Public Policy Network in Governance: German School's Argumentative Stance

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Abstract

The study of network policy presents a significant challenge in academic literature. This is due to the diverse conceptual frameworks employed, encompassing disparate concepts, methodologies, analytical tools, and theoretical underpinnings. This lack of consensus extends to fundamental aspects of network policy, necessitating a critical examination of the knowledge base through the lens of scholars. This article aims to synthesize insights from academic literature, with a particular focus on the German governance school of thought in contrast to the dominant Anglo-Saxon school of thought. While Anglo-Saxon scholars prioritize the traditional framework of state-private sector interactions, the German governance school of thought offers a contrasting perspective that emphasizes the governance dimension of network policy. This leads to the identification of distinct patterns, such as command-and-control models and market-oriented models, within network policy analysis. However, the article also raises objections, suggesting that the content of network policies proposed by the German-style school of thought transcends mere analytical tools, diverging from the emphasis of their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

Introduction:

The term "network" is currently regarded in a general sense. It is not only widely recognized in the fields of public administration and political science. Other fields of education are also well known. Microbiologists use the term network to describe the environment of living organisms as network systems, while computer engineers use the term network in terms of neuronal networks to study the management and self-learning capabilities of computer systems. In the contemporary social sciences, the study of networks is considered a new form of social organization, both in sociology and technology (Callon, 1986), in the economics of industrial networks and technological networks (Katz & Shapiro, 1985), in business

administration (Thorelli, 1986) As far as complicated designs go, it appears that the word "network" is practically becoming the new paradigm. (Kenis and Schneider, 1991, p. 25)

However, the concepts of networks used are varied in both the same and different disciplines, but they all have a point of mutual understanding that "a network is a set of certain interrelationships without hierarchical characteristics and has a multi-acting interdependent nature in which they have mutual interests and exchange resources between them." Moreover, in order to make the most of this shared resource, "cooperation" is the best way to achieve such mutual benefits. As mentioned, it can be considered the most basic meaning of the network on which the term "policy network" is based.

Nevertheless, when it comes to "policy network concepts," it doesn't seem easy to find the perfect balance of common meaning. Often, vague, unclear, and differing explanations are given, and it seems that the concept of policy network will be difficult to achieve common clarity. Some scholars see policy networks as metaphors in order to illustrate the fact that policymaking involves a large and diverse number of actors. Another group of scholars considers policy networks to be useful analytical tools that help point out interactions between actors in a particular policy sector. While others view policy networks as tools to help analyze social structures, it is worth noting that most scholars are not interested in debating the analytical toolbox as to whether this is the core of the concept of policy networks. Only secondary scholars are interested in studying, exchanging ideas, and debating such issues. The German network of policy thinkers is classified as this secondary current. Incidentally, this article aims to present the concepts and synthesis of the different content of policy networks. It focuses on the German governance school of thought in the sense that it is a new governance, which is an alternative to the chain of command and market models. (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, p. 53) It also has content that goes far beyond being just an analytical toolbox.

Two Schools Clash: Policy Networks as New Governance:

Currently, the concept of policy networks in academic textbooks is so diverse that it seems difficult to create a unified understanding of policy networks. It's not just about understanding the concept. Even in the matter of metaphors. Methods of study, analysis tools, and even the appropriateness of the theory itself have not yet reached a consensus on such matters. Some scholars consider policy networks as independent variables, while others consider them as dependent variables as a result of the interaction of diverse actors (Kenis & Knoke, 2002). The dominant viewpoint in this context is the Anglo-Saxon thought, which focuses on policy networks as a type of interest intermediation typology, stressing that the term is general and can be used to describe a wide range of public-private actor

relationships. While the alternative school of thought that will be presented in this article are German thought that study policy networks as a specific form of governance, it is noteworthy that the initial kind of research, known as the "interest intermediation school," is accorded precedence in policy network textbooks in both the United States and the United Kingdom. The former, which is linked to the German "governance school," highlights non-hierarchical cooperation, whereas the latter school also addresses the essence of the disagreement (Compston, 2009, pp. 7-8).

Interest Intermediation School

Research on the relationship between the state and social interest groups or interest intermediations of the Anglo-Saxon interest intermediation school can be said to have been studied on this subject for a long time. The study focuses on the various forms of public-private relations in a generic term at the macro level (Kavanagh et al., 2006, p. 426). The pluralistic studies have faced challenges from a new method known as corporatism (Schmitter & Lehmbruch, 1979). In subsequent eras, better than the two subjects that were originally based. New models have emerged such as pressure pluralism, state corporatism, societal corporatism, group subgovernment, corporate pluralism, iron triangles, clientelism, and meso corporatism (Jordan & Schubert, 1992).

However, newly developed subjects belonging to the aforementioned Anglo-Saxon think group are still problematic because they are often the same subject describing different phenomena, or they are different but refer to phenomena in the same way. It often leads to confusion and misunderstanding in describing the relationship between public and private actors. Some Anglo-Saxon scholars reject the traditional "bipolar opposite" framework for understanding the relationship between the social state and pluralism. They advocate for a new, network-based approach that better explains the diverse patterns of interaction between public and private actors. This network approach, they argue, offers an alternative to both non-pluralistic and partisan-state models (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992a, p. 4; Jordan & Schubert, 1992; Waarden, 1992).

Within the Anglo-Saxon scholarly discourse on network studies, a common understanding emerges concerning the key features of policy networks. These networks are characterized by interdependent power relationships between public and private actors, including interest groups and pressure groups, facilitated by resource exchange. However, the specifics of these characteristics vary depending on the criteria employed to differentiate network types.

For instance, Atkinson and Coleman (1989) propose a six-category network typology based on two dimensions: (1) state structure (independent vs. centralized power), (2) resource mobilization capacity, (3) policy scope (sector-specific vs. cross-sectoral),

and (4) participation threshold (restricted vs. open). Alternatively, Frans Van Varden (1992, pp. 33-38) utilizes seven criteria: actor characteristics, functional aspects, network structure, institutional settings, regulatory frameworks, power dynamics, and the strategic behavior of actors. These criteria serve to distinguish networks based on factors such as membership size and internal resource distribution.

Rhodes' network classification is based on Benson's (1982, p. 148) characterization of a policy network as a" complex and interconnected grouping of organizations dependent on resources." This definition emphasizes the intricate web of relationships and resource dependence that underpins these networks.

Table 1
Policy communities and policy networks: the Rhodes model.

Type of network	Characteristic of networks
Policy community/ Territorial community	High levels of membership restriction, vertical dependency, stability, and minimal horizontal articulation
Professional network	Stability, highly limited membership, vertical interdependence, restricted horizontal articulation, and profession-serving interest
Intergovernmental network	Limited membership, limited vertical interdependence, extensive horizontal articulation
Producer network	Fluctuating membership, limited vertical interdependence, serves interest of producer
Issue network	Unstable, large number of members, limited vertical interdependence

Source: Rhodes & Marsh, 1992b, p. 14; Rhodes, 1997, p. 38

Among all the aforementioned academic works on the issue of relations between states and social interest groups or policy actors at the intermediate level of the Anglo-Saxon scholars. Only Rhodes' study used a policy network model to describe the interrelation of actors at the government level. Rhodes was the only Anglo-Saxon scholar to propose the concept of policy networks as governance and the same ideas that the German school of thought presented on the concept of policy networks as a new form of governance. (Compston, 2009, p. 8)

However, in principle, the classification of all of the aforementioned networks of this Anglo-Saxon think

tank. It can be broadly summarized into two types (Börzel, 1998, pp. 257-258): (1) heterogeneous and (2) homogenous. In other words, actors relate to differences in interests and resources. Interests and resources create a state of interdependence of actors by linking them together in a policy network, and those actors interact with each other in exchange of resources. While not many studies are interested in studying networks with the same properties. This behavior will have the same or similar resources and benefits. These include professional networks, epistemic communities, principled issue networks (Burkey & Mattli, 1993).

In short, the concept of a policy network that emphasizes relations between states and interest groups at the intermediate level has evolved quite a long time since the early stages of research. This type of policy network is generally used as an "analytical tool", and most studies of Anglo-Saxon policy networks are aimed at this aspect to become the main tradition known as the Anglo-Saxon interest intermediation school.

German Governance School

The German governance school of thought is a think tank that focuses on the study of policy networks as a specific form of governance. (Rhodes, 2006, pp. 427-430; Marsh & Smith, 2000). In other words, today there is a single Anglo-Saxon scholar of Rhodes who aims to describe policy networks as a form of governance as the German school of thought (Compston, 2009, p. 8). German scholars have criticized it for focusing only on structural relationships, which focus on the relationship between political actors and policymaking, which is merely a toolbox for analysis. In fact, the study of policy networks goes far beyond just using policy networks as a toolbox. Scholars in the German think tank have further argued that it is not possible to adequately understand the behavior of any actor as a product of the interrelation of that actor in the network. To put it simply, this group of scholars proposes to elevate the unit of analysis from an individual actor to a set of interrelated relationships of organizational actor networks (Kenis & Schneider, 1991, p. 44).

The German governance school of thought also suggested that the Anglo-Saxon thinker often focused on context. Factors and interactions of actors in certain structures and processes lead to macro-policy cooperation. Meanwhile, the German camp argued that the study of policy networks is a specific form of governance. This particular model is in modern political systems where policy decision-making systems are functional differentiation, while environmental conditions are uncertainty, complexity, dynamic, diversity, and there is overlap in functions of various sectors at all levels, both sub-social and international. This led to the emergence of the concept of policy networks as a new form of governance with characteristics that are very

different from the two traditional forms of governance: (1) the bureaucratic chain of command and (2) particularly during the Thatcher era in the UK, primarily dominated the 1980s. It can be said that the core of the German school's policy network concept is mutual trust. This trust acts as a key mechanism for network coordination, while the command-and-control model relies on commands and the market model emphasizes price competition. (Frances et al., 1991, p. 15; Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, pp. 55-56).

In light of the aforementioned perspective, the definition of "a spiderweb network in which relationships progress, where such relationships can mobilize and extract scattered resources through harmonious collaboration towards joint policy solutions" (Kenis & Schneider, 1991, p. 36) provides the best understanding of the concept of policy networks as a new form of governance.

Policy networks as a specific form of governance are evidenced by the work of German policy scholars such as Renate Mayntz, Fritz Scharpf, Patrick Kenis Volker, Schneider and Edgar Grande, often known as the Max Planck school (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, pp. 53-54). Explain that a policy network is characterized by an aggregate of all actors involved in policy making and policy implementation. The actors are unique in that they interact informally between public and private actors based on mutual trust. This kind of policy network reflects that there has been a shift in relations between states and societies and that unlike Anglo-Saxon thinkers, there can no longer be a clear rigid separation between states and societies. In this sense, policy is not born from the center of power.

However, processes connected to the pluralistic nature of organizations in the public and private sectors result in policy. And for that reason, it clarifies the reason. Thus, the idea of a policy network as presented here is not a paradigmatic example of the novel analytical instrument that Anglo-Saxon scholars want to integrate into their own paradigm. Still, the Max Planck institute's policy network notion. As Anglo-Saxon intellectuals frequently point out, it has a deeper and more significant subject matter than simply being a toolbox. Another indication of a genuine shift in the

composition of the political regime is the policy network concept put forth by the German think tank (Börzel, 1998, p. 260).

Despite being presented as a novel governance model, the concept of policy networks lacks a clear theoretical foundation. Its primary purpose is not to establish a comprehensive theory, but rather to analyze specific governance situations. Developed by Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharp in 1995, the "actor-centered institutionalism" model incorporates elements from various other theories, including game theory, exchange theory, and resource dependency theory (Kenis & Schneider, 1991). However, this model faces limitations in terms of its resistance to change, its lack of openness to democratic control, and its tendency to function effectively only within specific contexts. These limitations raise concerns regarding the legitimacy of policy networks (Börzel, 1998, p. 263).

The most important part of the concept of policy networks as a new form of governance of the German school of thought is perhaps the most easily considered in terms of evolution. In other words, the concept of policy networks as a new form of governance is the result of an increase in complexity. The policy environment itself is very dynamic. The actors are diverse as well. This creates a strong need for interdependence between public and private actors. Because there are shared resources that need to be used by those resources tend to increase. Make in a sense the original model (chain of command and market model). And on the other hand, a new pattern has emerged. In terms of adaptation of the old model, the market model has adjusted itself by pressuring the state to reduce regulations. There is a transformation of public activities into private ones. However, this market model itself has the potential to face a situation of market system failure as well. While chain-of-command patterns may be adaptable in terms of increasing the efficiency of chain-of-command cooperation, they are not independent and remain subject to rules and orders. Meanwhile, a new model has emerged as a policy network of governance, which is characterized by non-hierarchical coordination and is a model proposed by the German governance school of thought that seems to be in line with the current situation (see Figure 1 and Table 2).

Figure 1
The evolution of policy networks as a new form of governance
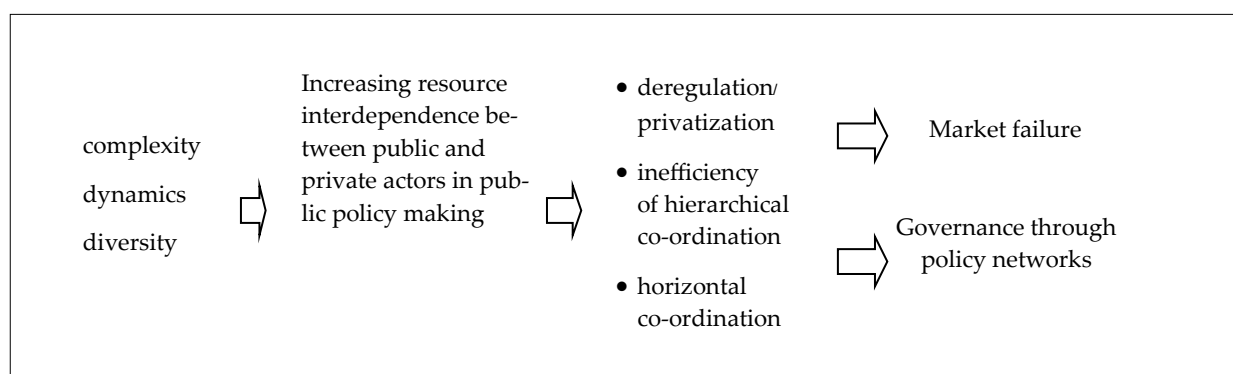
Source: Börzel, 1998, p. 264

Table 2
Hierarchies, markets and networks

Main characteristics	Tradition of Governance		Network policy as a new model of governance
	Hierarchies	**Markets**	**Networks**
Basic relationships	Employment relationship	Contract and property rights	Resource exchange
Degree of dependence	Dependent	Independent	Interdependence
Medium of exchange	Authority	Prices	Trust
Means of conflict resolution and co-ordination	Rules and commands	Haggling and the courts	Diplomacy
culture	Subordination	Competition	Reciprocity

Source: Bevir & Rhodes, 2003, p. 55.

Thailand as a Case Study:

The traditional governance models, characterized by hierarchical structures and market-driven interactions, are increasingly acknowledged as inadequate for addressing the complexities of the modern policy landscape. The policy environment is becoming more complex and interconnected, including a diverse range of participants. Due to the complexity of the situation, it is crucial to select a governance structure that is flexible and encourages cooperation. Policy networks have arisen in response to this demand. They may be described as long-lasting groupings of people, including both government and non-government organizations, that regularly interact to address common issues together. These networks demonstrate interdependence, the sharing of resources, and collaboration without a hierarchical structure.

The case of Thailand

Thailand is an interesting case study for examining the concept of policy networks. The country has a long history of centralized governance, with a strong emphasis on hierarchy and bureaucratic control of the elites (Riggs, 1966; Poocharoen & Boossabong, 2023). However, in recent decades, Thailand has also witnessed a growing role for non-state actors in policymaking. This includes businesses, civil society organizations, and international institutions. (Ungsuchaval & Ariya-sirichot, 2023, pp. 230-247)

The rise of policy networks in Thailand can be attributed to a number of factors, including:

The increasing complexity of policy challenges: Thailand faces a range of complex policy challenges, such as climate change, economic inequality, and social conflict. These challenges cannot be effectively addressed through traditional top-down approaches.

The need for greater participation and legitimacy: The Thai public has become increasingly vocal in demanding a greater say in policymaking. Policy networks can provide a platform for more inclusive and participatory governance.

The limitations of the state: The Thai state has limited resources and capacity to address all policy challenges on its own. Policy networks can help to leverage the resources and expertise of non-state actors.

There are at least two examples of policy networks in Thailand, including:

The first, the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), is a government agency that brings together public, private, and civil society actors to develop and implement Thailand's national development plans (Ubonloet, 2020).

The National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) serves as a fascinating example of the concepts discussed earlier. It embodies the network policy, governance, and actor-centered institutionalism approach championed by the Max-Planck School. Acting as a key node in a vast network, NESDC brings together diverse stakeholders: government agencies, businesses, and civil society groups. Through extensive consultations and collaborative planning, they craft Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans (NESDP) – the guiding frameworks for the nation's development journey. (Santhitiwanich, 2023, p. 30)

This network approach fosters inclusivity and leverages diverse expertise. However, navigating conflicting interests, ensuring equitable participation, and achieving sustainable development goals remain ongoing challenges. Understanding the interplay of formal institutions like the NESDP with informal power dynamics becomes crucial for effective policy implementation.

By analyzing specific policies or projects spearheaded by NESDC, we can delve deeper into these dynamics. Whether focusing on regional disparities, environmental initiatives, or inclusive growth strategies, exploring NESDC through this lens unveils valuable insights into Thailand's development landscape and the intricacies of network governance.

This condensed explanation merges the strengths of both previous responses, providing a clear and concise overview of NESDC while maintaining the key points about network policy, governance, and actor-centered institutionalism.

The second, the Mekong River Commission is an intergovernmental organization that coordinates water resource management in the Mekong River basin. The commission includes representatives from Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, and China.

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) embodies the intricate dance of network policy, governance, and actor-centered institutionalism across international borders. Spanning six nations – Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, and China – this intergovernmental organization orchestrates the critical task of managing the Mekong River's water resources. (Campbell, 2017)

Examining the MRC through this lens illuminates the complexities of transboundary water governance. It reveals the delicate interplay between national priorities, regional collaboration, and the need for sustainable water management for millions who depend on the Mekong River. (Offerdal, 2019; Campbell, 2017, pp. 724-740)

By delving deeper into specific projects and challenges faced by the MRC, we gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of this network approach. Analyzing how they navigate competing interests, manage data sharing, and address environmental concerns can illuminate the future of water cooperation in the Mekong basin and inform similar international endeavors.

Challenges and Opportunities

While policy networks offer a promising approach to governance in Thailand, they also face a number of challenges. These include:

The lack of clear legal frameworks: There is a lack of clear legal frameworks governing the operation of policy networks in Thailand. This can lead to uncertainty and ambiguity about the roles and responsibilities of different actors.

The risk of capture by powerful interests: There is a risk that policy networks can be captured by powerful interests, such as businesses or government agencies. This can lead to policies that are not in the best interests of the public.

The need for capacity building: Many actors in Thailand lack the capacity to effectively participate in policy networks. This includes a need for training in negotiation, communication, and conflict resolution.

Despite these challenges, policy networks offer a valuable tool for addressing complex policy challenges in Thailand. By promoting collaboration, participation, and knowledge sharing, policy networks can help to develop more effective and legitimate policies.

Public Policy Network's Camp Differences:

In light of the foregoing analysis, we can discern substantial differences between the Anglo-Saxon and German schools of public policy thought, as detailed below.

1. The German school of thought emphasizes the governance dimension of network policy, while the Anglo-Saxon school of thought prioritizes the traditional framework of state-private sector interactions.

2. The German school of thought proposes the concept of policy networks as a specific form of governance, while the Anglo-Saxon school of thought views policy networks as a generic term that can be applied to all kinds of public-private actor relationships.

3. The German school of thought argues that the study of policy networks goes beyond just using policy networks as a toolbox, while the Anglo-Saxon school of thought focuses on using policy networks as an analytical tool.

4. The German school of thought proposes to elevate the unit of analysis from an individual actor to a set of interrelated relationships of organizational actor networks, while the Anglo-Saxon school of thought focuses on the power-interdependent relationship between the public and private sectors.

As a whole, the Anglo-Saxon school of thinking adopts a more general approach to network policy analysis, whereas the German school of thought provides a more detailed and focused viewpoint.

Moreover, the German school of thought's emphasis on governance profoundly impacts the methodology of network policy analysis, as outlined below.

1. Specific Focus: The German school of thought focuses on studying policy networks as a specific form of governance, highlighting the unique characteristics and dynamics of these networks within the governance framework.

2. Organizational Relationships: It proposes to elevate the unit of analysis from an individual actor to a set of interrelated relationships of organizational

actor networks, emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of actors within the governance structure.

3. Beyond Analytical Tool: The German school argues that the study of policy networks goes beyond just using policy networks as a toolbox, indicating a deeper and more comprehensive approach to understanding the complexities of governance and policy implementation.

4. Non-Hierarchical Coordination: The German school emphasizes non-hierarchical coordination within policy networks, suggesting a departure from traditional hierarchical models of governance and highlighting the importance of collaborative and cooperative relationships among actors.

Ultimately, the German school of thought's emphasis on governance enriches network policy analysis by fostering a more nuanced understanding of the intricate organizational dynamics and administrative processes within policy networks.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The policy network landscape exhibits a diverse array of types, with this study exploring the knowledge status division based on different schools of thought in policy network analysis. Two primary perspectives emerge: the mainstream and the alternative school. The Anglo-Saxon approach adopts a toolbox strategy, emphasizing broad terms applicable to public-private actor relationships at a macro level. In contrast, the German governance school views policy networks as transcending mere analytical tools, advocating for their recognition as a distinct form of governance separate from traditional hierarchical and market models. This model is particularly relevant in contemporary political systems characterized by functionally differentiated policy decision-making structures, where unique actors engage in informal interactions across public-private spheres, fostering trust and collaborative approaches devoid of hierarchy amidst an environment of uncertainty, complexity, and dynamism.

This article has provided an in-depth exploration of public policy networks in governance, specifically contrasting the perspectives of the German School with the dominant Anglo-Saxon school of thought. By synthesizing insights from academic literature and critically analyzing diverse conceptual frameworks, this study has illuminated the nuanced dynamics of policy networks and their implications for governance structures. Future research in this area should continue to investigate the evolving landscape of policy networks, examining the interplay between public and private actors, the influence of governance models, and the efficacy of network-based policy approaches. Furthermore, scholars are encouraged to conduct in-depth case studies and empirical research to validate theoretical frameworks and enhance the practical significance of policy network analysis. By offering a fresh perspective on the governance dimension of policy networks and challenging traditional analytical models, this article contributes to existing knowledge, enriching the discourse on public policy networks and paving the way for further research and debate in the field of governance studies. Embracing the complexities of network policy analysis is crucial for advancing our understanding of governance practices and facilitating informed decision-making in the ever-evolving policy landscape.

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