# Introduction

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## Governance or the rise of a new vocabulary

One of the most striking developments in the analysis of politics and policy-making is the shift in vocabulary that has occurred over the last ten years. Terms such as 'governance', 'institutional capacity', 'networks', 'complexity', 'trust', 'deliberation' and 'interdependence' dominate the debate, while terms such as 'the state', 'government', 'power' and 'authority', 'loyalty', 'sovereignty', 'participation' and 'interest groups' have lost their grip on the analytical imagination. The new vocabulary prevails in spheres ranging from international relations (Finkelstein 1995; Rosenau 1995; World Bank 1997) to policy analysis and public administration (Rhodes 1996; 2000), from comparative politics to urban planning (Forester 1999; Healey 1997; Innes and Booher 1999b), from European studies (Marks et al. 1996) to political theory (Dryzek 2000; March and Olsen 1995). The shift from 'government' to 'governance' is widely proclaimed and endorsed in the political-science and policy-science communities (for an analytical overview, see especially Pierre 2000). Social science is no less immune to fads than popular culture. New concepts often have a remarkably short shelf-life. New vocabularies may signify no more than a change of rhetoric. In this case, such an explanation is too simple. The new vocabulary seems to capture changes in both the nature and topography of politics. A new range of political practices has emerged between institutional layers of the state and between state institutions and societal organizations. The new language is rooted in an appreciation of the importance of these new political practices. Authors as varied as James Rosenau, Judith Innes and John Dryzek have pointed out that it is these often transient and informal arrangements that produce solutions; not conventions among states, directives, or authoritative decisions.

Examples offer themselves readily. In California 'collaborative dialogues' have produced workable solutions to persistent problems in water management, a sensitive issue that state institutions have long sought to regulate (Innes and Booher, this volume). The importance of informal policy networks in the European Union is increasingly appreciated. Specialists have characterized the EU as 'an experiment in finding alternative forms for developing public policy' (Wallace and Young 1997: 16). The success of these networks of public administrators, scientists, experts and NGOs in resisting the pressure to become part of the formal policymaking structures and the contribution of non-governmental actors to reducing the much-discussed 'implementation deficit' are now acknowledged, even if reluctantly (Jordan 1999; Knill and Lenschaw 2000). In international politics the Arctic Council brings together eight national governments to discuss common environmental problems. Representatives from 'First Nations' (Inuit, other Native American and Sami communities), scientific experts and policy advisors from international organizations play prominent roles in the discourse (Tennberg 1998; Young and Osherenko 1993). CITES arrangements on the protection of wild animals rely heavily on the work of non-state actors.

The emerging vocabulary of governance speaks to a widely acknowledged change in the nature of politics and policymaking. The prominence of the new vocabulary also illustrates a widespread dissatisfaction with the limited reach of 'set solutions' to thorny political issues imposed through top-down government intervention. One of the virtues of the vocabulary of 'governance' is the way it opens up the cognitive commitments implicit in the thinking about governing and political decision-making. The language of 'governance' seems to help practitioners and theorists alike to unlearn embedded intellectual reflexes and break out of tacit patterns of thinking. This stimulates them to rethink governing, politics and administration against the backdrop of these changing societal processes. Thinking about institutional design nowadays requires sociological input.

Many pressing problems no longer comport with the established systems of politics, administration and society. Practical needs drive the development of co-operative efforts among new constellations of actors. Organizations themselves have become aware of how much more fluid their boundaries are. The demands of business highlight interdependencies and relationships among tasks and prompt the development of inter-organizational networks. Governments also see the tie between interaction, cooperation and results. The consequences of these new inter-organizational activities do not stop with how politics is conducted. They reshape what politics and policymaking are about. We live in an age of 'constitutional politics' (Ackerman 1992) in which constitutive rules are increasingly the object of politics. Collaborative dialogues in California, the role of the variety of committees in the European Union and of the Artic Council all suggest that politics is not 'simply' concerned with outcomes (Ackerman's 'normal' politics); we quarrel about the rules of the game themselves.

The rise of a vocabulary of governance indicates a shift away from well-established notions of politics and brings in new sites, new actors and new themes. There is a move from the familiar topography of formal political institutions to the edges of organizational activity, negotiations between sovereign bodies, and inter-organizational networks that challenge the established distinction between public and private. The disparate actors who populate these networks find nascent points of solidarity in the joint realization that they need one another to craft effective political agreements. Their efforts to find solutions acceptable to all who are involved (and to expand the circle of involvement) nibble and gnaw on the constitutional system of territorially based representative democracy. Notions of politics itself change as new themes occupy centre stage. It is probably no coincidence that these practices are more developed in 'new' spheres of politics such as the environment and the 'life politics' of food and technology.

We witness the creation of a secondary reality of political practice, in the terminology of Mark Warren of 'expansive democracy' (Warren 1992), juxtaposed with standard liberal democracy. Expansive democracy is characterized by increased participation, either by means of small-scale direct democracy or through strong linkages between citizens and broad-scale institutions, by pushing democracy beyond traditional political spheres, and by relating decision-making to the persons who are affected. Democracy has intrinsic value for those who engage in deliberative processes, value that is tied to an immanent potential for transformation and the development of capacities for citizenship that enable individuals and groups to respond directly and effectively to uncertainty and social conflict (Warren 1992: 9). This does not imply that 'classical-modernist' institutions, characterized and maintained by codified, well-established patterns of behaviour, simply fade away. Clearly, much of the business of governing is still effected by the traditional hierarchical institutions of government. However, they must now increasingly compete with open-ended, often unusual, ad hoc arrangements that demonstrate remarkable problem-solving capacity and open up opportunities for learning and change in exactly those circumstances where classical-modernist institutions have failed to deliver.

These trends shift the debate about democracy from the normative to the empirical. This does not absolve analysts from confronting the standard objections to direct democracy levelled by adherents of representative, Madisonian forms of democratic government (deLeon 1997; Warren 1992), but at least these objections can now be addressed on *empirical* grounds. What these developments show is that expansive democracy has moved from an alluring ideal to a budding reality in many regions, countries and policy domains. The new vocabulary of governance rides the back of new political strategies of cooperation that play out at the margins of traditional classical-modernist political institutions. The conceptual rhythm of these efforts pares political reality in new metres and themes.

## The need for an interpretative account of governance

Many analysts and commentators seem to suggest that the new vocabulary is the logical answer to a changing world. 'Governance' and 'network management' emerge as responses to the new reality of the 'network society' in which we live. The conceptual shift is legitimized as a necessary adjustment, and a habitual quick reference to Castells (Castells 1996) is mostly seen as sufficient indication of what sort of processes of social change we should have in mind when rethinking politics and policymaking.

Involvement tends to induce myopia, but it is probably safe to say that we are going through a phase of radical social change. At the same time there is something profoundly disturbing about the change of vocabulary and the rush into a restyling of the practices of government that accompany the new vocabulary. First, the new commitments to governance are often not based on a rigorous analysis of what exactly is 'new' about our reality. There is a widespread tendency among analysts to describe the changing reality in terms of key macro-sociological processes. Technological developments (information technologies in particular), globalization, individualization and emancipation are called upon to explain the erosion of the power of the state and politics in general. Yet it might also be seen as an academically legitimated 'mantra' emphasizing various centrifugal tendencies in society without really showing the mechanisms at work. The relationship between macro-sociological change and the crisis of government is often more asserted than argued. To be sure, we would agree that the themes discussed under the headings of the 'network society', the 'risk society', or 'reflexive modernization' have grave repercussions for the character of governance, yet the field is remarkably short on empirical investigations which draw on that literature to see new manifestations of governance in the 'network society' (Beck 1999). It remains unclear how the changes and transformations that are summarized by the term 'network society' exactly challenge the activity and effectiveness of policymaking and politics. How are technological developments related to the introduction of new practices of governing, for instance? Which development causes what? What can we expect from a 'subpolitics' 'outside and beyond' the representative institutions of politics? What is the effect of the widespread usage of managerial language and practices in the new systems of governance, and how does this relate to the processes of macro-sociological change?

Concluding the first volume of his inquiries into the information age, Manuel Castells states: 'Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of network logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture' (Castells 1996: 468). In a certain sense this is of course a truism as *any* social formation can be conceived of as a network. The more profound idea is, however, that we can discern *shifts in networks*: new networks eroding the power of previously powerful ones. Moreover, there is the *instability* of networks; the awareness that society experiences a 'new modernity' (Beck) in which established institutions might prove less stable and solid than we assumed and are less well positioned to keep risks at bay. Society should be conceived of as made up of *open or unstable structures* that expand, readjust, shift and evaporate; that create new chances but new risks too, of practices that mobilize on some problems, leaving others aside.

In this context the abstract language of Castells makes sense. What the rise of the vocabulary of governance makes clear is that we experience a shift in language from institutions to networks. Whereas the institutional language implies stability, networks imply fluidity. What comes out in Castells' work is that presence or absence in particular networks, combined with the inherent dynamics of each of these networks, now becomes a critical source of power (1996: 468). However, even this can be seen as a rather superficial statement. We need to know much more about the *character* of this dynamics. As R. A. W. Rhodes argued, the emergence of networks is not the end of state authority per se but the redefinition of it, characterized by a much more open mind allowing for much more diversity and experimentation (Rhodes 2000: 55; cf. also Héritier 1993; Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997). Likewise, in this context issues of power and interest are not simply rendered meaningless but are redefined and relocated. Hence to take networks and governance seriously by no means implies endorsing a quasi-Thatcherite 'rolling back of the state'. Rather what we want to do is analyse the tensions and conflicts generated by the impact of the newer 'networked' forms of policymaking and political mobilization, and also examine the potential of these new practices to search for more democratic governance. After all, as Torgerson (this volume) points out, there is hardly a reason to idealize classical bureaucracies in this regard. Endorsing this view, our task is to trace telling experiments with governance and to conceptualize the new settings in which politics and policymaking take place as well as the way in which this changes the character of the political game.

We aim to readjust this relationship between social theory and the inquiries into policymaking and politics. Rather than suggesting that these should be about the *impact* of the network society on policymaking and politics, our suggestion would be that we should focus on concrete *manifestations* of policymaking and politics in the era of the network society. In the former tradition we would try to explain various occurrences in politics drawing on macro-sociological insights. However, if we focus, empirically, on the manifestations of policymaking and politics in the network society, we would analyse such issues as the way in which different actors nowadays conceive of politics, which actors participate, what they see as effective political action, how actors frame conflict, and to what extent the classical-modernist institutions indeed hamper finding effective solutions to problems people want to see resolved. The idea here clearly is not simply to 'promote' governance as an alternative approach. Likewise, the search is not for the general laws, or the 'essence' of governing in the network society. Right now we aim to focus on the variety of ways in which governing occurs. We thus try to grasp analytically what this means for our understanding of politics and policymaking, of the relationship between state and society, of our possibilities of collective learning and conflict resolution, and of the nature and role of policy analysis in all this.

This book is an attempt to do just that. We draw on the tradition of interpretative analysis of policymaking and politics, a tradition which, we think, has a much wider relevance for understanding contemporary politics than is often appreciated (for an overview, see Gibbons 1987; Rabinow and Sullivan 1979). Rooted in the tradition of the American pragmatism of John Dewey and reinforced by the work of Harold Lasswell (Lasswell 1951, 1971) and many others, the interpretative approach to public policy has already contributed to a more subtle understanding of policymaking and politics.

Over the last twenty-five years interpretative policy analysis has primarily been engaged in a methodological and foundational debate with its positivist counterpart. This has resulted in a strong body of work, in which the biases and limitations of mainstream policy analysis were systematically spelled out (Tribe 1972; Hawkesworth 1988; Dryzek 1989; Yanow 1996; Stone 1997). In this context the label 'post-positivist' policy analysis was of course useful and appropriate. However, it also may have led some to regard interpretative analysis as merely a 'counter-narrative' to the dominant narrative of mainstream, institutionalized policy analysis. It has also led some to proclaim that the post-positivists were engaged in a futile fight with a positivist straw man of their own making, as, clearly, positivism is an antiquated ideal, and no self-respecting policy analyst actually follows the positivist precepts in everyday working routines. In this book we hope to correct that picture. First, positivism is not just a set of methodological principles but, as the philosopher Leszek Kolakowski observed, above all an attitude towards knowledge (Kolakowski 1968), with deeply intertwined ramifications that range from a barely articulated ontological understanding of reality, via methodological principles of how to collect data in a proper way, to a rhetoric of accepted ways of talking about knowledge and policy. In practice this means that positivism does not restrict itself to the conduct of the social sciences, but also, and more importantly, includes normative beliefs and habits of governance and policymaking. Far from being a straw man, positivism is above all a practice of policymaking that is deeply rooted in the institutions of modern government (see also Fischer, this volume). Second, the interpretative approach has solid philosophical underpinnings that precede the policy analytic debate of the last two decades, as Gottweis and Yanow show in this book. In addition, as Fischer (this volume) argues, post-positivist policy analysis displays much greater sociological validity than mainstream analysis. Careful ethnographic observation of scientific work in research labs has shown the extent to which application of scientific methods to concrete problems involves all sorts of improvised, on-the-spot practical judgments that do not conform to the official, objective logic of science (Latour 1987; Lynch 1985).

Third, and most important, the last decade saw an attempt within post-positivist policy analysis to gauge the relationship, both normative and empirical, between policy analysis and the democratic environment in which it functions. Heeding Lasswell's call for a 'policy science of democracy', analysts such as John Dryzek and Peter deLeon have explicitly attempted to assess the place of policy analysis in contemporary representative democracy, and, given the widespread discontent with 'politics' in many western countries, explored the alternatives that might be available (Dryzek 1989). These developments within policy science merge with other developments that point towards the importance of problem formulation and practical judgment in understanding policy problems and finding policy solutions. For example, the analysis of stubborn or 'intractable' policy controversies (Schön and Rein 1994) illuminated that problem solving required a much better understanding of how various parties framed the situation, thus arguing – at least by implication – in favour of a more direct involvement of societal parties in policymaking processes. *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, edited by Frank Fischer and John Forester (1993), and subsequent studies, established once and for all the importance of attending to the discursive dimension of public policy and politics (Fischer 1993; Hajer 1995; Yanow 1996). And solid work in planning theory demonstrated how planners in concrete situations of conflict relied on interactive and deliberative processes of discovering ends, recognizing other parties, marshalling evidence and giving reasons, exploring the implications of various value positions, and developing joint responsibility in concrete situations. Such deliberative approaches to public policy emphasize collective, pragmatic, participatory, local problem solving in recognition that many problems are simply too complicated, too contested and too unstable to allow for schematic, centralized regulation (Forester 1999; Fung 2001; Healey et al., this volume; Innes and Booher, this volume; King and Stivers 1998; Sabel, Fung and Karkkainen 1999).

This book is thus an attempt to build upon these foundations. *Deliberative Policy Analysis* explores ways in which interpretative and deliberative methods of policy analysis help us to come to grips with the political phenomena of our time. It is also an account of the intellectual development of this scholarship after seminal books such as the aforementioned *Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, *Frame Reflection* or *The Deliberative Practitioner*

(Fischer and Forester 1993; Schön and Rein 1994; Forester 1999, respectively). Yet it is also a book showing that some of the themes that long dominated the critical interpretative agenda – such as the commitment to 'participation' – are in need of a critical reexamination (Innes and Booher, this volume, Torgerson, this volume, Wagenaar and Cook, this volume). In the remainder of this introduction we will spell out the focus of the book in more detail.

## Policymaking and politics in the network society: five challenges for analysis

This book explores the changing manifestations of policymaking and politics. It shows new themes for analysis inspired by the macro-sociological work on the network society, the new modernity, or reflexive modernization (Beck 1999; Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994; Castells 1997, 1998; Giddens 1991, 1992; Lash and Szerszinski 1996). The essays combine this macro-sociological orientation with a strong commitment to concrete empirical work. Instead of paraphrasing the work of these sociologists, we distinguish five concrete challenges to policymaking and politics in the era of the network society. Each of them has repercussions for the analysis of policymaking and politics. Together they set the frame for the book.

### *The new spaces of politics*

In the classical-modernist conception political institutions complied with an implicit conceptual '*matrouchka*' system. Like Russian dolls, governments were conceived to fit into one another (local fits into regional, fits into national, fits into international containers) and the political space was related to this system. This model loses its heuristic power: politics and policymaking often happen in configurations that do not conform to the old formats (Dryzek 1999; Eriksen and Fossum 2000; Held 1995). Politics in the network society is characterized by a search for 'multi-level governance', 'regimes', or 'transnational policy discourses' (Hajer 2000b). This reconstitution of political action can be observed at all levels of governing: in the domain of international politics, within the borders of the nation-state, regionally and even locally. Politics and policymaking are reinvented. Traditional top-down bureaucratic structures make way for civil servants, citizens and private sector actors who act as 'entrepreneurs' or 'problem solvers' in policy networks of their own making (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997; Sabel, Fung and Karkkainen 1999). Party politics, once the domain of the big debates on the big decisions, finds its central role challenged. In some cases the media create political issues, in other cases it is political action from civil society that speaks to the heart of the people much more effectively than the leader-dependent, party-political practices (Manin 1997). Moreover, there is also a very concrete challenge to the practices of policymaking and politics coming from below. The emergence of 'life politics' (Giddens 1991) implies a new style of political involvement in which people combine lifestyle choices with very focused and discontinuous political activity. Bang and Sörensen captured this in the phenomenon of the 'everyday maker': a type of political activity at grassroots level that resists conceptualization in the familiar terms of participation, social movement or interest group (Bang and Sörensen 1999).

In all cases we see how the topography of politics changes as politics and policymaking is made in new spaces. Characteristically, these new spaces of politics initially exist in an *institutional void*: there are no pre-given rules that determine who is responsible, who has authority over whom, what sort of accountability is to be expected. Yet as politics takes place between organizations, all people bring their own institutional expectations and routines with them. And, as different participants follow their own 'logic of appropriateness' (March and Olsen 1995), politics in new political spaces is never only about content, but inevitably also about the rules of the game and a dynamics of credibility.

To be able to make sense of this sort of complicated communication the scholarship on the politics of symbols and meaning comes in handy. For a long time interpretative social science has focused on symbolic politics and has shown how symbols are not to be mistaken for cute epiphenomena of politics but constitute a key dimension of power and influence in an era of constitutional politics (cf. Edelman 1964). In the instability of a network society this dimension of power and influence deserves our careful attention.

### *Politics and policymaking under the condition of radical uncertainty*

Writing on the impossibility of absolute judgments, Milan Kundera once observed that man is like somebody walking in the mist (Kundera 1992). Yet whenever he looks back to judge the behaviour of people in the past – Mayakovsky, Gottfried Benn, Heidegger – he sees no mist but only clarity. Kundera wondered who are more blind, those who do not see the mist of uncertainty that always surrounds people or those that made the decisions that we – helped by the clarity of hindsight – later see as problematic. It is a useful reminder now that we so often find the suggestion that the challenge for the analysis of policymaking and politics can be captured in terms of the enhanced complexity of society (cf., e.g., Roe 1994). Although it is tempting, it is not unproblematic to suggest that the present is more complex and unpredictable than before. So if we say that some of the most pressing problems of today require us to make 'hard' decisions with only 'soft' evidence (Ravetz and Funtowicz 1993) we should probably add that this is not particularly new.

However, in another sense the network society does indeed add something that constitutes a particular form of complexity for politics and policymaking.

The failures of classical-modernist government have created a widespread *awareness* of the ubiquity of the unintended, perverse consequences of large-scale rationalized planning and the limits to centralized, hierarchical regulation as the dominant mode of collective problem solving (Scott 1998). In its wake it has created a deep unease among citizens about the possibilities of effective and responsible state power. This new social awareness now constitutes a pool of uncertainty surrounding major projects. It is essentially a democratization of knowledge that has created *the social explosiveness* of many contemporary practices (Beck 1992). Networks are not only often 'tightly coupled' and therefore vulnerable systems (Perrow 1999), policymakers are now also forced to rethink the way in which uncertainties are dealt with *socially*. The sudden politicization of food in Europe over the twin crises of BSE and foot-and-mouth disease strongly speaks to this. Whereas within the old regulatory regime the idea prevailed that one could still employ the 'knowledge for policy' practice ('first get the facts right'), the new political reality is one in which this is no longer a credible policymaking strategy. Ulrich Beck has nicely put this condition into words, arguing that we now have an increased 'awareness of our unawareness' (1999: 123). There is a widespread appreciation that governments cannot legitimately keep up the idea that decisions can only be made once the appropriate knowledge is available. Quite the contrary, the new condition is one in which politics has to be made under conditions of 'radical uncertainty' while social protest cannot be controlled with a traditional politics of expertise (Fischer 1993).

This political-sociological shift implies the demise of the myth of absolute knowledge in the public domain. This backfires on the longstanding commitment of policy analysis to deliver knowledge for policy. Under conditions of radical uncertainty policymakers must be made aware of the limits of the (quickly) knowable. Concrete problem solving, joint responsibility, continuous performance-based and collective learning become potential building stones of a viable alternative strategy. In more practical terms, the appreciation of these limits calls for the introduction of concepts such as the 'precautionary principle', according to which we institutionally aim to *avoid* risks knowing that science might, ultimately, show the inconceivable (such as the role of previously unknown 'prions' in the BSE case) to be true. Although this awareness that the condition of radical uncertainty challenges the practices of politics and policymaking is now widespread, institutions are often slow in responding.

### *The increased importance of 'difference' for our understanding of politics*

Modern societies have become culturally more complex. Solving public problems now almost inevitably requires us to deal with an array of groups that do not necessarily share the same language. This might often be true in the literal