chap.7) there are two major strands within liberal democratic theory: aggregative and integrative theories. Among other things, the two strands differ with regard to their interpretation of what is meant by equality, liberty and communality.

### **Aggregative theories of liberal democracy**

Aggregative theories of democracy fit well into the conflict/calculation cell in table 1. Core theorists within this stand are James Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Charles Montesquieu and Joseph Schumpeter. They basically regard democracy as a means to regulate conflicts between individuals who follow a calculating logic of consequentiality. This regulation is not only obtained through the aggregation of the pre-given preferences of the individuals into a collective will through majority voting, but also through the balancing of powers. Within the state power is balanced between the legislative, the executive and the judicial institutions while power between the individual citizens and the state is balanced at election day when the citizens elect sovereign leaders, and through the existence of rules that favour minority protection, and the presence of a sharp borderline between a public sector of collective rule and a private sphere where individuals decide for themselves.

Aggregative theories of democracy define the concept of 'equality' narrowly as an equal formal access to political channels of influence, and it is most efficiently ensured

through general elections where each citizen have one vote and hence the same influence on the selection of political leaders. A well functioning representative democracy demands for an open and uncensored sphere of public debate ensuring that citizens make informed and well considered political choices on election-day. Furthermore, a high level of transparency in the policy process is needed in order to ensure that citizens are able to hold elected representatives accountable for their actions. Finally, the fact that the representatives of the people possess the legislative powers within the state apparatus helps to prevent a situation in which the executive and juridical power dominate the governing process at the cost of the people. To sum up, aggregative theories of democracy regard the traditional institutions of representative democracy as the best means to ensure an equal access to the channels of political influence and control among the citizens of a nation state.

Aggregative theory defines liberty negatively as no collectively defined limitations on individual action. Hence, the promotion of liberty calls for a political system that to as limited an extent as possible regulates individual action (Berlin, 1991). Negative liberty can be ensured in two ways: through rules that protect minorities in processes of collective decision making, and through the existence of a sharp borderline between a large private sphere of individual rule, and a small sphere of collective rule.

Finally, aggregative theories of democracy define the concept of community instrumentally. First, the community is defined formally as the legal citizens within a nation state. Second, the community voice is produced instrumentally through democratic institutions that produce a majority voice.

Seen from an aggregative perspective, governance networks represent a serious threat to liberal democracy. First, by creating the available channels of political influence with limited access governance networks increase the possibilities of an asymmetrical distribution of political power between citizens. Second, the limited publicity and transparency in many governance networks is likely to undermine the ability of the people to make informed choices and to control the actions of political elites. Third, the delegation of decision making competence to governance networks weakens the ability of elected representatives to control political processes and outcomes. Fourth, networks between politicians and administrators undermine the separation of legislative and executive powers. Fifth, networks between public and private actors undermine the desired borderline between the public and the private sector at the possible cost of negative liberty. Finally, the existence of trans-national governance

networks undermine the borderlines between sovereign nation states, and thereby make it unclear who should be counted as citizens and who should not. All in all, it can be concluded that aggregative theories of democracy regard governance networks as a serious threat to democracy. In the next section we analyse how governance networks are viewed from an integrative perspective on democracy.

### **Integrative theories of liberal democracy**

The integrative theories of liberal democracy fit well into the culture/coordination cell in table 1. Hence, theorists such as John Stuart Mill, Almond, Carole Pateman and Benjamin Barber share the view that democracy is not only a set of institutions that enhance collective decision making. A democratic polity is not defined by a specific set of institutions, but by a shared political identity that establishes a 'we'. In addition, democracy is regarded as a means of social coordination that rests on a set of shared rules, norms and images of appropriate behaviour, and a collective orientation towards the common good among the citizens. Integrative theories of democracy define equality, liberty and communality radically different from the aggregative theories of democracy.

Equality is understood in broad terms as the influence that citizens are actually capable of obtaining in decision making processes. From this perspective it is not important whether or not the citizens have access to exactly the same channels of influence. Integrative theories have a much broader understanding of democratic equality. What is important, they claim, is the extent to which all citizens are in fact able to obtain substantial influence on decisions that affect them. Therefore, equality does not only demand equal access to defined channels of influence. It also calls for a high level of social and political empowerment among the citizens in terms of acceptable living standards, proper education, and some level of internal and external political efficacy. Accordingly, a certain amount of resources, competencies and know how is regarded as a prerequisite for ensuring democratic equality in the same way as positive experience with political participation. Since self-governing institutions within civil society allow ordinary citizens to obtain political efficacy, these institutions are perceived as yet another necessary precondition for the promotion of equality.

Integrative theories of democracy take their departure in a positive definition of liberty that focuses on the ability of the citizens to realize their dreams and desires (Berlin, 1991). Positive liberty leads to a more complex and less conflictual understanding of the relationship

between collective decision making and individual liberty than was the case in the aggregative theories of democracy. First of all, it is argued, that collective decision making under specific conditions can increase the citizens' ability to reach desired goals. Coercion in one aspect of life might lead to considerable liberty in another part of life. Collectively decided rules that limit the right carry arms might increase the possibility to move around safely in society as one pleases. Second, collective decisions do not necessarily result in coercion. They might rest on a genuine consensus created through reasoned debate, or they might be taken in a civil society that is founded on voluntarism. Seen from an integrative perspective on democracy there are many ways to ensure a happy co-existence between collective decision making and individual liberty.

With regard to the definition of communality, the integrative theories of democracy stress that a community is not primarily a legally defined unity. It is first and foremost a collective political identity characterized by a set of democratic rules, norms and logics of appropriate behaviour. If there is no shared political identity within a polity, and no democratic political culture that favours reasoned debate to instrumental majority rule, there is no political community. Integrative theories of democracy claim that a political community is not automatically forged when a nation state is formed. A nation state only becomes a political community if the citizens begin to see themselves as a unity. This sense of unity and solidarity cannot be established legally, but is produced in and through the institutions of civil society.

Seen from the perspective of integrative theories of democracy, it is positive for democracy that governance networks allow for increased citizen participation, but the nature of the participation causes alarm. First, since governance networks tend to bring elites together, there is a danger that they will empower those who are already strong with the result that the inequalities in empowerment among the citizens increase. Second, governance networks involving both state actors and civil society actors undermine the autonomy of the institutions within civil society that integrative theories of democracy perceive as a cornerstone of democracy because they are the main producers of the rules, norms and logics of appropriateness that transforms a formal democratic system into a real live democracy. Third, governance networks can be seen as a threat to a universally oriented logic of communality because they articulate particular interests more than community interests. Finally, functionally oriented governance networks undermine territoriality as the defining principle for defining a political community. This does not least count for trans-national

networks that challenge the image of the nation state as the undivided unitary political community towards which the citizens' are to direct their collective orientation.

### **A farewell to traditional theories of liberal democracy**

As described above integrative as well as aggregative theories of democracy see governance networks as a serious threat to democracy because they challenge some of the most fundamental organizing principles for the traditional institutions of representative democracy. Governance networks undermine the institutional borderlines between territorially defined political communities; between the legislative and the executive powers; and between the political system and civil society. However, since there are few signs in current western societies that these borderlines will be reinstated in the near future, the traditional institutions of representative democracy can no longer be seen as a privileged model of democracy. We must start looking for new models of democracy that are capable of regulating governance processes as they take place today.

Now, the need to rethink democracy is not only due to the increased recognition of the substantial role that governance networks play in the governing of society. It is also necessitated by the narrow minded approach to democracy that has hitherto dominated theories of liberal democracy. The aggregative and the integrative theories of liberal democracy do not exhaust the possible theoretical approaches to democracy. They merely fill two of the four cells in table 1. We need to fill in the coordination/calculation cell and the culture/conflict cell, as this might help us to gain new insights about what democracy is, and how it can be improved under the present conditions. To sum up, what is called for is the development of a theory of post-liberal democracy that can serve as a starting point in our search for new democratic institutions. This task is huge and we do not aim to provide all the answers in this paper. We merely want to suggest in which theoretical and institutional directions we might go, and to consider whether a rethinking of the concept of democracy might open up for a more positive evaluation of the democratic potentials of governance networks than the liberal theories of democracy.

## **5. In search of a post-liberal theory of democracy**

In the last two decades, a series of new theories have surfaced that in different ways go

beyond the traditional theories of liberal democracy. Some of them argue, that economic globalization challenges the traditional role of the nation state as *the* democratic unit as such. Michael Sandel contends: ‘Nation-states, traditionally the vehicles of self-government, will find themselves increasingly unable to bring their citizens’ judgements and values to bear on the economic forces that govern their destinies’ (Sandel, 1996: 339). In other words, the nation state can no longer play the role as the key institution of democracy. While the answer to this predicament according to David Held (1993: 25ff) is the development of a cosmopolitan unitary democracy, Michael Sandel argues for a dispersion of sovereignty: ‘The most promising alternative to the sovereign state is not a one-world community based on the solidarity of mankind, but a multiplicity of communities and political bodies – some more, some less extensive than nations – among which sovereignty is diffused. The nation-state need not fade away, only cede its claim as the sole repository of sovereign power and primary object of political allegiance’ (Sandel, 1996: 345).

Although Paul Hirst (1994) perceives the global threat to the nation state to be highly exaggerated he agrees that that the capacity of the sovereign state to govern society has been reduced considerably. In his view, the reason for this decline in governance capacity is caused by the increasing pressure on the nation state to solve all kinds of governance tasks – not least tasks related to service delivery. The reaction to this pressure has been a series of new public management reforms that has resulted in a dispersion of power within the political system, and integrated private actors in public governance. While Michael Sandel and others describe how the sovereignty of the nation state is threatened from above, Paul Hirst argues that it is threatened from below.

William Connolly takes the critique of the image of the nation state as a unitary and sovereign centre of power and democracy even further when he claims that the notions of *a community, a people, a nation* so central in traditional theories of liberal democracy are expressions of homesickness. They express our feeling of a loss of place and belonging – our loss of a Greek polis that probably never was (Connolly, 1995: 137). It is high time that we give up this image of democracy as place and develop a more ‘multi-dimensional imagination of democracy that distributes democratic energies and identifications across multiple sites, treating the state as one site of identification, allegiance, and action among others’ (Connolly, 1995: 137). The source of inspiration in the search for a new democracy should no longer be a taproot or a tree where multiplicity is a result of a branching out from a trunk within a unitary

structure. Rather, it should be a rhizome in terms of a heterogeneous multiplicity of decentred connections and chains, or in other words a multifarious network structure (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Connolly, 1995: 94).

As illustrated above, the new theories of democracy are radical in their demands for a rearticulation of democracy and its institutions. Some of the new theories share the basic theoretical approach with either the aggregative or the integrative theories of liberal democracy. Others fit well into the culture coordination approach of the integrative theories of liberal democracy. However, they depart from the liberal theories in arguing that the core features of the traditional institutions of representative democracy must be transgressed. Other theories seek to develop new approaches to democracy that fit well into the coordination/calculation cell and the conflict/culture cell in table 1. The new theories of post-liberal democracy are presented in table 2:

Table 2: Four theoretical approaches to post-liberal democracy

	<i>Calculation</i>	<i>Culture</i>
<i>Conflict</i>	<p><b>Power-balance democracy</b></p> <p>[Ezioni-Halevy, 1993; Hirst, 2000]</p>	<p><b>Discursive democracy</b></p> <p>[Mouffe, 1993, 2000; Connolly, 1995; Dryzek, 2000]</p>
<i>Coordination</i>	<p><b>Outcome democracy</b></p> <p>[Scharpf, 1994; Mayntz, 1999]</p>	<p><b>Deliberative democracy</b></p> <p>[March &amp; Olsen, 1995; Sandel, 1996]</p>

While the differences between these new democratic theories are many they can all be said to be post-liberal in that they focus more on cultural difference than on social inequality as a basic societal condition that democracy must cope with (Connolly, 1991; 1995; Shapiro, 1999; Kiss, 1999; Ackerly and Okin, 1999; Mouffe, 2000; Benhabib, 1996). In what follows, we



take these theories as the starting point for our attempt to assess the democratic problems and potentials of network governance. It should be stressed that our main focus of attention in this article is directed towards the democratic potentials of governance networks. We have chosen this focus not because post-liberal theories primarily view governance networks as a positive contribution to democracy but rather in order to establish a contrast to the one sided negative view of the liberal theories of democracy.

### **Power-balance theories of post-liberal democracy**

Among the aggregative power balance theories of post-liberal democracy we find Eva Ezioni-Halevy's reformulation of traditional elite theory and its focus on competition as a means of balancing elite power. She insists that the democratic functioning of representative democracy is not primarily that it allows the people to control elites through elections. As underlined by Charles Montesquieu, the core democratic feature of representative democracy is that it establishes competition among autonomous elites, and thereby establishes a situation in which elites control each other (Ezioni-Halevy, 1993: 53-4). Ezioni-Halevy argues that a pluralistic, multi-centred power structure plays an important role in the balancing of the power of elites. A key element of the multi-centred power structure is the so called sub-elites constitute a layer of resourceful actors that constantly challenges the position of the ruling elites. Sub-elites have been more or less ignored by traditional elite theory, despite the fact that they play a crucial role in most democracies. They are important because they control political elites between elections just as they establish an intermediary level between the people and the ruling elites that help to facilitate mobility between the elites and the people (Ezioni-Halevy, 1993: 194). Eva Ezioni-Halevy stresses that a precondition for an efficient balancing of powers between elites and between elites and sub-elites is a well-functioning public sphere of free and open debate through which elites and sub-elites contest each others' views and actions.

Also Paul Hirst has contributed to rethinking democracy from an aggregative perspective, and again the power balance perspective is central. His associative model of democracy suggests that representative democracy at the state level is supplemented with publicly funded, but autonomously governed service providing associations. The purpose of this is not to ensure a horizontal power balance between different elites but to establish a vertical power balance between democracy from above (representative democracy at the state

level) and democracy from below (self-governing voluntary associations). In this vertical balancing of powers the role of the state is to define the overall political goals and financial frames for the operation of the associations while the task of the associations is to produce public services in competition with each other. Paul Hirst argues that the principle of affectedness must play a central role in considerations about how to ensure equal access to channels of political influence. The equal right to vote for parliament must also play a central role in the future. However, this territorially defined representative democracy must be supplemented with a functionally defined democracy for the affected stakeholders. In this associative democracy, the access to channels of influence is distributed equally, not among all citizens, but among those who are affected by the decisions.

The model of associative democracy is not only an aggregative theory of democracy because it aims to institutionalize equality in the narrow sense of the term in new ways. It also stresses the need to ensure negative liberty. However, as Paul Hirst maintains, the expansion of a large private sector involving individual choice beyond the reach of the public realm of collective decision making is not the only way to ensure negative liberty. It can just as well be promoted within the public sector. The effort to enhance individual choice within the public sector has precisely been one of the chief ambitions of the New Public Management reforms. But according to Paul Hirst (2000: 29) the service providing institutions should not be private firms, but civil society associations that do not only grant the affected individual choice but also voice (Hirst 2000: 29).

Paul Hirst operates with a number of mediating con-sociational institutions that link the self-governing associations and the state. These con-sociational institutions play a central role for balancing and connecting the two levels in the associative model of democracy in a process of negotiated governance (Hirst, 2000: 30). The con-sociational institutions have many of the same characteristics as governances as network as they link interdependent but relatively autonomous actors in an effort to reach solutions to shared problems through negotiation.

To sum up, the aggregative power balance theories of post-liberal democracy show that the concepts of narrow equality and negative liberty can be reformulated in a way that leads to different conclusions regarding the democratic problems and potentials of governance networks. They underline the need for a horizontal and vertical balancing of powers as a central precondition for democracy. This balancing is promoted through the existence of

competition between autonomous political elites and (sub-)elites, through shared power between the state and self-governing voluntary organizations, and through shared power between users and producers of public services. Seen from this perspective governance networks might play a positive role in democracy. First, governance networks could be seen as a means to establish a level of sub-elites that could serve as a countervailing power for established political elites that could serve as a countervailing power for established political elites and as an mobility promoting intermediary platform for political participation between political elites and ordinary citizens. Second, governance networks might represent a way of establishing a link between top-down state rule and bottom-up self-governance in autonomous associations.

However, the power-balance theories also note a number of potential dangers for democracy connected to governance networks. Eva Ezioni-Halevy argues that governance networks between elites and sub-elites tend to undermine elite autonomy and elite competition, and that the informal nature many governance networks tends to result in a low level of publicity and transparency in the decision making process. Paul Hirst on his side claims that there is a risk that governance networks become involved in the governing of tasks that should be governed solely by the state. These tasks are 1) the distribution of powers and responsibilities between itself, regional and local governments and civil society; 2) to serve as the main point of internal democratic legitimacy for the citizens; and 3) to function not as the only but as the primary legitimate actor in external relations to other nation states and political entities (Hirst, 2000: 31). Accordingly, Paul Hirst finds both positive and negative sides of governance networks for democracy

### **Deliberative theories of post-liberal democracy**

The new integrative – or deliberative - theories of post-liberal democracy maintain that a democratic community cannot be reduced to a legally defined unit. In a democratic community, the citizens experience a certain connectedness and might also have a collective identity. However, deliberative theories of post-liberal democracy argue that this unitary image of the democratic community must be discarded because it is no longer meaningful to imagine one overarching point of identification. Due to the undermining of the sovereign status of the nation state and the dispersion of political power to a whole range of actors the nation state can no longer play the role as *the* unifying point of identification that transforms a

group of individuals into a people. And what is more no other overarching point of collective orientation is ready to take its place. Michael Sandel writes:

Since the days of Aristotle's polis, the republican tradition has viewed self-government as an activity rooted in a particular place, carried out by citizens loyal to that place and the way of life it embodies. Self-government today, however, requires a politics that plays itself out in a multiplicity of settings, from neighbourhoods to nations to the world as a whole. Such a politics requires citizens who can think and act as multi-situated selves. The civic virtue of our time is the capacity to negotiate our way among the sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting obligations that claim us, and to live with the tension to which multiple loyalties give rise (Sandel, 1996: 350).

Today the construction of one overarching collective identity can no longer be seen as the goal. Democratic norms and guidelines are needed that suggest how people should navigate within a patchwork of collective identifications and orientations.

Furthermore, deliberative theories of post-liberal democracy have given up the claim that reasoned debate leads to an identification of a universally given common good. Instead they argue that reasoned debate leads to the construction of shared stories of past, present and future that make meaningful collective behaviour possible (Sandel, 1996: 350; March and Olsen, 1995: 63ff). Democracy is promoted through the telling of stories that construct democratic rules and norms and logics of appropriateness in a community and between communities. The deliberative theories have also shown an increased interest in identity formation as a means to enhance the level of democratic political empowerment among the citizens. Democracy involves the shaping of political identities that support a democratic ethos of reciprocity and a high level of political engagement (Connolly, 1995: 94; Sandel, 1996: 333; March and Olsen, 1989: chapter 7; Sørensen and Torfing, 2003: 623-5).

Summing up, deliberative theories of democracy give up the idea that a democratic political identity must be inscribed in one overarching political community; that political engagement is directed towards the promotion of a pre-political, universally given common good; and that the development of empowered citizens with a strong sense of communality must take place within an autonomous civil society. They see the state as one out of many competing and overlapping points of political identification; and they regard the establishment

of linkages and bridges between political identities, narratives and communities as an important democratic task that post-liberal theories of democracy must take into account. Governance networks might prove to be an important means to establish such linkages and bridges.

Governance networks seem to be an obvious choice for post-liberal integrative theorists in their search for new democratic institutions that might help to establish links between the fragmented multiplicities of overlapping political communities. However, governance networks can also be seen as at threat to democracy if the networks undermine the establishment of strong community identities more than it promotes them. This could be the case if the actors in the networks are not in close cooperation.

### **Outcome theories of post-liberal democracy**

We have now studied the recent attempts to transgress the traditional aggregative and the integrative theories of democracy. It is now time to turn our attention towards recent efforts to develop theories of democracy that take their departure in a calculation/coordination and a conflict/culture approach to governance. Let us start with the calculation/coordination theories which we might term the outcome oriented theories of post-liberal democracy. It is a slight exaggeration to claim that we witness the emergence of a whole new set of post-liberal theories of democracy that build on a calculation/coordination approach. It is more correct to say that it is possible to identify a number of theoretical steps in this direction. The main contributors to this theoretical development are found among game theorists such as Fritz Scharpf (1997). These theorists share the view that the most pressing problem that theories of democracy must deal with is coordination. The coordination problem occurs because society consists of a multitude of rational actors who act in order to reach desired outcomes in situations where other actors do the same. Since it is notoriously difficult for the actors to take the actions of the other actors into account, the aggregated outcome is in most cases intended and desired by no one. The objective is therefore to find ways to establish institutional games that promote desired aggregated outcomes. Following this line of thought, Renate Mayntz (1999: 10-11) argues that democratic theory has focussed too little on the extent to which democratic institutions have been successful in coordinating action in a way that ensures the production of mutually desired outcomes. In her view, this state of affairs results from the traditional separation within the political sciences between studies of the input side of the

political system (theories and studies of democracy) and study of the output side (theories and studies of governance). The current ungovernability problems in the western world make the problems related to this theoretical separation of studies of democracy and governance efficiency more evident than ever.

In the same vein, Fritz Scharpf (2000: 102ff) claims that the focus on the ability of the institutions of representative democracy to produce desired outcomes as efficiently and effectively as possibly should be seen as a central aspect of democracy. The democratic quality of a political system should not only be measured by its input-legitimacy (i.e. in terms of how those who govern are appointed), but also by its outcome legitimacy (i.e. in terms of its ability to produce intended and desired outcomes). Citizens' right to vote at general elections is not worth much if the political system is unable to transform political goals into outcomes. Democracy and efficient governance become two sides of the same coin.

According to the outcome oriented post-liberal theories of democracy governance networks might play a positive role in strengthening democracy. Renate Mayntz argues that the principle of reciprocity and the outcome orientation that characterizes governance networks enhances makes coordinated collective decision making and effective policy implementation possible in a world of rational actors with pre-given and often conflicting interests. Fritz Scharpf claims that governance networks might play two important democratic roles. First, governance networks are likely to increase the level of positive and negative coordination among the many actors that participate in the governing process through the production of trust within the networks. This increased coordination makes the realization of desired outcomes more likely (Scharpf, 1997: 48). Second, governance networks are likely to enhance the level of democratic outcome legitimacy because they involve representatives for the involved and affected in the governing process (Scharpf, 2000: 118).

However, the out-come oriented post-liberal theories also see potential dangers for democracy. First, governance networks are vulnerable and are likely to fall apart if they are not constantly governed from above through the construction of plus-sum games. Second, the insurance of democratic legitimacy on the input side as well as on the output-side calls for publicity. Since governance networks tend to become invisible and closed it is necessary to act in order to ensure an increased public focus on the role that governance networks play in the production of policy outcomes.

### **Discursive theories of post-liberal democracy**

Finally, we shall look at a group of new theories of post-liberal democracy that take a conflict/culture approach to democracy. These theories share the view with the aggregative theories that democracy is a means to regulate political conflicts, but at the same time they refuse the view that actors are basically driven by a calculus interest maximizing rationality. Instead, they seek to combine the conflict approach with an integrative understanding of subjectivity as an outcome of identity formation conditioned by contingent hegemonic discursive articulations.

The discursive theories of democracy, as we might call them, share the view that traditional theories of liberal democracy have focussed too much on the regulation of the three faces of power: direct power, indirect power and ideological power (Lukes, 1974) while ignoring the question of how discursive power that defines the actors' identity, intentions and strategic orientation can be democratized. The core issues that these theorists have taken up relates to how individuals discursively construct themselves and others, how the best conditions for discursive contestation are established, and how discursive images of the polity and the political produce specific structures of inclusion and exclusion (Young, 2000, 2001; Mouffe, 1993, 2000; Dryzek, 2000, Hajer, 2003).

John Dryzek (2000: 163) argues that the core objective of democracy is to pave the way for ongoing discursive contestation. Politics consists of battles between competing discursive images of the nature of society, its borders and the identity the people who inhabit it. One of the most central objectives for theories of democracy, he claims, is to consider how these battles are to be regulated. William Connolly (1991) and later Chantal Mouffe (1993) have taken up this challenge in claiming that a core objective of democracy is to transform conflictual relations from antagonistic friend-enemy relations into agonistic relations where people disagree on substantial and procedural issues but respect each others right to have a different opinion. In Chantal Mouffe's words 'the aim of democratic politics is to construct the 'them' in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an 'adversary', that is, somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question' (Mouffe, 2000: 101-2). Therefore, democracy's worst enemy is essentialist beliefs that for example stipulate the existence in a pre-political common good. Such beliefs might serve to legitimize efforts to remove democracy and establish a totalitarian regime in situations where the outcome of a democratically regulated political process does

not realize what some define as the common good. The best protection against totalitarianism is the recognition of the political character of the common good.

In line with this argument for the primacy of politics, Chantal Mouffe underlines the political nature and effects of the demarcation of the polity. Because traditional theories of liberal democracy treat the polity as pre-political (Hansen and Sørensen, forthcoming) some of the most decisive political patterns of inclusion and exclusion a given polity establishes tend to become invisible, and thus escapes democratic regulation. This critique of traditional theories of liberal democracy is seconded by John Dryzek who regard globalization as a positive thing for democracy because it helps us to reveals that the nation state is not an incontestable prepolitical political unity. The demarcation of a polity and the patterns of inclusion and exclusion it brings with is in itself a political matter that should be regulated democratically (Dryzek, 2000: 164). This discursive *politization* of the polity is according to Dryzek just one aspect of a general tendency towards a growing politization of society as such which is to the benefit for democracy because still more issues can be made subject to political contestation.

The discursive theories of post-liberal democracy suggest a number of ways in which governance networks can contribute positively to the promotion of democracy. First, governance networks might serve as some sort of buffer mechanism between antagonistic groups in society. Hence, they might contribute to the transformation of antagonistic sentiments into agonistic sentiments between various groups of citizens and between affected citizens and the political elites and sub-elites. Second, governance networks offer a way of regulating political processes that takes place outside and between traditional institutions of representative democracy in the still more politicized society and globalized world.

However, governance networks also represent a potential problem for democracy. If governance networks become too domination do not only transform antagonism into agonism but also transform agonism into compromise they might undermine the presence of the ongoing political contestation that the discursive theories of democracy regard as essential for democracy.

### **Post-liberal democracy and the challenge of governance networks**

As it should now be clear, the choice between traditional theories of liberal democracy and new theories of post-liberal democracy is decisive for the answers we get to the question of



the democratic problems and potentials of governance networks. In contrast to the liberal theories of democracy, the post-liberal theories do not necessarily see the undermining of the traditional institutional borderlines between nation states, between the public and the private sphere, and between the legislative input-side and the executive output side as a threat to democracy. In fact, they tend to see the evaporation of these borderlines as a prerequisite for a strong democratic regulation of governance processes. The post-liberal theories outline a number of democratic tasks that could potentially be solved by governance networks. They could:

- enhance a vertical balance of powers through the establishment of sub-elites
- establish a link between top-down representative democracy and bottom-up self-governing democracy
- serve as medium for the enhancing political empowerment and mutual trust
- promote the constructions of overlapping meaning, identities and logics of appropriateness that makes linkages between multiple images of communality possible
- improve governance efficiency and outcome legitimacy in processes of public governance
- transform antagonistic into agonistic sentiments
- widen the institutional and discursive sphere of the political and thus enlarge the space for political contestation

However, the post-liberal theories of democracy also underline a variety of potential dangers for democracy that governance networks raise. Governance networks might:

- undermine political competition and autonomy

- reduce discursive contestation
- get involved in decision making that should be performed solely by elected politicians
- undermine communities if network representatives do not maintain strong links to the communities they come from
- make political processes less transparent and public
- reduce the stability of the political system due to the fragile nature of governance networks

Accordingly, post-liberal theories of democracy do not regard governance networks as unproblematic. They are potentially problematic for democracy. But in contrast to the liberal theories of democracy they agree that governance networks do also carry a democratic potential. This situation opens for a discussion that makes little sense if one departs from the liberal theories of democracy that is the discussion of how the positive potentials of governance networks are enhanced and the negative sides reduced. In the last section of this article we will make some preliminary efforts to answer this question.

## **6. Making governance networks democratic through meta-governance**

As described above, a central focus of attention in the second generation of governance network theory is how governance networks can be regulated through meta-governance. The different groups of theories each point to a number of ways in which meta-governance can be exercised. The *interdependence theory* seeks for ways to indirectly influence network action through the shaping of interdependencies through resource allocation and more directly through the regulation of access and facilitation of cooperation and conflict resolution within the networks. *Governability theory* seeks ways to exercise meta-governance indirectly through the construction of institutional rules of the game that establish specific incentive structures. *Integration theory* points to the possibility of exercising meta-governance through the

construction of democratic political identities and images of communality. Finally, *governmentality theory* argues that story telling does not only concern the construction of democratically empowered identities and images of communality among the citizens, but also involves the framing and shaping of freedom. These various forms of meta-governance can be condensed to three forms of meta-governance:

1. Indirect meta-governance through the shaping of interdependencies by means of strategic resource allocation and institutional game construction
2. Directly meta-governance through facilitation of network cooperation conflict resolution within self-governing networks
3. Indirect meta-governance through story telling that constructs and regulates the network actors' identities and actions

Up till now, the governance network theories have more or less exclusively focussed on how public authorities can enhance governance efficiency through the various means of meta-governance. However, we shall claim that the three forms of meta-governance outlined above can just as well be used as a means to promote democracy within and between governance networks. Hence, resource allocation can be used strategically as a means to balance the power within or between networks or to make actors who are potentially threatened by exclusion more interesting to network with for other actors. Furthermore, meta-governors can promote output efficiency through the facilitation of cooperation and conflict resolution. Finally, stories can be told in order to transform antagonism into agonism; empower political identities, and articulate a multitude of collective points of identification.

## **7. Conclusion**

Today governance networks play a central role in the governing of society. From the 1980s and onwards the social sciences have to an increasing extent focused on the role of governance networks. A first generation of governance network research aimed to uncover and grasp this role. An emerging second generation of governance network research focus more on the

possible contributions and shortcomings of governance networks in the governing of society. They particularly focus on three research questions: 1) What are the possible failures and successes of governance networks; 2) How can governance networks be regulated through meta-governance, and 3) What are the effects of governance networks on democracy?

We have argued that first and second generation governance network theories can be divided into four groups: 1) interdependence theory, 2) governability theory, 3) integration theory and 4) governmentality theory. Each of these groups, contribute in one way or another to answering the three research questions forwarded by the second generation of governance network theories. In this paper, we have particularly focussed on the third question. In order to consider the democratic problems and potentials of governance networks we have made an effort to define the concept of democracy more precisely. First we defined the concept of democracy with reference to the traditional theories of liberal democracy. Seen from this perspective, governance networks represent a serious threat to democracy. Then, we focussed on the way democracy is perceived in the emerging theories of post-liberal democracy. These post-liberal theories reformulate the traditional images of democracy and introduce new perspectives on democracy so that all the four boxes in table 1 can be filled with theories of post-liberal democracy: the aggregative theories, the deliberative theories, the outcome oriented theories, and finally the discursive theories. If governance networks are evaluated from the point of view of these post-liberal theories of democracy the answer we get regarding the effects of governance networks on democracy is more complex and promising. Governance networks might actually under certain conditions contribute to the strengthening of democracy. This is not least the case if they are regulated through the exercise of various forms of democracy promoting meta-governance.

## References:

Ackerly, B.A. and Okin, S.M. (1999): 'Feminist social Criticism and the international movement for women's rights and human rights' in I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordón (Eds.): *Democracy's Edge*, pp. 134-162.

Almond, G.A. and Verba, S. (1963): *The Civic Culture - Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Arrow, K.J. (1963 [1951]): *Social Choice and Individual Values*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Barber, B. (1984): *Strong Democracy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Benhabib, S. (Ed.) (1996): *Democracy and Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Berlin, I. (1991): 'Two Concepts of Liberty' in D. Miller (Ed.): *Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp. 33-57.

Cawson, A. (Ed.) (1985): *Organized Interests and the State*. London: Sage.

Christiansen, P.M. and Nørgaard, A.S. (2003): *Faste Forhold - flygtige forbindelser. Stat og interesseorganisationer i det 20. århundrede*. Århus: Århus Universitetsforlag.

Connolly, W. (1991): *Identity/Difference*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Connolly, W. (1995): *The Ethos of Pluralization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Dahl, R.A. (1961): *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Dean, M. (1999): *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. London: Sage.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987): 'Introduction: Rhizome' in G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (Eds.): *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-25.

Deutsch, Karl W. (1963): *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*. New York: Free Press.

Dryzek, J.S. (2000): *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond. Liberals, Critics, Contestations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Elmore, R. F. (1985): 'Forward and backward Mapping: reversible logic in the analysis in public Policy' in R. Hanf and T. Toonen (Eds.). *Policy Implementation in Federal and Unitary Systems*. Boston: Dordrecht: Nato ASI Series

Etzioni, A. (Ed.) (1995): *New Communitarian Thinking: Persons, Virtues, Institutions, and Communities*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Ezioni-Halevy, E. (1993): *The Elite Connection - Problems and Potentials of Western Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Evers, A. (1990): 'Shifts in the Welfare Mix', in A. Evers and H. Winterberg, (Eds.): *Shifts in the Welfare Mix: Their Impact on Work, Social Services and Welfare Policies*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, pp. 7-30.

Fischer, F. and Forester, J. (1993): *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*. Durham: NC: Duke University Press.

Foucault, M. (1991): 'Governmentality' in G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (Eds.): *The Foucault Effect*. London: Harvester, pp 87-104.

Hajer, M. (2003): 'Policy without polity? Policy Analysis and the institutional void': *Policy*

*Sciences*, Vol. 36, pp. 175-195.

Hansen, A.D. and E. Sørensen (2004): *Polity as Politics: Studying the Shaping and Effects of Discursive Politics*. London: Palgrave.

Held, D. (1989): *Models of Democracy*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Held, D. (1993): 'Democracy from city states to Cosmopolitan Order?' in D. Held (Ed.): *Prospects for Democracy*. Oxford: Polity Press pp 13-52.

Hirst, P. (1994): *Associative Democracy. New forms of Economic and Social Governance*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hirst, P. (2000): *Globalisering, Demokrati og det civile samfund*. København: Hans Reitzel.

Holden, B. (1993): *Understanding Liberal Democracy*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Jessop, B. (1995): 'The Regulation Approach and Governance Theory: Alternative Perspectives on Economic and Political Change?' *Economy and Society*, Vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 307-333.

Jessop, B. (1998): 'The Rise of Governance and the Risks of Failure. The Case of Economic Development', *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 50, no. 155, pp. 29-45.

Jessop, B. (2000): *Globalisering og interaktiv styring*. Frederiksberg: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.

Katzenstein, P.J. (1985): *Small States in World Markets*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kickert, W. (1993): 'Complexity, Governance and Dynamics: Conceptual Explorations of Network Management' in J. Kooiman (Ed.) *Modern Governance. New Government – Society interactions*. London: Sage, pp. 191-204.

Kickert, W., E.H. Klijn and J.F.M. Koppenjan (1997): *Managing Complex Networks: Strategies for the Public Sector*. London: Sage.

Kiss, E. (1999): 'Democracy and the Politics of recognition' in I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordón (Eds.): *Democracy's Edge*, pp. 193-209.

Klijn, E.H. (1996), 'Analyzing and Managing Policy Processes in Complex Networks: A Theoretical Examination of the Concept of Policy Network and Its Problems', *Administration and Society*, Vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 90-119.

Klijn, E.H. (1997), 'Policy Networks: An Overview' in W. Kickert, E.H. Klijn, and J.F.M. Koppenjan, (Eds.): *Managing Complex Networks: Strategies for the Public Sector*. London: Sage, pp 14-14.

Klijn, E.H. and Koppenjan, J.F.M. (2000), 'Public Management and Policy Networks – Foundations of a Network Approach to Governance', *Public Management*, Vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 135-158.

Kooiman, J. (Ed.) (1993): *Modern Governance - New Government-Society interactions*. London: Sage.

Lukes, S. (1974): *Power: A radical view*. London: British Sociological Association.

Macpherson, C.B. (1977): *Life and times of Liberal Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

March, J.G. and Olsen, J.P. (1989): *Rediscovering Institutions. The organizational Basis of Politics*. New York: The Free Press.

March, J.G. and Olsen, J.P. (1995): *Democratic Governance*. New York: The Free Press.



- Marin, B. and Mayntz, R. (Eds.) (1991): *Policy Networks: Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Considerations*. Frankfurt-am-Main: Campus Verlag.
- Marsh, D. (1998): 'The Utility and Future of Policy Network Analysis', in David Marsh (Ed.): *Comparing Policy Networks*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 185-197.
- Marsh, D. and R.A.W. Rhodes (1992): *Policy Networks in British Government*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mayntz, R. (1993): 'Governing Failures and the Problem of Governability: Some Comments on a Theoretical Paradigm' in Jan Kooiman (ed.): *Modern Governance. New Government-Society interactions*. London: Sage, pp. 9-20.
- Mayntz, R. (1999): 'New Challenges to Governance Theory'. *Paper*. Max-Plank Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung.
- Milward, H.B. and K.G. Provan (2000): 'How Networks are Governed' in C.J. Heinrich and L.E. Lynn (Eds.) *Governance and Performance. New Perspectives*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, pp. 238-262.
- Mouffe, C. (1993): *The Return of the Political*. London: Verso.
- Mouffe, C. (2000): *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso.
- Nielsen, K. and O.K. Pedersen (1989): 'Fra blandingsøkonomi til forhandlingsøkonomi – mod et nyt paradigme?' in K.K. Klausen and T.H. Nielsen (Eds.): *Stat og marked*. København: Jurist- og Økonomforbundets Forlag, pp. 171-226.
- Pateman, C. (1989): *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pestoff, V. (1995): *Citizens as Co-Producers of Social Services in Europe: From the Welfare*

*State to the Welfare Mix*. Stockholm University: Department of Business Administration.

Pierre, J. and Peters, G. (2000): *Governance, Politics and the State*. London: St. Martin's Press.

Pierre, J. (Ed.) (2000): *Debating Governance. Authority, Steering, and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Powell, W.W. and DiMaggio, P.J. (1983): 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 48, pp. 147-160.

Raab, Jörg og H. Brinton Milward (2003). "Dark networks as problems", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 413-439.

Rhodes, R.A.W. (1990): 'Policy Networks: A British Perspective', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 2, pp. 293-317.

Rhodes, R.A.W. (1994): 'The Hollowing Out of the State: The Changing Nature of the Public Service in Britain', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 65 no. 2, pp. 138-151.

Rhodes, Rod A. W. (1996): 'The New Governance: Governing Without Government', *Political Studies*, Vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 652-667.

Rhodes, R.A.W. (1997): *Understanding Governance. Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Rose, R. (1986): 'Common Goals but different Roles: The State's Contribution to the Welfare Mix', in R. Rose and R. Shiratori, (Eds.): *The Welfare State East and West*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 13-39.

Rose, N. and Miller, P. (1992): 'Political Power Beyond the State: Problematics of

Government', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 173-205.

Sandel, M.J. (1996): *Democracy's Discontent - America in Search of a Public Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Scharpf, F.W. (1994): 'Games Real Actors Could Play. Positive and Negative Coordination in Embedded Negotiations', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 27-53.

Scharpf, F. (1997): *Games Real Actors Play. Actor Centred Institutionalism in Policy research*. Oxford: West View Point.

Scharpf, F. (2000): 'Interdependence and Democratic Legitimation' in S.J. Pharr and R. Putnam (Eds.): *Disaffected Democracies. What's troubling the trilateral Countries?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 101 -120.

Scott, R.W. (1995): *Institutions and Organizations*. London: Sage.

Shapiro, I. (1999): 'Group aspirations and democratic politics' in I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordón (Eds.): *Democracy's Edge*, pp. 210-221.

Stuart Mill, J. (1946 [1861]): *On liberty and Considerations on Representative Democracy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Sørensen, E. and Torfing, J. (2003): 'Network Politics, Political Capital, and Democracy'. *International Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 26, no. 6, pp. 609-635.

Schmitter, P. and Lehbruch, G. (Eds.) (1979): *Trends towards Corporatist Intermediation*. London and Beverly Hills: Sage.

Young, I.M. (2000): *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Young, I.M. (2001): 'Activist Challenges to deliberative Democracy', *Political Theory*, Vol.

29, no. 5 pp. 670-690.