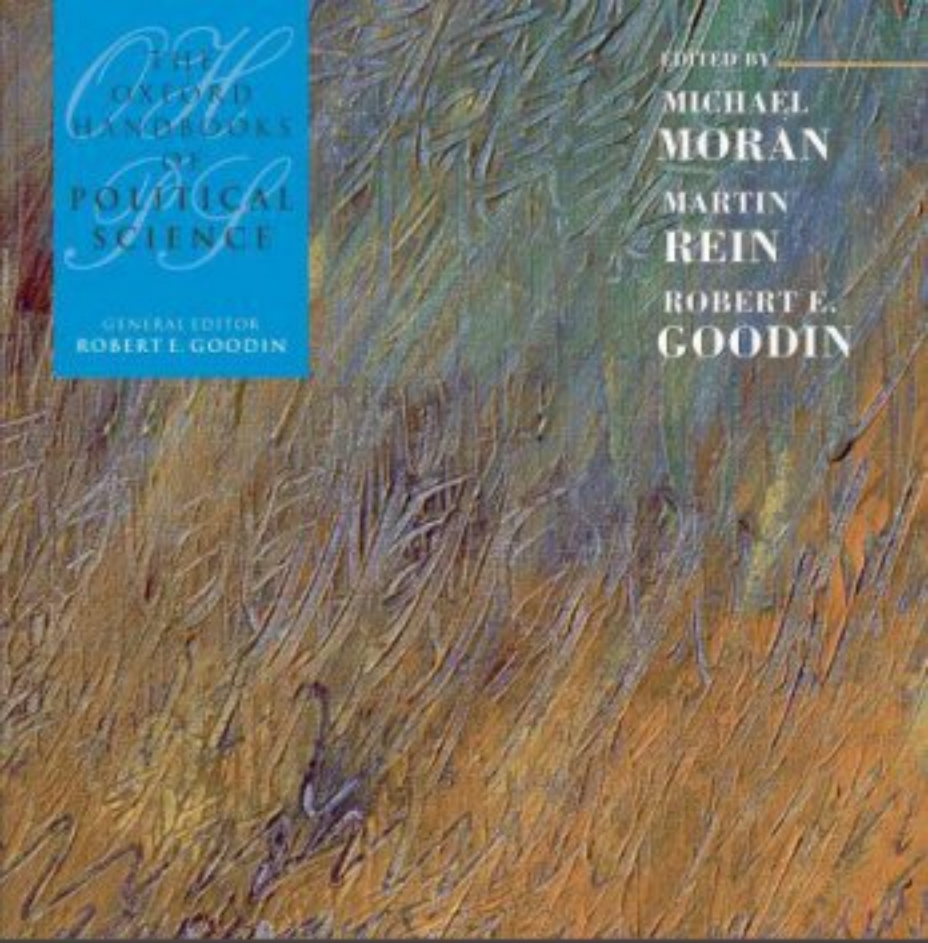

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government programs. Resources change over time, most commonly in response to changes external to the subsystem. Most distinctively, Sabatier distinguishes between core and secondary beliefs and argues that coalitions have a consensus on their policy core that is resistant to change. In sharp contrast, secondary aspects of the belief system can change rapidly (paraphrased from Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993, 25–34). Moreover, these beliefs are central to understanding the actions of policy makers who are not necessarily motivated by rational self-interest. However, as Parsons (1995, 201) succinctly points out, the model works well for the federal and fragmented government of America, but there is little evidence that it travels well.

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

Grappling with the same issues as the formation, evolution, transformation, and termination of policy networks, Hay and Richards's "strategic relational theory of networks" is a sophisticated variation on the dialectical theme. To begin with, they avoid the ambiguities of, and controversies surrounding the term "dialectical." They argue individuals seeking to realize certain objectives and outcomes make a strategic assessment of the context in which they find themselves. However, that context is not neutral. It too is strategically selective in the sense that it privileges certain strategies over others. Individuals learn from their actions and adjust their strategies. The context is changed by their actions, so individuals have to adjust to a different context. So a networking is "a practice—an accomplishment on the part of strategic actors . . . which takes place within a strategic (and strategically selective context) which is itself constantly evolving through the consequences (both intended and unintended) of strategic action" (Hay and Richards 2000, 14; see also Hay 2002).

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

Bevir and Rhodes (2003, ch. 4) argue for the decentered study of networks, for a shift of topos from institution to individual, and a focus on the social construction of policy networks through the ability of individuals to create meaning. Bang and Sørensen's (1999) story of the "Everyday Maker" provides an instructive example of a decentered account of networks. They interviewed twenty-five active citizens in the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen to see how they engaged with government. They identify the "Everyday Maker," who focuses on immediate and concrete policy problems at the lowest possible level. Thus, Grethe (a grass-roots activist) reflects that she has acquired the competence to act out various roles: contractor, board member, leader. There has been an explosion of "issue networks, policy communities, ad hoc policy projects, and user boards, including actors from 'within,' 'without,' 'above,' and 'below' traditional institutions of democratic government." So the task of the "Everyday Maker" is "to produce concrete outcomes" (Bang and Sørensen 1999, 332). Political activity has shifted from "formal organizing to more informal networking" (Bang and Sørensen 1999, 334). Politics is no longer about left and right but "dealing with concrete problems in the institutions around which . . . everyday life . . . is organized" (Bang and Sørensen 1999, 336). In short, they draw a picture of Nørrebro's networks through the eyes of its political activists, constructing the networks from the bottom up.

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

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

3.3 Managing the Institutional Void

If we live in a world of "polycentric networks of governance," then the task facing politicians, managers, and citizens is to manage "the institutional void," that is, to make and implement policy when there are no generally accepted rules and norms for conducting policy making (Hajer 2003, 175). Hajer's vivid metaphor may overstate the extent of change but it does dramatize the problems of managing the

network state. Four such problems recur: the mix of governing structures, the diffusion of accountability, enhancing coordination, and devising new tools.

Managing the Mix

In a world of policy networks where every service is a mix of bureaucracy, markets, and networks, we need to understand when these governing structures for allocating resources work. We need to be clear about what we mean when we call for effective service delivery because the criteria of effectiveness vary. For example, the competition that characterizes markets conflicts with the cooperation so characteristic of networks. Flynn et al. (1996, 136–7) argue that trust became important in the British National Health Service because of the difficulties in specifying contracts and participants' experience of assertive purchasers whose style "engenders or exacerbates suspicious attitudes and feelings of mutual distrust." So, market relations had "corrosive effects" on "professional networks which depend on cooperation, reciprocity and interdependence." I would belabor the obvious if I gave examples of bureaucratic failures. The apt conclusion is not that contracts or bureaucracies or networks fail, but that they all do (Jessop 2000). Not every day or every week or for every policy. The key is to understand the conditions under which each works and a core lesson of that analysis is, "it is the mix that matters." We need to know how to manage not only each governing structure but also the relationship between them.[10]

Diffuse Accountability

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

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

to be closed to public scrutiny, a species of private government. The brute fact is that multiple accountabilities weaken central control (Mulgan 2003, 225).[11]

Enhancing Coordination

Weakened accountability is not the only consequence of networks. The spread of networks also undermines coordination. Despite strong pressures for more coordination, the practice is "modest." It is "largely negative, based on persistent compartmentalisation, mutual avoidance and friction reduction between powerful bureaus or ministries;" "anchored at the lower levels of the state machine and organised by specific established networks;" "rarely strategic, so almost all attempts to create proactive strategic capacity for long-term planning . . . have failed;" and intermittent and selective in any one sector, improvised late in the policy process, politicized, issue oriented, and reactive (Wright and Hayward 2000, 33). And that it is before we introduce networks into the equation. Networks make the goal ever more elusive. As Peters (1998, 302) argues, "strong vertical linkages between social groups and public organizations makes effective coordination and horizontal linkages within government more difficult." Once agreement is reached in the network, "the latitude for negotiation by public organizations at the top of the network is limited." However, these remarks presume hierarchy is the most important or appropriate mechanism for coordination. Lindblom (1965) persuasively argued many years ago that indirect coordination or mutual adjustment was messy but effective. The San Francisco Bay Area public transit system is a multiorganizational system (or network) and Chisholm (1989, 195) shows that only some coordination can take place by central direction and so "personal trust developed through informal relationships acts a lubricant for mutual adjustment." In sum, coordination is the holy grail of modern government, ever sought, but always just beyond reach, and networks bring central coordination no nearer. However, they do provide their own messy, informal, decentralized version.

Devising New Tools

The mainstream literature (for example Salamon 2002) encourages a tool view of how to manage networks; if learning the skills of indirect management is itself a major challenge, it is not the only one confronting would-be network managers. The epistemological debate extends to the question of how to manage networks. An interpretative approach encourages us to replace the toolbox approach with storytelling. Although the label varies—the argumentative turn, narratives—there is now a growing literature on storytelling as a way of managing the public sector.[12] Van Eeten, van Twist, and Kalders (1996) make the important point that this latest

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

[12] See Bevir, Rhodes, and Weller 2003; Hummel 1991; Rein 1976; van Eeten, van Twist, and Kalders 1996; Weick 1995.

intellectual fashion has its feet firmly on the ground because managers use stories not only to gain and pass on information and to inspire involvement, but also as the repository of the organization's institutional memory. In sum, as Hummel (1991, 103–4) argues, "managers communicate first and foremost through stories." He asks, "how could it be otherwise?" When managers confront a problem, their people tell them what is going on. So, managers "could do worse than hone their skills in story-telling and story-validating." Management is just as much about interpretation as rational calculation.

4. Conclusions

In the 1970s, debate raged about the future of public policy making and policy analysis. Was it a distinctive field of study or just good old public administration under a new and fashionable label? It staked a claim to be a distinct field of study. Now we no longer discuss the question. Policy analysis is established. In this sense, there is no longer a debate about the future of policy networks. The story of policy networks follows the same trajectory as public policy making. The subject is here to stay—a standard topic in any public policy-making textbook (Parsons 1995) or textbooks on British government (Richards and Smith 2002).

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

The story of policy networks is a story of a success. The "Young Turks" won their elevation to the professorial peerage, ran out of steam, and moved on. A flood of doctorates and case studies followed. It is no longer an innovative idea but a commonplace notion in almost every nook and cranny of both political science texts and British government textbooks in particular. It is ripe for challenge. Controversies in policy network analysis now parallel controversies in political science, whether they are about how to explain political change or the uses of

ethnographic methods. Of course, we also respond to debates and problems in the "real" world. Much of the literature reviewed in this chapter sees networks as an effective way of managing complex problems in health and education. However, Al Qaeda and the war on terror have focused attention on "dark networks" (Raab and Milward 2003), a term that also encompasses drug smuggling, the arms trade, and failed states. Fieldwork may not be an option but the problems of policing dark networks cannot be ignored. Policy network analysis has become one more locus for the endless debates about how we know what we know in the social sciences. I doubt the founders could have hoped for more. I am sure their expectations were less.

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