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Institutions and Policy Networks in Europe

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter reviews the European literature on institutions and policy networks. Institutions provide actors with opportunities and constraints for negotiation and cooperation and thus influence the structure of policy networks. The chapter first presents studies on the influence of country- and sector-level institutions on the structure of policy networks. The respective literature deals with the influence of consensual democracy versus majoritarian democracy, corporatist systems of interest intermediation, multiple levels of governance, degrees of European Union integration, processes of liberalization and democratization, and policy-process-specific venues on policy networks. The chapter then discusses the positions and roles of state actors in policy networks. Due to their formal decision-making power, state actors are either networking targets or play a key role in terms of network integration, brokerage, or network management. The review concludes with a short discussion of commonalities and directions for future research.

Keywords: institutions, policy networks, Europe, majoritarian democracy, consensus democracy, corporatism, European Union integration, liberalization, democratization, state actors

Introduction

Institutions influence the structure of policy networks (Lubell et al., 2012), as they provide actors with opportunities and constraints for negotiation and cooperation (Ostrom, 1990, 2005). Policy networks are a specific subtype of political networks. They describe the networks of (mostly collective) actors dealing with the production or implementation of public policies. Nodes of such networks are interest groups, political parties, administrative units, experts, and other actors involved in policy processes.

These actors are typically linked by ties of cooperation, information exchange, or conflict. The study of policy networks allows us to understand the production of policy outcomes.

This chapter reviews the European literature on the relationships among institutional contexts, institutional power, and policy networks. Given the more than fifty independent countries in Europe, policy networks there evolve within many different institutional settings, some of which change over time. Changes of institutional contexts are mostly due to the transformation of state structures in Eastern European countries, as well as the process of European integration. This is not to say that institutional differences and developments are always taken into account explicitly in studies of European policy networks, or that all relevant studies compare policy networks in different institutional settings. Actually, quite the contrary is true: most European studies on political networks focus on one country and are not comparative by design (for exceptions, see, e.g., Bressers et al., 1996; John and Cole, 1998, 2000; Kriesi et al., 2006; Moschitz and Stolze, 2009; Braun, 2012). Also, the relationship between institutions and networks is obviously not specific to Europe. However, given the high diversity and evolution, an institutional focus is helpful when discussing European policy networks.

More specifically, this chapter is structured along two dimensions. A first part discusses the institutional context of a country or a policy sector. On the country level, majoritarian or consensual political systems, the system of interest intermediation, the type of multilevel governance, and the level of integration in the European Union (EU) are expected to influence policy networks. As institutional conditions often vary between policy sectors, I further discuss sectoral context conditions, such as liberalization processes or the opportunity structures provided by institutional venues such as working groups and committees for the creation of policy networks. A second part of this chapter discusses the influence of institutional power on policy networks. Taking a micro-level perspective, state actors (including executives and the administration), as opposed to nonstate actors such as interest groups, political parties, or think tanks, have an institutionalized influence on and a formal role in policy processes. This again is especially crucial in a European context, as the very role of state actors differs between countries.

A few caveats apply. First, the chapter focuses on the influence of institutions on policy networks, but is unable to take into account further elements of the complex, diverse, and evolving literature on different types of political networks in Europe. For example, it explicitly excludes networks among individuals, related to protest movements (Baldassari and Diani, 2007), which is dealt with in the chapter in this book on social movements and networks, or legislative networks among members of parliament (Fowler, 2006; Kirkland and Gross, 2012; Ringe et al., 2013), which is scarce for European countries, and is dealt with in the chapter in this book on legislative networks. Furthermore, a vibrant part of

the European literature on policy networks deals with the EU (Börzel and Heard-Lauréote, 2009; Henning, 2009). This literature is dealt with in the chapter in this book on networks and the EU. In addition, studies dealing with transnational or cross-border networks (e.g., Kern and Bulkeley, 2009; Svensson, 2015) are explicitly excluded from the discussion, given their international dimension. Second, theoretical and conceptual discussions on policy networks are important and manifold in the European literature on policy networks. These are often related to different intellectual traditions in different countries, most prominently in Germany and the United Kingdom. The respective literature includes the influential idea that networks should be seen as an alternative to, or a hybrid between, forms of social organization along markets or hierarchies, wherein negotiation and exchange predominate (Powell, 1990; Williamson, 1991; Mayntz, 1993). Furthermore, and relatedly, important conceptual discussions include the one between the formal or heuristic use of the network concept (Dowding, 1995; Marsh and Smith, 2000; Dowding, 2001; Christopoulos, 2008), or between the network governance and the policy network analysis schools (Fawcett and Daughbjerg, 2012). Third, the direction of causality between institutions and policy networks does not exclusively lead from the former to the latter. Networks have also been described as being themselves institutions that allow actors to solve coordination problems (Blom-Hansen, 1997; Ansell, 2006; Sandström and Carlsson, 2008). Even more important, informal networks might give rise to formal institutions (see, e.g., the chapter in this book on networks and the EU), actors might rely on network contacts to construct institutions, or networks can affect the (institutional) context (see the “dialectical approach,” e.g., Marsh and Smith, 2000; Toke and Marsh, 2003). I do not take up these discussions here, but refer to the existing discussions on the distinctive ways of using the network concept (Kenis and Schneider, 1991; Rhodes and Marsh, 1992; Börzel, 1998; Marsh, 1998; Pappi and Henning, 1998; Adam and Kriesi, 2007; Börzel, 2011).

The goal of this chapter is to review the literature on how institutions influence policy networks in Europe. Whenever possible and relevant, I mention the types of nodes and ties that define the respective network, as well as the means of data gathering. The review focuses on more recent (after 2000, with some exceptions) journal publications (with some exceptions). While it is by no means exhaustive and not based on a systematic procedure for selecting pieces of literature, I believe it includes the most relevant, recent publications related to institutions and policy networks in Europe and provides an overview of substantive issues and methodological and theoretical approaches related to the study of policy networks in Europe.

Institutional Context and Policy Networks in Europe

This first section discusses the influence of the country- or sector-level institutional context on the structure of policy networks. The respective literature is based on the argument that given types of institutional structures provide actors with opportunities to form given types of networks. More specifically, this section discusses majoritarian and consensual political systems, systems of interest intermediation, multilevel governance and European integration, democratic transition processes, liberalization processes, and venues of policy processes. Some of these influence factors are rather constant, while others change over time and across policy sectors within countries.

Majoritarian versus Consensual Systems

On the most general level of different types of democracies (Lijphart, 1999), and with a broad cross-country comparative perspective, Adam and Kriesi (2007; Kriesi et al., 2006) argue that the national institutional structure influences the structure of the respective policy networks (for an early, similar argument, see also Atkinson and Coleman, 1989). The authors expect consensual democracies with power-sharing institutions, such as Switzerland or Germany, to produce policy networks with fragmented power and cooperative interactions between actors. By contrast, majoritarian democracies such as France or the United Kingdom should have policy networks with a concentration of power in the hands of a few actors, as well as rather conflictive relations between actors. The comparison of policy networks in three policy sectors (agriculture, EU integration, and immigration) in Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands shows that the empirical observations mostly correspond to the expected patterns. The major exception is British policy networks, which are quite fragmented and resemble more the networks of consensus democracies than of other majoritarian democracies (Kriesi et al., 2006). The authors focus on network measures such as block models, interpreted as coalitions, as well as within-coalition and across-coalition densities of cooperation and conflict relations. These measures are relatively simple but straightforward to interpret, as they indicate subgroups in the network, as well as the intensity of interaction within and across these subgroups (see also Fischer, 2014, 2015). Such generalizations and comparisons on the level of entire countries are important, as they allow us to relate macro-level formal institutional structures to more informal aspects of actors' interactions in policy networks. The combination of and influences between both elements are crucial to fully understand the functioning of political systems

at the macro level. Yet as acknowledged (and partly examined) by the authors, both institutional contexts and related configurations of policy networks also vary considerably from one policy sector to the other, depending on the sectoral context (e.g., John and Cole, 2000; Kriesi et al., 2006).

Systems of Interest Intermediation

One aspect of consensual and majoritarian systems that differs between policy sectors is the system of interest intermediation. The European literature has traditionally made an important link between corporatist or pluralist types of interest intermediation and policy networks to describe relations between society and the state (Atkinson and Coleman, 1989; Knoke et al., 1996). In this tradition, different forms of policy networks have been associated with types of corporatism, clientelism, or pluralism (Schneider, 1992; van Waarden, 1992).

Corporatist traditions remain important in many European countries, and the respective processes are examined based on the structure of policy networks. For example, Svensson and Öberg (2005; Öberg and Svensson, 2010) analyze the network interactions in the coordinated market economy of Sweden, where the government, unions, and employers are involved in formal negotiations over economic and labor policies. Based on a survey among individual representatives of seventy collective actors, they show that state agencies play a central role in the influence network, but that the strongest, reciprocated relations still exist between unions and employers. Also, Beyers' (2002) analysis of Belgian policy networks (actor-event participation networks, assessed through 343 face-to-face interviews with public and private actors) suggests that access to domestic policymakers is still influenced by corporatist traditions; that is, actors traditionally defending specific interests have better access than actors lobbying for diffuse interests. On the contrary, a qualitative case study on spatial planning policy networks in Belgium shows that a regionalization of competences led to a transformation from centralized, corporatist arrangements to new forms of more decentralized and multilevel governance networks (De Rynck and Voets, 2006).

As with other institutional context conditions, the influence of (the decline of) corporatist types of interest intermediation is not always easy to isolate. For example, the influence of different types of changes in the macro-level institutional structure on the policy network in Switzerland over thirty years is examined by Fischer et al. (2009; Sciarini, 2014), who observe a decreasing centrality of key interest groups over time. Overall, while the concept of corporatism might have lost importance in the scholarly discussion, the interactions of different types of societal interests and state actors remains an

important issue, not least in the context of European integration (discussed later in the chapter). As demonstrated by these studies, rather simple network indicators, such as the centrality of given types of actors, the intensity of ties between actor types, or access of actors to specific venues, can help to disentangle the more and more diverse, complex and informal relations of interest intermediation.

Multilevel Governance

Multilevel governance encompasses different aspects. On the one hand, the degree to which a state is organized in a decentralized or federalist manner is a rather constant attribute of a given country. This aspect is included in the consensual type of democratic systems as dealt with by Adam and Kriesi (2007; Kriesi et al. 2006). On the other hand, the degree to which the existence of multiple levels of decision-making affects policy networks is also sector-specific. Examples of policy network studies that examine the influence of (the interplay between) different levels of decision-making in given policy sectors abound.

First, the influence of a policy sector being (co-)regulated between a country and the EU on policy networks have been examined. The EU context is expected to influence policy networks by redistributing actors' resources and opening up new access points to decision-making (Adam and Kriesi, 2007). One of the important, early studies on the influence of multilevel governance institutions on policy networks deals with EU agricultural policy (Pappi and Henning, 1999). Based on interviews with interest groups and government actors on the national as well as EU levels, the authors find that national farmer organizations adapt their lobbying strategies as they create network contacts to both national governments as well as European-level interest groups. Not only access, but also pressure from the EU environment can influence national policy networks. Cisar and Navratil (2014) conclude that access to EU financial resources consolidates the cooperation network activities among Czech nongovernmental organizations (NGOs): intensifying their network contacts is one condition to meet their policy goals and is explicitly required as a strategy by the EU funding body. The authors' analysis is based on survey data on the cooperation and communication networks among 101 NGOs advocating for the environment, women's rights, human rights, or workers' rights. Besides societal actors, national state actors also adapt their strategies. In Europeanized policy sectors, state actors in Switzerland are especially active in creating collaboration ties to actors that are critical of European integration in order to include them in the policy process (Fischer and Sciarini, 2013). The authors analyze the development of the network over time and focus on two subsequent networks of collaboration relations among the twenty-two collective actors dealing with the bilateral treaty on the free

movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU, assessed through semidirected interviews. In a similar vein, Sciarini et al. (2004; Fischer et al., 2002) show that state actors have higher betweenness centralities (Freeman, 1978) in collaboration networks dealing with so-called Europeanized policy processes than in domestic ones, whereas the contrary is true for other actors such as interest groups and political parties. Their network data on three different policy processes were gathered through semidirected interviews with sixty-five actors.

Second, a devolution of competencies to regional levels also affects the respective policy networks. For example, De Rynck and Voets (2006) discuss the transformation of Belgian spatial planning networks from corporatist to more open networks as a consequence of the regionalization of the respective competencies. Based on a qualitative case analysis, they schematically reconstruct the network between governments and corporatist actors at different levels. However, as mentioned previously, the institutional influence of types of multilevel decision-making often interacts with other contexts. A comparative analysis of the domestic coordination of EU policies in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands suggests that network structures of information exchange and collaboration substantively derive from formal (non)federalist structures. Analyzing survey data on networks among government agencies, ministerial cabinets, and political parties, the authors find that intergovernmental relations do not only depend on the question of whether a country has federalist (Belgium) or more centralized (Netherlands, France) institutions, but also on the role of parties, the functioning and organization of the executive, and the position of the parliament in the political system (Bursens et al., 2014). In a similar vein, Jordana et al. (2012) find that the same type of EU cohesion policy program leads to different types of implementation networks in Spanish regions, depending on different roles of government actors and levels of social capital.

The institutional context also has consequences for the policy network structure at the purely local level. Ingold (2014) compares seven policy networks dealing with implementation processes in the domain of land use and protection policies in Swiss mountain regions. The respective networks include a minimum of fifteen and a maximum of thirty-nine actors, and network ties are defined by collaboration relations assessed through surveys. The author argues that local actors tend to be better integrated in the collaboration network in bottom-up-designed implementation processes, led by private and civil-society actors, as compared to top-down processes, even though the latter provide formal participation rules for local actors. In addition, at the level of cities, differences between policy sectors seem to matter. John and Cole (2000) conclude that institutions have a stronger influence on networks in secondary education than in economic development policies, because different national state traditions are more prevalent in the former than in the latter. The authors compare two city-level networks in

the United Kingdom to two city-level networks in France, based on qualitative case studies. Whereas education policy networks in the United Kingdom are composed of head teachers, chairs of boards of school governors, and bureaucrats, the French policy network is more state-centered and composed of elites from the central state and the region. Finally, at least on the local level, the institutional context does not always affect policy networks. De Vries (2008) finds no effect of various institutional reforms and experiments in the form of public-private partnerships and interactive policy processes on the composition of local policy networks in the Netherlands. The study covers more than fifteen years and is based on surveys at three different time points. It finds that the local policy networks still correspond to the core-periphery structure, with state actors in the center and civil-society actors on the periphery.

Overall, the influence of European integration on the respective policy networks appears to be confirmed by the respective studies: New levels of decision-making provide new opportunities or constraints to different types of actors, and their respective positions and behavior (in terms of centrality) in the policy networks are affected. The influence of multilevel structures on policy networks within countries is less clear and seems to strongly interact with other country- and sector-level institutional factors. Whether all combinations of different types of (institutional) contexts can always be included in the respective research designs is questionable, but being explicit about the context specificity of the respective policy network seems important. Further, new methods of multilevel statistical network models could provide an important tool for examining cross-level processes in more detail. Overall, the understanding of complex cross-level networks, influenced by different institutional contexts at different levels, remains a major challenge.

Democratization and European Integration in Eastern Europe

As suggested previously, the institutional context influencing policy networks can change over time, and the networks are expected to change accordingly. Some of the most important changes in terms of macro-level state institutions in Europe are those in Eastern European countries related to the transition of former communist, Soviet(-related) states to more democratic political systems and, for some, their EU accession. Observed effects of the transition from autocratic to democratic regimes on policy networks are manifold.

For example, a study of the Russian city of Novosibirsk (based on interviews with about one hundred elite representatives) finds that already in 1997, city-level elite networks included many private actors and thus looked very similar to Western European elite networks (Hughes et al., 2002). McMnamin (2004) studies informal networks between

businesspeople and politicians in Poland, which in a postcommunist context are expected to be more important than formal business associations. Some 194 businesspeople representing 144 businesses were interviewed and asked how well they knew politicians. Against expectations, the study found that the knowledge relations between businesspeople and politicians are not based on clientelism and businesspeople's loyalty to political parties, but are promiscuous. Forest policy networks in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are also affected by the transition from the Soviet system to a more democratic one. Whereas Estonia and Latvia liberalized their forest sector, the one in Lithuania remains closer to the Soviet organization. The respective networks in the first two countries are described as participatory, well-integrated, and heterogeneous, whereas the network in Lithuania is still dominated by a high number of state-related forest organizations. The study is based on stakeholder and expert interviews as well as officially available documents (Lazdinis et al., 2004). Moschitz and Stolze (2009) examine organic farming policy networks in eleven European countries based on face-to-face interviews with thirteen to twenty-six organizational actors per country. Explicitly comparing Eastern to Western European countries, they find that networks are generally smaller and less dense in the former than in the latter. The authors explain this finding by noting the short history of organic farming in the Eastern European countries, influenced by their adoption of EU legislation since their accession in 2004.

One important aspect of the transition of Eastern European countries is their integration into the EU. Jurje (2013) studies the role of Romanian state actors in the accession process to the EU and finds that due to preaccession conditionality mechanisms and their privileged access to EU policymakers, state actors are highly central in the respective policy networks, whereas their centrality decreases after accession. Her analysis is based on interviews with key organizational actors in the sectors of immigration and asylum policy, social assistance policy, and education policy. But at least in an Eastern European transitions context, EU integration has not always been found to affect policy networks. Palne Kovacs et al. (2004) study the effects of EU integration on the cooperation networks and related learning processes in regional development in Hungary. The authors interviewed thirty organizational actors from the national, regional, and local levels of policymaking. Despite EU initiatives for strengthening the regional level and its participation in national-level decision-making, their analysis shows that actors from the three levels are still only very weakly connected.

In addition to the cross-cutting influence of different country- and sector-specific institutional contexts, studies dealing with the democratic transitions and EU integration of Eastern European countries raise an additional challenge: the change of the institutional context over time. Comparisons of networks at two or more different time points, or the analysis of longitudinal data and the respective evolution of policy

networks, can be appropriate strategies to deal with this challenge. However, gathering data at different points in time, or even on the past, is most often costly and difficult to do in one single research project.

Liberalization of Industry Sectors

Related to European integration and the internationalization of the economy, another important change is taking place in many European countries. Former monopolies in sectors such as telecommunications, railways, and electricity have been destroyed and the respective sectors liberalized during the last two decades. Institutional change thus happened at an ideational level, affecting the conditions for market behavior and the ideational resources of actors. These processes of liberalization are expected to lead to changes in the networks among political authorities, regulators, and state-owned and private companies (e.g., Majone, 1997). For example, Jordana and Sancho (2005) study the process of market opening in Spain's telecommunications sector. The respective networks consist of collective actors such as political parties, public bodies, and different types of private actors. The authors assess the network of perceived influence ties between actors through a survey. The comparison of two networks, one before and one after the liberalization, shows that the network after liberalization was denser, but still included a similar set of main actors, with the same few actors in highly central positions. The authors conclude that a more successful liberalization would have required a network that was more open to new competitors and less centralized in terms of power. Contrary to the Spanish case, a study on the transformation of the Swiss telecommunications sector (Fischer et al., 2012) finds that despite an overall decrease in network ties, local closure happens between actors with similar roles in the new governance structure, especially operators, as well as sector-specific regulating agencies and more general regulating agencies. Furthermore, new actors such as regulatory agencies, coregulators, and new operators were quickly integrated into the governance network of Swiss telecommunications. Fischer et al.'s analysis is based on statistical longitudinal models for network data and includes three subsequent networks of collaboration relations among twenty-three actors, assessed through semidirected interviews and surveys. Furthermore, when studying liberalization processes, the analysis of networks represents a useful approach for assessing the actual independence of the newly formed "independent" regulatory agencies from other actors (Ingold et al., 2013; Maggetti et al., 2013). Based on networks of influence and reputational power, Ingold et al. (2013) find that the main regulatory agency in the Swiss telecommunications domain is independent from telecommunication operators and policymakers, but is influenced by other regulating bodies. The network of influence relations is assessed through a survey and includes twenty-five organizational actors.

The studies reviewed indicate that liberalization processes do not always affect the respective policy networks to the same extent. This again underlines the importance of analyzing networks over time in order to be able to understand the influence of the changing institutional context. Further, the network concept proves important to evaluate the functioning of new governance arrangements in liberalized economies.

Venue Participation as Institutional Opportunity Structures

While country-level generalizations might hide sectoral differences, sectoral generalizations might hide differences between single policy processes. However, institutional characteristics also vary on the process level. For example, Leifeld and Schneider (2012) conceive of policy process venues as institutional opportunity structures that allow actors to develop collaboration contacts. Joint participation in arenas such as policy process working groups or parliamentary committees facilitates communication and thereby reduces transaction costs. In a study on the technical issue of toxic chemicals policy in Germany, Leifeld and Schneider (2012) show that coparticipation in institutional venues of the policy process, such as policy committees, even absorbs the effect of actors' preference similarity on their probability to exchange political and scientific information in a policy network. The respective study is based on interview data with thirty organizational actors. Further studies show that the specific characteristics of institutional venues seem to matter for how well institutional opportunity structures work. Fischer and Sciarini (2016) compare collaboration networks in eleven different policy sectors in Switzerland based on interview data with individual representatives of twenty to twenty-five organizational actors per process. Their analysis suggests that if a venue is important in terms of its influence on the final policy output, this increases the effect of venue coparticipation on collaboration among political actors (Fischer and Sciarini, 2016). Kriesi and Jegen (2001) emphasize the importance of policy venues and arenas for the formation of cooperative ties within the pro-ecology and pro-economy coalitions in the Swiss nuclear policy sector. They analyze the respective policy sector on the national level as well as in six cantons based on ties of close collaboration, assessed through interviews with about 240 individual actors. In a reanalysis of five policy networks at both local and national levels, dealing with both decision-making and implementation, Ingold and Leifeld (2016) find that actors participating in many institutional venues are perceived as especially powerful by other actors. Their explanation for this finding is that institutional access confers possibilities of policy influence to actors (Ingold and Leifeld, 2016). While the effect of institutional opportunity structures on policy network ties appears to be confirmed, the exact mechanism behind it needs more examination. The qualitative study of what exactly happens in venues is one promising approach, as well as the differentiation among different types of policy venues

depending on their incentives to create policy network contacts (Fischer and Leifeld, 2015).

Furthermore, coparticipation in institutional venues of the policy process is sometimes used as a direct indicator of a network contact. Contrary to the literature that discusses the influence of coparticipation on collaboration, this approach directly operationalizes coparticipation as the network tie of interest. For example, Hirschi et al. (2013) analyze different scenarios of Swiss agricultural policy in the context of market liberalization. They assess the participation patterns of twenty to thirty actors in different venues of the respective policy processes. Relying on this type of data has the advantage that the data are rather easily available from documents. The Actor-Process Event Scheme (APES, Serdült and Hirschi, 2004) facilitates the systematic representation of the respective data. The respective data can also be analyzed as two-mode networks, with links representing actors' venue participation (see also Beyers, 2002).

The Role of State Actors in Policy Networks in Europe

This second section discusses the role of state actors (government actors at different levels as well as administrative actors) in European policy networks. Even if the classical boundaries between the different functions of state and private actors have become "fluent and irrelevant" over time (Laumann and Knoke, 1987, 381; Knoke et al., 1996), state actors are special. On the one hand, their decisions are considered binding in society and are backed by the possibility of the legitimate use of force (Coleman and Perl, 1999; Adam and Kriesi, 2007). On the other hand, state actors have a crucial influence on the design of policy processes wherein decisions are made. Accordingly, state actors are often perceived as especially powerful in policy networks, as suggested in two studies on ties of influence perception, both comparing several policy domains and different levels of decision-making (Ingold and Leifeld, 2016; Fischer and Sciarini, 2015). Furthermore, differentiating between state and nonstate actors seems particularly important in the European tradition of policy networks. For example, the metaphorical use of the term "policy network" in the British literature (Dowding, 1995; Börzel, 1998) is mainly aimed at describing the specific relations between the state and society. Bressers and O'Toole (1998) define a policy network as the "pattern of relationships between a governmental authority and a set of target groups."

State Actors as Networking Targets

In an early key contribution to the field, Stokman and Zeggelink (1996; Stokman and Berveling, 1998) model the structure of policy networks based on a key driver: actors' resource dependency and their desire to gain access to powerful others. State actors often are "powerful others," and actors aim at creating network ties to them, deliver relevant information to them, or lobby for their preferences. Another early study, by König and Bräuninger (1998), examines the establishment of policy network contacts in the German labor policy domain, based on a survey among 126 organizations. They show that whereas the similarity of policy preferences is the basic predictor of the establishment of policy contacts, the "neo-institutional" aspect is important, too: controlling for preference similarity, policy actors tend to establish contacts with formal policymakers, presumably because the latter have the final vote on public policies. This finding is most important for networks of information exchange, but less for networks of exchanging favors and support. Similarly, Leifeld and Schneider (2012) study the German toxic chemicals policy sector and show that actors have a strong tendency to deliver political as well as scientific information to state actors. Their statistical network analysis (exponential random graph model) is based on data about a set of thirty collective actors, and network ties are relations of information exchange between actors. The same trends show up in a longitudinal analysis of Swiss climate policy networks, in which state actors are strongly lobbied during the decision-making phase, but not during implementation of policies (Ingold and Fischer, 2014). This study is based on interview and survey data on collaboration networks among thirty-four collective actors at three points in time. The important role of government actors in the German climate policy networks is also analyzed by Foljanty-Jost and Jacob (2004). State actors are central in network ties of cooperation, information exchange, support, and conflict, as assessed through interviews with fifty-three actors. Similar results are reported by Bursens et al. (2014), who study informal political-administrative networks dealing with the domestic coordination of EU politics. They show how societal actors target policymakers in order to influence government positions in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands. Comparing the indegree, outdegree, and betweenness centralization of networks of information exchange and collaboration in the three countries (elite survey with over one hundred actors in each country), they find that informal network practices substantively deviate from formal procedures. In Belgium and in the context of the increasing importance of the EU level of decision-making, interest groups try to diversify their strategies and establish information exchange network ties at both levels, but few are successful in doing so, and specific interests still have privileged network access to state actors (Beyers, 2002). The respective study is based on interviews with 343 private and public actors at both the Belgian and European levels. Beyers and Braun (2014) examine how coalitions among

groups, and the network position of interest groups within and between coalitions, shape access to policymakers. Their results (based on 135 interviews) suggest that access to state administration is favored if actors have information exchange and collaboration ties that bridge different coalitions. Further, state-administrative actors in the domain of public health were found to be the main targets to whom actors deliver healthcare-related information in the United Kingdom (Oliver et al., 2015).

State Actors as Networking Activists and Brokers

Studies observe that besides being preferential targets for network contacts, state actors are particularly active in creating network ties. Particularly in the presence of international obligations to act, such as in the case of immigration or climate policy, state actors have strong incentives to actively look for support from nonstate actors, either already during the international negotiations or during the implementation of the policy (Fischer and Sciarini, 2013; Ingold and Fischer, 2014). Both studies are based on the longitudinal analysis of collaboration networks measured at several time points (twenty-three and thirty-four collective actors, respectively), with data gathered through face-to-face interviews and surveys with representatives of collective actors. A comparative study of four municipal employment policy networks in Denmark also underlines the importance of municipal administrative actors in terms of inclusion of nonstate actors. Still, the respective networks often have a rather hierarchical form; that is, they are dominated by municipal actors themselves (Damgaard, 2006). This study is based on qualitative interviews with twenty-six municipality and private actors. Research on individual bureaucrats and local managers in the United Kingdom, based on surveys among several hundred individuals, shows their activity in interacting with other actors such as MPs, other levels of government, or local interest associations (O'Toole et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2007).

Usually, however, state actors' active roles in policy networks are related to brokerage. State actors can act as brokers between different types of economic interests, otherwise opposing coalitions, different levels of decision-making, or different policy sectors. The idea of state actors creating contacts between opposing economic interests has already been touched upon in relation to the identification of different types of interest intermediation systems and their typical network forms, where state actors would relate to both employers and labor unions (Schneider, 1992). In Swedish labor market policy, state agencies play a crucial role in the coordination among peak organizations (Svensson and Öberg, 2005). The respective study is also based on a survey among individual representatives of seventy collective actors. With respect to other types of coalitions, Ingold and Varone (2012; Ingold, 2011) identify a center political party and an

environmental administrative agency as actors able to mediate between opposing coalitions in Swiss climate policymaking. Brokers are identified based on structural equivalence of conflict ties as well as on betweenness centralities in the collaboration network, and the study is based on fifty face-to-face interviews with thirty-four key actors in the respective policy domain. The importance of brokerage (“bridge building”) has also been emphasized by a study of Norwegian implementation networks of the European Water Framework Directive (Hovik and Hanssen, 2014). The more complex a network is in terms of including different types of actors and opposing interests, the more network managers tend to play the role of bridge builders. This study is based on surveys among members and managers of Norwegian water boards. It does not empirically measure network ties, but focuses on different types of strategies of actors in the network. Cross-level brokerage seems to be more tricky. Ernstson et al. (2010) discuss the findings of several case studies on urban ecosystem management in Stockholm and illustrate the need for scale-crossing brokers to connect different ecosystem scales. However, no actor currently occupies this crucial position in the ecosystem management network of Stockholm. By contrast, Swiss administrative actors at several levels play a crucial role in creating vertical cross-level interactions. This result is suggested by Hirschi (2010), who compares the development of collaboration networks involved in the planning and organization of two regional parks. His study is based on surveys among thirty-six and thirty-eight collective actors, respectively. Finally, various sectors can be connected by brokers. Papadopoulou et al. (2011) emphasize the role of state-administrative actors in representing and connecting different policy sectors (“administrative inter-sectorality”) in Greek rural development projects, despite their overall weak standing in the respective power hierarchies in the networks. Their study is based on interviews with actors identified as being part of different types of projects (sixteen actors per network). Similarly, in a qualitative case study, Le Galès (2001) emphasizes the crucial role of mayors in French cities’ policy networks, for both sectoral and cross-sectoral coordination. Somewhat contrary to all these studies, Edelenbos et al. (2012) find that government actors are doing worse than external network managers in terms of connecting policy networks. Finally, if they are not occupying brokerage roles themselves, bureaucratic state actors have been shown to create ties with actors occupying broker roles (Beyers and Braun, 2014). The respective analysis is based on interviews with representatives of 135 NGOs, labor unions, and business organizations, as well as elected and unelected officials.

Meta-Governance of Policy Networks

Finally, an important strand of the European policy network literature is related to the idea of brokerage in networks, but takes a broader approach. It deals with the role of

state actors related to their capacity for meta-governance of networks or network management (Klijn et al., 1995; Kickert et al., 1997; Klijn, 2005; Provan and Kenis, 2008; Sörensen and Torfing, 2009; Klijn et al., 2010; Verweij et al., 2013; Van Meerkerk et al., 2015; Raab et al., 2015). The network governance literature is based on the idea that some actors can attempt to manage the interdependent relations in order to promote joint problem solving in policymaking. For reasons of resource endowment and legitimacy, this role is most often conferred on state actors (although not exclusively), or state actors are expected to have a specific interest in active network management, as they depend on the networks to govern policy processes (Klijn et al., 1995). Network management or meta-governance can be broadly defined as the capacity of the state to steer networks by influencing the context within which they function to ensure that its outcomes correspond with its broader interests (Kickert et al., 1997; Adam and Kriesi, 2007; Daugbjerg and Fawcett, 2015). It seeks to steer by initiation and facilitation of interaction processes, brokering and mediating conflicts, and reallocation of resources (Kickert et al., 1997; Klijn, 2005; Adam and Kriesi, 2007). A number of intervening factors can influence the success of network management strategies, such as the number and heterogeneity of actors in the network.

A lot of work on this issue is theoretical, but there are also empirical illustrations of the effects of network management. For example, Van Meerkerk et al. (2015) study the Dutch water sector based on a survey among two hundred stakeholders and managers of complex water projects. The analysis shows that connective management of linking actors from different sectors and different levels of decision-making by network managers influences actors' perceptions of the democratic governance process, which again has a positive influence on network outputs such as innovation or problem-solving (Van Meerkerk et al., 2015). A meta-analysis of environmental projects in the Netherlands finds that the network managers' ability to connect the important actors has a beneficial effect on the perception of project outcomes by actors (Klijn et al., 2010). Daugbjerg and Fawcett (2015) compare farming and land use policy networks in Sweden and Denmark (plus Australia and the United States) and find that the role of the state in network governance, together with the level of inclusiveness of the network, influences both input and output legitimacy. Their analysis is based on the comparison of several qualitative case studies.

This strand of the literature has developed compelling theoretical arguments and has tested them in various contexts. Most of this work, however, is based on a metaphorical use of the network concept—that is, on the assessment of policy networks as groups of actors responsible for the management of a given resource or policy—but relations in these networks have usually not been explicitly measured. Combining these theoretical arguments with explicit measurements of network ties would allow us to answer

important questions about the network positions and related strategies of network managers and about the influence of network management strategies on the structure of policy networks.

Conclusions and Avenues for Further Research

Institutions have an important influence on the structure of policy networks (Lubell et al., 2012), as they provide actors with opportunities for and constraints on negotiation and cooperation (Ostrom, 1990, 2005). Given the institutional diversity and ongoing transformations, the European context provides a particularly interesting setting for studying the influence of institutions on policy networks. Policy networks describe the diverse types of interactions among actors in processes of political decision-making and policy implementation. Understanding the influence of institutions on policy networks is crucial for the design of effective and democratically anchored policymaking. In addition, studying both more formal aspects of institutional context and institutional power together with more informal aspects of policy networks allows for a more complete understanding of the functioning of policymaking. Policymaking is inherently relational, as it implies processes of negotiations and compromise finding among different types of actors, as well as the exchange of resources and information. These relational processes are at the core of democratic decision-making, and they are influenced by the institutional context in which they evolve.

This review focuses on two elements related to the institutional context and its influence on policy networks. First, studies of the influence of country- and sector-level institutions on the structure of policy networks discuss the influence of consensual versus majoritarian democracies, corporatist systems of interest intermediation, multiple levels of governance, degrees of EU integration, processes of liberalization and democratization, and policy-process-specific venues on policy networks. Second, given their formal decision-making power, state actors often play a specific role in policy networks, as networking targets, brokers, or network managers. Both institutional aspects are obviously related, as the type of macro-institutional structure influences the role state actors play in policy networks. For example, in a tradition of state-led corporatism, state actors occupy brokerage roles in the respective policy networks (Svensson and Öberg, 2005), or they are especially active in reaching out to other actors due to the pressures of Europeanization (Fischer and Sciarini, 2013).

The literature reviewed is based on different types of nodes and ties, different countries and policy sectors, different methods of data gathering (surveys, document analysis, interviews, etc.), and different methods of analysis (from qualitative case studies to

statistical network models). Yet within this diversity, a rather small set of simple network concepts has proved most popular. Many of the studies reviewed in this chapter rely on indicators such as the number and types of network members, the network densities within and across groups, and measures of actors' degree and betweenness centralities. While these concepts might not capture all the complex and interesting details of network-related behavior of actors, they have the advantage of being straightforward to interpret and rather easily understandable to non-network specialists.

How institutional differences and transformations affect the incentives of actors to resort to more complex network-related types of behavior such as reciprocity, the establishment of transitive ties, bonding and bridging structures (Berardo and Scholz, 2010), homophily, or preferential attachment is certainly one of the directions that future work should explore. Furthermore, the potential and need for more comparative research designs (both over time and across countries and policy sectors) to establish the influence of institutions on policy networks are evident. However, such efforts are complicated by the costs of data gathering over time or language differences between European countries.

Finally, a review of policy networks in Europe implicitly rests on the assumption that there is something specific about policy networks in Europe, as compared to elsewhere. Given the institutional diversity and transformations in Europe, a focus on the influence of institutions on policy networks seems particularly interesting in this context. This is not to say that institutions have no influence on policy networks in other parts of the world, but the fact that European scholars deal with the implicitly top-down concept of "network management" (e.g., Klijn, 2005), while US scholars examine "self-organizing networks" (e.g., Feiock and Scholz, 2010), might be exemplary of cultural differences between the two sides of the Atlantic.

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