Challenges regarding the operationalization of representation and accountability in governance networks

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Discussion paper for the NewGen Accountability workshop at the University of Utrecht, 10th of November 2014

Introduction

The prime goal of this paper is to discuss the challenges I experience to operationalize mechanisms of representation and accountability in the context of local governance networks in Flanders (Belgium)[1]. Over the last two decades we witness a proliferation of local governance networks in Flanders that operate between governmental levels and beyond territorial borders. Local governments increasingly establish relationships with e.g. autonomous agencies, other governments, private organizations or with a combination of these (Agentschap voor Binnenlands Bestuur 2012). It is argued this new organizational layer on top of the local political landscape challenges traditional merits of local democracy like popular control, territorial sovereignty and the primacy of politics. From a traditional perspective on liberal representative democracy these governance practices are therefore frequently labeled as undemocratic. Yet according to a postliberal perspective governance networks might even expand the democratic quality of a decision making process as long as they are anchored to the bodies of local representative democracy (Sørensen and Torfing 2005).

Local elected politicians are often seen as the lynchpin between both worlds. Obviously, the validity of this argument depends on the actual role local elected politicians adopt. In this regard my research project started with three fundamental questions. Firstly, what role do local politicians play in framing, designing and managing governance networks with regards to the municipality, this is in *metagovernance*? Secondly, what role do local politicians play in interest mediation and decision making in relationship to their municipality, this is in *co-governance*? Lastly, what role do local politicians play in the *representation* of the municipality in the network and in its subsequent *accountability*?

This last question I want to explore further in this paper since I experience a tension between the operationalization of governance networks as composited sites of complex decision making on the one hand and the operationalization of representation and accountability on the other hand. While the theoretic literature retreats from the

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[1] This text is part of PhD-research project on the role of local elected politicians with regards to the democratic anchorage of governance networks conducted within the frame of the Policy Research Centre on Governmental organization in Flanders (SBOV III - 2012-2015), funded by the Flemish government. The research consists of a qualitative study of strategic and complex decision making within the realm of a local governance network in the region of Kortrijk.

principle-agent approach on representation and accountability its remnants are still present in our conceptualization of these mechanisms. I will start this paper with introducing the way I approach local governance networks and complex decision making before I elaborate on this operationalization challenge.

Governance networks and complex decision making processes

Governance and networks

Since the last decades of the 20th century there has been much ado about the so-called rise of governance within political studies, public administration and related fields (Sørensen and Torfing 2005; Stoker and Chhotray 2009; Bevir 2011). The term governance is borrowed from a broad variety of approaches that all use governance to describe and explain changes in our world in general and changes in the nature and role of the state in particular. I follow the understanding of scholars who approach governance as a new academic paradigm through which we can deal efficiently and effectively with the specific complexity, interdependency and dynamics of contemporary public policy issues (Kuhn 1962; Sullivan, Sørensen et al. 2011; Klijn and Koppenjan 2012).

I adopt the comprehension of Rhodes (2007) that governance equals "governing with and through networks". Hence the emergence of governance networks should not be understood as the end of state authority but rather as a redefinition of it (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003). I base my understanding of governance networks further on Sørensen and Torfing (2007) who define a governance network as:

"a (more or less) stable articulation of mutually dependent, but operationally autonomous actors from state, market and civil society, who interact through conflict-ridden negotiations that take place within an institutionalized framework of rules, norms, shared knowledge and social imaginaries; facilitate self-regulated policy making in the shadow of hierarchy; and contribute to the production of 'public value' in a broad sense of problem definitions, visions, ideas, plans and concrete regulations that are deemed relevant to broad sections of the population."

Admittedly this definition is covering a wide array of phenomena. Therefore I emphasize three dimensions which are already implicitly present in this definition.

First, governance networks are "being formed, reproduced, and changed by an ecology of games between these actors" (Klijn 1996). Hence governance networks do not equal fixed institutional settings but institutional settings that *change over time*. Decision making within a governance network is composed by many moments and all these moments can be seen as tipping points where the whole process could have proceeded in a different direction (Block, Steyvers et al. 2010).

Second, the complexity of governance networks is defined by their *composite character*. Chains of explicit and implicit decisions get interwoven in a nexus of different

governments, various arenas of governance and informal channels (Kingdon 2003; Block and Paredis 2012). Governance networks consist of many (sub)systems, parallel circuits and tangled series of decisions (Teisman 2000; Teisman 2005; Block, Steyvers et al. 2010).

Third, governance networks involve *strategic and complex policy issues*. The issues are complex because they go beyond the existing institutional boundaries of governments and involve many policy domains. This complexity is moreover reinforced by the diffusion of resources like knowledge, competences, legitimacy and means of production among different actors. The issues are strategic because they have the ambition to define the operational margins of public policy in space and time (Mintzberg 1978; Marcussen and Torfing 2007; Blanco, Lowndes et al. 2011; Provan and Lemaire 2012; Torfing, Peters et al. 2012).

Complex decision making processes
For my understanding of the analysis of decision making processes in governance networks I am indebted to Teisman (2000), in particular to his conceptualization of the rounds model. A decision making process consist in this model on a series of rounds. A round is defined by a particular choice situation on an issue. Decisions both conclude rounds as initiate new rounds with new chances for all actors involved to influence the preliminary outcome. Moreover interdependent actors do not only make decisions jointly but also separately from each other. All these decisions mutually influence, elbow or build on each other. Seen through this lens a decision making process consists of a series of decisions in various arenas, hence suiting the aforementioned characteristic of governance networks.

A governance network then is formed by a *policy game* surrounding a complex and strategic policy issue. The policy game itself takes place in and between governance arenas. A particular *arena* includes a set of specific *actors* that want to influence the policy issue at hand and is constituted by some organizational arrangements and a code of conduct. The complexity of such a process comes from many factors. First, we have the amount of players and their, often unpredictable, strategic choices. Second, we have the number of arenas that interact at different places in space and time. Lastly, policy games are not played in a vacuum so (parts of) other policy games might interfere with a specific policy game (Teisman 2000; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004; van Gils and Klijn 2006). Moreover, as described in table 1, *the structural context*, *political culture* and *institutional milieu* surrounding a governance network will mediate the functioning of this network (Di Gaetano and Strom 2003).

Table 1 Conceptualization of governance networks

Actors	Directly or indirectly involved. They have resources and strategic preferences.
Governance arenas	Settings for decision making involving certain actors.
Decision rounds	Defined by a choice situation the actors are confronted with.
Policy game	The pushing and pulling of a strategic and complex policy issue.
Institutional milieu	The formal and informal institutional arrangements that mediate the interaction between actors in the governance arenas. The institutional milieu does not only consist of organizational rules but also of logics of conduct shaping key positions and relations.
Political culture	The normative assumptions on the appropriate role and goals of the government and its actors wherein a governance network is embedded.
Structural context	The macro societal parameters wherein a governance network is embedded like the economic structures, demographics, extra local regulation etc.

Hence if we want to analyze the democratic anchorage of a governance network we need to take this layered complexity and dynamic into account. Therefore I argue we need to map the actors and arenas of such a network within a particular context before we can start to explore the political representation and accountability mechanisms of such a governance network.

The local governance network configuration in Kortrijk
Let me introduce you very briefly to the empirical background of my research. The region of Kortrijk consists of thirteen municipalities that collaborate on extra-municipal issues. Some of this collaborative arrangements negotiate about strategic and complex issues in the region. These local governance network arenas position themselves between two institutional levels in Flanders: the municipal level and the provincial level. Hence they form an intermediary level of governance structures. The strategic and complex decision making in the region is mainly centered within the realm of the intermunicipal company for regional development (Leiedal), the Conference of Mayors and Regional Socioeconomic Consultation Committee (RESOC).

Most of the members of these governance arenas are local elected politicians, other members are representing corporatist interests or other governmental levels. Interestingly these three bodies are interwoven by intermediary actors who are either official members of these boards or are invited to participate as advisory member. These overlapping mandates are the result of understanding between some entrepreneurial politicians and administrators, who seem "to act like the spiders of their webs" (De Rynck, Temmerman et al. 2013) since they manage in part to organize their own circuits of interest mediation, representation and accountability.

The political culture of this governance network is one of consensus decision making. On the one hand this culture is influenced by a long tradition of corporatist policy-making in Belgium and in the region in particular. On the other hand it has been facilitated by a long tradition of Christian-Democratic party homogeneity in the region (until recently) (Block, Steyvers et al. 2010). Within this governance network setting the case study reconstructs three strategic and complex policy dossiers: the adoption of a regional windmill implementation strategy, the realization of an intermunicipal crematory and the creation of an economic-artistic urban development project in the city of Kortrijk. Through the reconstruction of these dossiers I want to explore how local political actors understand and play their role with regards to democratic anchorage.

The democratic anchorage of governance networks

Of course defining democracy is not an easy and uncontested task. However one can delimit the field of research to approaches formulated within the liberal tradition on democracy (Sørensen and Torfing 2005). Perspectives within this tradition share an interest in the balancing act between individual liberty and political equality within the realms of a territorially defined political community. Traditionally this perspective is highly skeptic about governance networks. Firstly, it is argued governance networks might undermine political equality through the bypassing of elected representatives. Secondly, they are considered a threat to individual liberty through the blurring boundary between state and society and between public and private. Lastly, they are regarded as undermining the territorial basis of a political community.

Nowadays, the democratic repertoire has been widened with so-called postliberal conceptions and governance networks are no longer straightforwardly labelled as undemocratic. Governance networks, seen from this perspective, allow to open up decision making circles to affected actors on a case-by-case basis. Moreover it is argued that governance networks potentially enhance political mobilization whereby more actors participate, discuss and deliberate policy issues. This way governance networks might respond to the fragmentation of society with tailor-made decision making. From this point of view the blurring of the traditional borderlines is not necessary seen as a threat but as a prerequisite to increase the democratic potential of such governance settings. Yet, also within this postliberal stance it is argued that the contribution of governance networks to democratic deliberation still depends upon their democratic anchorage and in particular upon the extent to which certain mechanism allow the reconciliation of governance networks with representative government (Sørensen and Torfing 2005; Barnett 2011; Torfing, Peters et al. 2012).

Local elected politicians are often at the crossroads of the latter fairways and given their unique position in the democratic polity they may be considered as key for subsequent anchorage. How local elected politicians provide linkage is key to whether governance as the fragmentation of governing power should be considered as undermining the influence of elected authorities on the political process or should be regarded as a

reorientation and readjustment of their capacity to govern in an increasingly complex environment (Hansen 2001; Aars and Fimreite 2005). Therefore 'making' the municipality 'present' and acting on its behalf is one of the crucial substantive aspects of the municipal representative in governance networks (Dovi 2014).

This brings this paper back to the question of the operationalization of representation and accountability.

Representation within governance networks

As Pitkin (2004) pointed out however we cannot simply assume the relationship between representation and democracy. The presence of a mandated politician in a governance network is not sufficient to call that governance network democratic. Therefore we need some active attachment of a governance network to the local democracies. Yet in political science there has been a long tradition of describing representation in terms of "standing for" rather than "acting for" (Rao 1998; Andeweg and Thomassen 2005). Formalistic accounts take the representation of interests as self-evident and merely analyse whether a representative legitimately holds his position (a question of formal authorization) and if a representative can be sanctioned or has been responsive (a question of accountability). Descriptive accounts assess the accuracy of resemblance between the representative and the represented. The focus is then on who representatives are and not on what they do (Mansbridge 2011). Both accounts of representation approach representation as static. The preferences of the represented are regarded as given and the relation between represented and representative is seen as unidirectional from the former to the latter.

More contemporary research frames representation as a dynamic process involving interactive relationships. With regards to the operationalization of representation I based my understanding for instance on Andeweg and Thomassen (2005). They propose a new typology of representation. Representation is according to them guided by a sense of direction and by a sense of timing. In representation *from below* representatives are expected to translate the views of the represented into policy. According to representation *from above* representatives instigate the presentation of policy towards the represented. When representation is performed *ex ante,* control precedes the representative act while when representation happens *ex post,* control follows upon it. Mansbridge (2003) makes a similar distinction between anticipatory and promissory modes of representation. While the latter mode is based on the selection of representatives the former mode conceives the possibility of sanction as constituting representation. According to Andeweg and Thomassen's ideal-typical model of representation, the subsequent modes of representation are authorization (*from above and ex ante*), delegation (*from below and ex ante*), accountability (*from above and ex post*) and responsiveness (*from below and ex post*) (Andeweg 2003; Andeweg and Thomassen 2005).

The remnants of the principal-agent approach

This typology of representation offers an interesting response to the common critique on the unidirectional focus of the standard principal-agent approach. Adding the sense of direction is interesting because it breaks with the traditional understanding of the nature of representation as being essentially bottom-up. Representation is then seen as a constantly varying repertoire covering both directions. Yet while the typology as a whole encompasses reciprocity each mode of representation remains unidirectional. Besides what counts for the sense of direction holds true for the operationalization in terms of timing, since here we also witness a one way approach. Moreover one can wonder if it makes sense to conceptualize an act of representation as solely backward oriented, a question I will return to further in this paper.

The remnants of the mandate-independence controversy

Another reflection I have on the typology is related to two particular modes of representation as described by it: authorization and responsiveness. The former regards the representative as someone with the authorization, given by the represented, to implement his manifesto. The latter views the representative as someone with the constant desire to please (or with fear for) the represented. In a way these modes mirror the trustee-delegate dichotomy as presented by the mandate-independence controversy. In this understanding the trustee type of representatives are endowed with the autonomous judgment to act in the interests of their constituency and the delegate type of representatives are restricted in their behavior by the clear instructions or mandate they got from their constituency (Andeweg and Thomassen 2005; Mansbridge 2011; Willems and Van Dooren 2012). Remarkably, when we take this conceptualization at its extreme, representatives are not any longer representing but merely judging autonomously in the trustee case or executing political affairs in unmediated ways in the delegate case. Does this understanding of representation not reflect formal, static, one-dimensional notions of representation that are at odds with representation as a dynamic process defined by interactive social relationships (Andeweg and Thomassen 2005; Urbinati and Warren 2008; Hendriks 2009; Mansbridge 2011)? Therefore one can wonder if it is more fruitful to regard representation simply in terms of delegation (*from below and ex ante*) and accountability (*from above ex post*).

Representation as delegation

However as pointed out before two fundamental characteristics of governance networks may challenge the representative relationship conceived as delegation. First, in a network context interests and preferences are usually not straightforward, predetermined and static but subject to a permanent process of construction (by representatives) and identification (by the represented). Second, networks thrive on negotiated decision making calling for an open mandate to respond to new challenges and opportunities that may alter interests and preferences through power-ridden forms of deliberation. In networks, representation is thus much more of a performative act to which the selection and instruction of representatives, the ability to develop an informed opinion on and to critically asses and differ on the representative performance

are crucial. Representatives tend to act with more discretion but in a reflexive manner, i.e. to the extent that they will try to anticipate and pre-empt on the possibility of ex-post critique. This comes closer to accountability (*from above and ex post*) as the primary mechanism of representation (Sørensen and Torfing 2003; Sørensen and Torfing 2005).

Representation as accountability

Yet to operationalize representation as accountability seems to be at odds with the very notion of representation as simply to "make present again" (Pitkin 2004; Dovi 2014). Accountability seems rather to be the prior condition to guarantee democratic representation than to be a representative act in itself. It seems the typology confuses a mechanism of control with a mechanism of voice. I wonder if it might be more helpful to operationalize both mechanisms separately since democratic anchorage is a matter of the well-functioning of both these mechanisms.

Representation as a mechanism of voice

Some scholars have been promoting the operationalization of representation as a matter of voice. For instance, Saward (2005) argues that representation is not a fact but rather a process that involves the making of representative claims by representatives. The represented people are but invested with meaning through the very process of representation. Represented interests are simply portrayals according to Saward (2005). "To speak for others is to construct portraits of the represented that bring selected character traits and the interests of the latter into some focus". Interestingly with regards to governance practices is Saward's claim that his view on representation does not have to be conceptualized through an electoral link. While electoral selection and sanction remains possible some representatives, like stakeholders, social workers, human rights advocates, etc. might claim their legitimacy from other sources than election. This alternative constituencies might be short-lived, non-territorial and spontaneously-formed. Yet they might be claimed by representatives in a political process. With regards to the elected politicians I study one can for instance wonder if they simply represent the municipality or rather represent the region, some political party or some other constituency.

Urbinati (2000) conceptualizes representation as acts of advocacy. She argues "an 'advocate' is not asked to be impartial like a judge, or to reason in solitude like a philosopher". Advocates have ties to the cause they represent but are not just defined by it. "Their job is not to apply the rule but to define how the facts fit or contradict the rule or to decide whether the existing rule conforms to principles that society shares or a 'good' government should adopt" (Urbinati 2000). For example a mandated politician might not try to present himself as a copy of the average citizen or councillor of his municipality but rather appeal to his skills as a defendant of the municipal ideals to convince his audience he is a respectable representative.

Disch (2011) emphasizes that representation is constitutive. The process of representation mobilizes *a people* to become *a political agent*. In her view interests and preferences are deliberatively formed. Also the represented can change their opinion

over time and she argues because sanction is retrospective representation becomes anticipatory. Hence representation is interactive and more continually reflexive than traditionally conceptualized. Besides a representative relationship is not performed in a void because different representatives and opinion makers are in competition with one another. So it is imaginable that a political representative changes his opinion and subsequent representative claims over time due to new circumstances or information.

All three scholars emphasize that representation is not the unmediated reflection of demands and interests. Representation is future oriented and a creative process. It is political and idealizing. It does not reproduce a state of affairs but produces effects. Hence the process of representation plays its own part in forming political groups and identities as well as in shaping societal interests and demands. This way representation as voice testifies with democratic deliberation but one can wonder how it relates to democratic anchorage.

Representation and democratic anchorage
The democratic anchorage model, from a postliberal perspective, balances the presence of representative claims from non-elective actors with a system claim that there is some formal line between the governance network and representative government. This line can be explicit through democratic delegation of political representatives and/or implicit through practices of metagovernance and monitoring by the local liberal representative governments. Saward (2005) argues that many network approaches make yet another claim. They stress that actors are "locked into" networks. Because actors are embedded in a network of mutually dependent relationships they are limited in how and about what they can govern. Disch (2011) argues when representative claims are enclosed by a system of interlocking reflexive institutions they might not be a threat to democratic legitimacy. This way "a ruling by one triggers a review by another". Hence mechanisms of voice require mechanism of control in order to claim democratic legitimacy. Therefore some form of accountability should be exercised in order to anchor governance networks to democracy (Papadopoulos 2007). Yet they see the link between both mechanisms as a dynamic movement. Maybe we can consider these mechanisms as two sides of the same coin that constantly flips during the process of decision making. Therefore I proceed this paper with a discussion on accountability.

Accountability in relation to governance networks
Accountability is one of those conceptual umbrellas that have the tendency to become a loaded buzzword, therefore I specify my understanding in line with Bovens (2007) as a social mechanism of relations. Based on his definition accountability can be considered as a relationship between an actor and a forum involving an obligation to explain and justify conduct (Bovens 2010). This relationship implies the need of the actor to provide information about his performance to the forum, the possibility of debate between actor and forum and the ability for the forum to pass judgement on the actor through

sanctions or rewards (Bovens 2007; Bovens, Schillemans et al. 2008). This definition helps to make a clear distinction with other concepts such as responsiveness or the mere communication of information since these concepts lack an element of judgement and/or deliberation (Bovens 2010).

The remnants of the principal-agent approach again
One can find similar discussions on the remnants of the principal-agent model in public administration theory on accountability as on representation in the political science literature. The model is criticized on the basis of four problem statements: its one-dimensional approach, its unidirectional focus, its hierarchical notion and its context independency.

The first problem statement argues against the notion that a single chain of delegation between principals and agents is mirrored by a corresponding single chain of accountability (Strøm 2000). However networks consist of many parallel and crisscrossing chains of control. Multiple interdependent actors are present in various governance arenas that negotiate and share decision making. Many of them have to explain or justify conduct to more than one account-holder (Mulgan 2003; Willems and Van Dooren 2012). This tendency has been accompanied by an evolution in accountability theory from the notion of "one person, one vote, one representative" to the notion of "one person, many interests, many voices, multiple votes, multiple representatives" (Willems 2009). Hence the concept of accountability itself becomes approached as a network of accountability relations. Examples are the notions of "360 degrees accountability", "extended accountability" and "aggregate accountability" among others (Mulgan 2003; Willems 2009). I think the understanding of accountability by Bovens can withstand this first problem statement since actors can be giving accounts to various forums. The nature of each forum can be political, legal, administrative, professional or social. Moreover both forums and actors can be individuals, public officials, organizations, boards or administrations etc. The basis for accountability regarding the actor can be corporate (an organization standing as one actor), hierarchical (one actor standing for all actors), collective (all actors standing as one) or individual (each actor standing for himself) (Bovens 2007).

A second critique on the principal-agent approach is directed to its one way conceptualization of relations. On the one hand power is solely regarded as in the hands of forums that have the ability to sanction actors. On the other hand the practice of accountability is in the hands of actors. However from a network perspective actors and forums are seen as interdependent in both ways. Actors have the power to construct representative claims while forums have the possibility to not only contest but also reframe the type of narrative that has been given. Hence accountability is dialectical in nature. To render an account is "to construct and present a narrative of past events and actions" (Black 2008). Yet the actor will follow some narrative logic that make sense to himself as well as to his audience. Moreover the story an actor decides to tell, or which it may be required to tell, might alter the behaviour of both the actor as well as the

forum to bring itself more into accord with the accountability narrative been told. Just as with representative claims, accountability claims might have a transformative effect and potentially build a new understanding about the objectives, means and ends of a decision making process (Black 2008). In line with this critique the actor-forum conceptualization regards accountability not simply as information giving by actors and rectification by forums. Also the presence of critical debate and policy dialogue is regarded as a crucial aspect of accountability (Bovens 2007; Bovens, Schillemans et al. 2008). The nature of the conduct can be about the general performance, particular decisions or compounded. The latter means giving an account about holding someone else to account (Mulgan 2003).

A third objection is directed on the hierarchical nature of relations in the principal – agent framework. In governance networks political actors are accountable to a number of forums which are not necessarily their democratic principal (Papadopoulos 2007). Moreover some actors in governance networks might be self-authorized and not elected representatives. Therefore accountability tends to become horizontal, i.e. towards other actors in the network rather than to remain vertical, i.e. towards the forum actors have initially been delegated by. Actors might for example feel obliged to render accounts to their negotiation partners. Indeed, both logics of consequences as logics of appropriateness can encourage accountability practices. Because actors are embedded in different policy games and arenas they are induced to anticipate each other's reactions (Papadopoulos 2007; Willems 2009). The actor-forum conceptualization makes a distinction between three natures of obligation in accountability relationships. In a vertical relation an actor feel compelled to give an account because of the formal hierarchical position of a forum. The nature of obligation is regarded as horizontal when the actor gives an account from a social commitment towards a forum. Lastly, an actor might also indirectly give an account to a forum. This relationship involves then a third party standing between the actor and the forum. The nature of the obligation is then regarded as diagonal (Bovens 2007).

Finally, principal-agent thinking has been criticized for making abstraction of the institutional context and political culture accountability arrangements are embedded in. The potential influence of political parties on accountability relations is for example not incorporated in this approach. While empirical studies have demonstrated the party control in representative democracies on delegated representatives. Parties employ extensive screening procedures to guarantee party cohesion. As a consequence it is argued that representative democracies deemphasizes ex post control, i.e. accountability mechanisms. Moreover party cohesion requires discipline thus parties try to pressure member politicians to follow the party line (Strøm 2000; Strøm 2003). Hence when we are confronted with a lack of vertical accountability we can wonder if it's the result of the characteristic of a governance networks or the result of a systemic problem regarding representative democracy. For instance Belgium is regarded as a true particracy. Political parties and party barons play a significant role both regarding the selection of personnel as towards the development of collaborative decision making

processes (Bovens 2007). Hence we might have to integrate political parties as particular forums in the actor-forum model as well as to incorporate it in our understanding of representation.

Accountability and democratic anchorage
According to Papadopoulos (2007) governance networks are democratically anchored as long as they are performed in the "shadow of democratic control". The knowledge that their actions might be under public scrutiny might have a disciplining effect on actors. The role of local elected politicians herein might be rather that of a "coastal patrol" than that of an "anchor", to borrow an alternative maritime metaphor from Hendriks (2008), since the shadow of democratic control does not require hands-on participation. Democratic control can also mean that politicians monitor the development of network decision making from a distance and only intervene when the waters get rough.

Yet there is a more profound normative argument to be made regarding the importance of accountability with regards to democratic anchorage. While governance networks might increase access to decision making they might also raise chances for unequal representation (Urbinati and Warren 2008). If we want to guarantee the liberal democratic ideal of political equality it seems impossible not to imagine a link to a democratic forum that has been elected through universal suffrage in a defined political space. Hence some institutional solution needs to be made to ensure the democratic legitimacy of governance practices (Hendriks 2009). Hereby political accountability can play its role as mechanism of control that balances the plurality of representative claims (Prezeworski, Stokes et al. 1999; Willems 2009). The compounded form of accountability can be a clever instrument with regards to the democratic anchorage of governance networks since compounded accountability is about controlling "the extent to which individual network members are accountable for exercising their accountability obligations" (Mulgan 2003).

To conclude: operationalizing representation and accountability in governance networks

At this point the question imposes itself what we can learn from this reflection regarding the operationalization of both representation and accountability in local governance networks. I argued in this paper that while both mechanisms in theory are obviously related they should be treated as separate. Since representative claims can be made without giving an account and accountability can be given without actively representing someone.

Regarding the operationalization of both representation and accountability mechanisms I argued they should adjust to the characteristics of governance networks. Many scholars, both in the political science literature as from public administration, have been

criticizing the dominance of principal-agent thinking in our conceptualization of representation and accountability relations. Yet it seems the remnants of this approach are still present in our conceptualizations of these relations.

To leave the principal-agent path regarding representation is to acknowledge that representatives not simply mirror but create multiple representative claims or portrayals of representatives. Thus representation is a dialectical process. When a representative claim is made with regards to a specific constituency, members of this constituency can reject, acknowledge or contest this claim. Yet also other actors can debate the validity of the claims made by an actor. Hence representative claims can be scrutinized through many incoherent accountability relations.

I argue political accountability is the minimum condition to ensure the democratic anchorage of governance networks. However democratic "coastal patrol" is maybe a more appropriate term since anchorage through accountability requires governance networks to be accountable to a political forum but not an active representative of the interests of that forum within a governance arena. While representation is forward-looking and idealizing, accountability is retrospective and scrutinizing. Yet also accountability is dialectical in nature since the rendering of accounts can reflect accountability narratives over time as well as shape it.

In this paper I mentioned several analytical units that can be used for the operationalization of decision making, representation and accountability.

According to the rounds model decision making processes in networks consists of actors, arenas, rounds and games. These elements and their relationships are embedded within an institutional milieu, political culture and structural context. The actor-forum approach to accountability seems to be flexible enough to withstand the critiques as formulated on the principal-agent model. In contrast to representation accountability is a very comprehensive concept since it consists of clear relationships between given actors and specified forums. Each relation holds the obligation to explain and justify conduct. I think it could be fruitful to develop the concept of representation in a similar way as relationships between representatives and constituencies. While representatives can be delegated by a constituency not all representative claims in governance networks are authorized this way.

With regards to the democratic anchorage of governance networks the question is not whether the whole society is represented or if all actors are accountable. To guarantee the democratic principle of political equality governance networks require minimally a shadow of democratic control provided by an active accountability link to a democratically elected representative forum.

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