

*In the last 10 years, policy networks have become a popular concept to analyze policy making in multi-actor settings. This article argues that, although stimulating and interesting, the research that has been done in this field can be improved in three ways. The first way to improve the usefulness of the concept network is to pay more attention to the dynamics of policy making. In this article, the concept game is used to conceptualize this dynamic character of policy processes. Second, the concept network stresses the context of policy making, but a coherent theoretical framework on how this context is formed and changed is lacking. This article attempts to make some steps toward such a theoretical framework. Central in this framework is the idea of the duality of structure proposed by Giddens and the notion of rules. Finally, the literature on networks could gain relevance by directing more systematic attention on how complex policy processes in these networks can be managed. Building on earlier work, especially in interorganization theory, some management strategies are discussed.*

## **ANALYZING AND MANAGING POLICY PROCESSES IN COMPLEX NETWORKS: A Theoretical Examination of the Concept Policy Network and Its Problems**

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**The notion that policy making** is the result of an interaction process between many actors, of whom only some are governmental agencies, has become common wisdom among policy scientists. The search for ade-

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quate concepts and theories to analyze complex policy decision making, however, has not yet resulted in a common ground.

The concept that has gained the most ardent supporters is the concept of network, or policy network. This concept has its roots in earlier theories: the literature on interorganizational relations and the literature on subsystems and policy communities. The first kind of literature is firmly embedded in the organizational sociology of the 1960s and 1970s. The second kind of literature belongs primarily to political science and was developed as a consequence of the power discussions between elitists and pluralists in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

This article focuses on the question, What insights has the debate around the concept network provided on the way policy processes in multi-actor settings are being structured and managed, and how can these insights be improved? This article will argue that these insights can be improved if more attention is paid to the dynamics of policy processes, on institutionalization processes in networks, and on ways to manage policy processes in networks.

The first section contains a very brief discussion of the concept of policy networks and its origins. Then, some critical comments on this literature are made, leading to theoretical improvement. Suggestions to improve the conceptualization of the term policy networks are subsequently developed, which will do greater justice to the dynamics of policy making.<sup>2</sup> The last two sections of the article focus on the institutionalization processes in networks and on management strategies in networks. Finally, some conclusions are offered.

### **(POLICY) NETWORKS: CHARACTERISTICS AND BACKGROUNDS**

The concept policy network has gained a lot of followers in policy science in the recent decade (Hanf & Scharpf, 1978; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Milward & Wamsley, 1985). In this view, policy processes take place within networks of actors that are mutually dependent on each other. The concept of network originally emerged in policy science in the literature on implementation and intergovernmental relations (Hanf & Toonen, 1985; Hjern & Porter, 1981; O'Toole, 1986). Recently, however, the concept has also been used in other kinds of research (Hufen & Ringeling, 1990; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992). Using the concept network or

policy network, policy scientists build on earlier work that has been done in the field of political science and organizational science. This section first deals with the main ideas of both sciences and then summarizes the network approach to public policy that evolved in the last decade.

#### **POLICY COMMUNITIES, SUBSYSTEMS, AND INTERORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONS**

In political science, the concept network was used to analyze complex relations between governmental agencies and interest groups. Specifically, it can be found in the research on power in the 1950s. As a result of this research, there was an extended discussion in political science about the relationship between governmental agencies and interest groups. Such concepts as subsystems (Freeman, 1965), subgovernments (Ripley & Franklin, 1987), and policy communities (Richardson & Jordan, 1979; Rhodes, 1981) were used to indicate that policy making occurred in a setting of close relationship between interest groups and governmental agencies. Most of this literature tended to emphasize the integrated character of the relations between actors (for an extended overview, see Jordan, 1990; Rhodes, 1990). New actors can only enter these networks at high costs, which are related to the investments that have to be made in learning the language and the rules of the network and the establishment and development of the relationships to secure a place in the network.<sup>3</sup> Currently, the concept policy network is replacing the previously mentioned concepts (Jordan, 1990; Milward & Wamsley, 1985). A lot of descriptions of the concept policy network exist, but one of the most popular is the one by Benson (1982, p. 148), who described policy networks as "a cluster or complex of organizations connected to each other by resource dependencies and distinguished from other clusters or complexes by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies."

In the organization, theory interest in the concept network emerged as a result of the interorganization theory (Negandhi, 1975; Rogers & Whetten, 1982). This literature focused on the relationship between organizations. Based on the premise that organizations are dependent for their survival on resources that other organizations possess, the interorganization theory examined the resource exchanges and interdependencies between organizations (Aldrich, 1979; Levine & White, 1961). The interorganization theory was also interested in the networks of dependencies that exist and that are of importance to organizations and the strategies that organizations use to influence their dependencies in the net-

work (Aldrich & Whetten, 1981; Benson, 1978, 1982; Cook, 1977; O'Toole, 1988; Scharpf, 1978). Coordination mechanisms and links between organizations have to be established, according to the interorganization theory, to secure the functioning of individual organizations and to secure the necessary resource flow (Litwak & Hylton, 1962; Rogers & Whetten, 1982).

### **POLICY NETWORKS: SOME CHARACTERISTICS**

Although originally two separate branches of literature, there has been an increasing tendency to connect the political and organizational sociological theoretical notions with each other.<sup>4</sup> Despite differences in concepts and flavor, there are some striking similarities: Both stress the importance of relation patterns between organizations, and both pay attention to strategies that organizations use to influence each other. Basically, the evolving network approach to public policy can, according to the huge amount of literature, be characterized by three main features:<sup>5</sup>

1. **Dependency:** Actors are dependent on each other. Actors want to reach goals but are dependent on other actors for the means to reach those goals (Aldrich 1979; Benson, 1978; Levine & White, 1961; Rhodes, 1981; Scharpf, 1978). This interdependence is not static but has to be discovered and is changed by actors engaged in interaction.
2. **Processes:** Policy network consists of more actors, and there is no single actor who has enough steering capacity to determine the strategic actions of the other actors. All actors have their own goals and interests. There is no single goal that can be used as a measurement for effective policy. Policy is the result of an interaction between many actors (Gage & Mandell, 1990; Milward & Wamsley, 1985; Rhodes, 1981; Rogers & Whetten, 1982; Scharpf, 1978). This does not mean that all actors have the same power in the interaction process. The power of each actor depends mainly on the resources that the actor possesses and the importance of these resources in the policy process (Crozier & Friedberg, 1980; Scharpf, 1978). It is fair to say that, in this feature of the policy network approach, one can trace strong influences of the garbage can models (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972; Kingdon, 1984) or interactive models (Allison, 1971; Lindblom & Cohen, 1979) of decision making.
3. **Institutions:** A policy network consists of a pattern of relations. Dependencies between actors, and the interactions that result, create patterns of relations between actors (Laumann & Knoke, 1987; Milward & Wamsley, 1985). These patterns show a certain density and have a lasting character (Laumann & Knoke, 1987). Rules of conduct emerge that give meaning to the interactions between actors and sustain the interaction patterns (Benson, 1982; Godfroy, 1981; Rhodes, 1988; Warren, Burgunder,

Newton, & Rose, 1975). Resource divisions between actors are created and changed (Benson, 1982).

As a result, a very promising perspective on policy making has evolved; a perspective that focuses on the interactions and relation patterns between different actors and their strategies and thus tries to contextualize the policy process. A critical examination of the literature, however, shows several missing links in the network perspective on public policy. The next section will elaborate on some of these important missing links.

### **CRITICAL COMMENTS: DYNAMICS, STRUCTURE, AND MANAGEMENT**

In the literature on (policy) networks, there has been a strong focus on relation patterns between organizations and the methodological techniques to map these relations (Aldrich & Whetten, 1981; Laumann & Knoke, 1987; Scott, 1991). On the other hand, a strong tradition of case research does exist (Gage & Mandell, 1990; Grant, Paterson, & Whitson, 1988; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Ripley & Franklin, 1987; Wilks & Wright, 1987). In both traditions, not much attention is paid to the theoretical conceptualization of the dynamics of policy processes and the way policy processes are related to the development of the structures of networks (for similar criticism, see Benson, 1982; Wamsley, 1985; Whetten, 1982). Another important theme, which should be further explored, is the way complex processes can be managed. The rest of this section will comment on each of these themes.

#### **DYNAMICS IN POLICY MAKING**

In almost all the (empirical) studies on networks, the importance of the processes of bargaining, coalition formation, and conflict are being stressed. This means that policy making in policy networks is not only complex but also often unpredictable because many actors are trying to influence this process according to their own goals. The interaction between these different strategies of different actors can have many unforeseen consequences. What is generally lacking, however, are the theoretical concepts that reflect these complex and dynamic processes. The use of typologies of networks (Jordan & Schubert, 1992; van Waarden, 1992) does not solve this problem. Although typologies may

be useful to some extent as a description, they are only useful for the comparison of different networks, not for the analysis of the processes within networks.

An exception is the use of the concept games by Rhodes (1981, 1988), who was especially inspired by the work of Crozier (Crozier & Friedman, 1980). As we will see in the next section, this concept can be made into a useful tool for analyzing policy processes in networks, while connecting the network to the policy process. Rhodes (1990) correctly stated that “game is treated as the ‘figure’ or the micro-level of analysis. It is also necessary to explain changes in the distribution of resources and the rules of the game: to contextualize the patterns of interactions” (p. 303). The concept of game, however, is useful to make this theoretical connection.<sup>6</sup> It can capture the dependency relations of actors engaged in interaction and the strategic character of that interaction.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERACTION AND STRUCTURE

A central question is, What influence does the interaction setting (the network) have on the interactions? This question about the usefulness of the concept (e.g., Rhodes, 1990, pp. 310-311) also raises the classical question regarding the relationship between action and structure. If a network is an interaction system (Burns & Flam, 1987), which seems to be the dominant opinion in the existing literature, it has to influence in some way the interactions that take place in it. In general, this difficult problem of institutionalization has been ignored or inadequately addressed in the literature on (policy) networks. In most cases, the term structure has been reserved for the relation patterns between actors, but the way these patterns are created and sustained has not been addressed.<sup>7</sup> However, the relationship between network and concrete interactions and the institutionalization processes that occur, raises some of the most interesting questions in network research. It is this point of contextualizing policy making that makes the policy network approach so interesting, compared with other ways of analyzing public policy processes.

One possible answer to this dilemma can be found in the duality of structure proposed by Giddens. Giddens stressed “the essential recursiveness of social life as constituted in social practices; structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices” (Giddens, 1979, p. 5). Social systems plainly would not exist without human agency, according to Giddens. But actors do not create social systems, “they reproduce or transform them, making what is already made in the conti-

nunity of praxis" (Giddens, 1984, p. 171). Structure is conceptualized here, in accordance with Giddens (1984), as "rules and resources recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems" (p. 377). Structure, according to Giddens, exists only as memory traces and manifests itself in practices and systems. Giddens primarily makes the comparison with language. We speak and write (social practices) but use grammar rules that enable us to do that. We learn those rules in our dealings with others. Thus structures are a precondition of actions. But we also modify these rules through the practices we sustain with others.

There is no need for us to be recursively aware of those structures. Most people do not know the grammar rules they use in language explicitly but have tacit knowledge of them—that is, they know how to perform sensible acts (they are "knowledgeable"). Just as the linguist makes explicit the grammar rules of language, the social scientist has to make explicit the social rules that actors have created with each other. In this way, Giddens finds a solution for the micro-macro problem and for the action-structure problem. Structure enables action, but at the same time it is changed by concrete action. Macro is created by micro but not always knowingly and willingly. Macro structures are often created and sustained by the unforeseen consequences of individual actions. At the same time, the macro decor is the setting in which further micro processes occur. In the next section, some notions of Giddens' structuration theory will be used in defining and using the concept of network. A network will be conceptualized as a social system in the way Giddens uses it, and instead of the word *praxis* we will use the word *game*.

#### MANAGING NETWORKS AND POLICY PROCESSES

From a policy analysis point of view, one of the most interesting questions is, How can complex policy processes in networks be managed? One of the remarkable characteristics of at least a part of the network literature, or the literature on policy communities and subsystems, is the lack of attention to the management aspect (Rhodes, 1990). In this literature, the reader will search in vain for prescriptions on how to handle situations of complex policy making in networks or policy communities. If the reader finds prescriptions, they are usually aimed at repairing what researchers consider the democratic deficits of policy making in communities. They include, for instance, the suggestion to increase the involvement of the Congress or to open up communities to other actors (Ripley & Franklin, 1987). This advice, however, is the result of a normative view

on democracy but not an analysis of how to improve the complex policy-making process in policy networks. To some extent, this advice even tends to ignore the findings of empirical research on complex policy making. These findings have stressed the complexity of processes because of the multiple goals involved. For instance, instead of arguing that one of the goals at stake (those of the politicians) should prevail, it may be more productive to look at how various conflicting goals can be linked to each other to reach satisfactory outcomes for all, or at least many, of the actors involved.

In the literature on interorganizational relations and networks, much more attention is given to the question of management. In most cases, the importance of the organizational arrangement between organization and coordination structures is stressed (Gage & Mandell, 1990; Rogers & Whetten, 1982). In the following section, some ideas on management in networks will be discussed. These ideas build on earlier work by interorganizational theorists (e.g., Aldrich, 1979; Friend, Power, & Yewlett, 1974; Gage & Mandell, 1990; O'Toole, 1988; Scharpf, 1978).

### **NETWORKS AND GAMES: A DYNAMIC VIEW ON POLICY PROCESSES**

From the preceding sections, it follows that concepts are needed that can clarify the relationship between interaction and the network and its structure, and that will do justice to the dynamics of policy making in networks. In the rest of this section and those following, some concepts and theoretical notions to analyze policy processes and management strategies in complex policy networks will be elaborated. The three characteristics of the network approach to public policy, which have been stated previously, are the starting point for this theoretical elaboration. In the conceptualization of the words *network* and *game* and the ideas on institutionalization, one can find the influence of Giddens' structural theory.

#### **NETWORKS AND GAMES: A CONCEPTUALIZATION**

Policy networks are described as (more or less) stable patterns of social relationships between interdependent actors, which take shape around policy problems or policy programs, and that are being formed, reproduced, and changed by an ecology of games between these actors. In these



games, actors try to influence policy processes by strategic behavior. Thus the network is an interaction system reproduced by concrete practices, in this article called games, which at the same time forms the context of these practices.<sup>8</sup> A network is not a static entity but changes over time as a result of the ongoing series of games. As a result of the ongoing series of games, some actors have an intense relationship with each other and some do not. Some actors have an intermediate position between other actors and a certain division of beliefs exists in networks. The network thus can best be visualized as the cumulative effect of all the connected games that are being played between sets of interrelated actors.<sup>9</sup>

Interdependency is a major factor in the constitution and maintenance of policy networks (see Aldrich, 1979; Hanf & Scharpf, 1978; Klijn & Teisman, 1991). An actor is dependent on another actor if he cannot successfully complete a policy process that he himself has activated without resources possessed by the other actor(s). The degree of dependency and the number of dependent relationships can vary considerably (see Scharpf, 1978). It depends on the goals an actor has and on his perception of dependency. If he sets ambitious goals, he will probably need numerous resources from various different actors. This is one of the reasons that policies initiated by governmental agencies involve a lot of actors. These policies concern collective goals on broad domains, such as environmental planning, housing provision, health care, and so forth, which cannot be dealt with by governmental agencies alone.

#### **GAMES, STRATEGIES, AND PERCEPTIONS: THE DYNAMICS OF POLICY PROCESSES**

A network analysis focuses on the interdependency of actors and the strategies they use to cope with that interdependency. It also focuses on the consequences of the interaction of the actors' different strategies. These different strategies affect each other in an interaction setting that can be called a game. A game is an ongoing, sequential chain of (strategic) actions between different players (actors) governed by formal and informal rules that develop around issues or decisions in which actors are interested. In a game, actors behave in a strategic way; that is, they base their actions and the means-ends combinations that they want to reach with their actions on the actions and the means-ends combinations of other actors. This means that players cannot predict the actions of other actors. They have to make guesses about other actors' behavior. They incorporate these guesses into their strategies. During the game, they constantly

reevaluate their strategies with the information they get from the behavior of other players and the consequences of previous games. Uncertainty is an intrinsic character of policy processes. It is not something that can be solved by gathering more information but is part of the undetermined character of human action.

Some of the consequences of interactions and games are anticipated by actors, but many of them are not. If all actors are acting strategically, not all the consequences of acts can be known in advance, and not all the consequences of previous acts are acknowledged or recognized in (future) acts (Giddens, 1984). This means that there is a lot of uncertainty about the consequences and effects of the actor's behavior and the behavior of other actors. A great deal of knowledge about the game, the stakes of the game, and the most successful strategy have to be learned during the game. In most situations, actors discover their goals during interaction with other actors from which they can learn what may be obtained or gather information, which causes goal displacement (Crozier & Friedberg, 1980; March, 1978; March & Olsen, 1976).

This gives the game a highly dynamic character. Not only do the results for every player depend on the strategies of the other players (Elster, 1986), but preferences and strategies also shift during the game. This means that actors not only constantly evaluate possible outcomes but also change that evaluation because their preferences change. This makes the analysis of empirical game situations with formal game models difficult (for such an analysis, see Scharpf, 1989, 1993; Tsebelis, 1990).<sup>10</sup>

The game does not have an objective reality. Reality is an interactive construction between actors that takes place in the games (Guba, 1990; van Twist & Termeer, 1991). The perceived realities of the actors involved are relevant to the game. The perceptions of the various actors involved determine their strategies and thus the outcomes of the game. Perceptions are the images or definitions that actors use in their game situation.<sup>11</sup> Using these perceptions, actors make sense of their own actions and the actions of others and evaluate these actions. In the perceptions of actors, the rules and knowledge of the policy network are reflected. These perceptions, however, also show the influences of the rules of other networks in which actors are participating and are the result of a "life story" of an actor. This means that actors can have widely different views about the nature of the game, the stakes of the game, and even sometimes on the correct interpretation of the rules of the game.<sup>12</sup>

The perceptions concern three important aspects of the game (see Klijn & Teisman, 1992):

- the interdependencies with other actors;
- the ambitions and stakes of the game of the actor and those of other actors;
- the policy arena and the policy problems that are important on that arena.

### ECOLOGY OF GAMES

As a result of interdependency relations, actors interact with each other in games and the ecology of games. In this interconnected but loosely coupled series of games, they try to reach certain outcomes and use strategies to affect the strategies and interdependencies of other actors that can influence the realization of those outcomes. Policy is a result of this ecology of games. Analyzing policy as an outcome of a series of games means analyzing which games are being played, how they are connected, and the effect of these games (see Allison, 1971; Crozier & Friedberg, 1980). It also means analyzing the perceptions of the main actors in these games and tracing changes in these perceptions during the games. The attention directed to the ecology of games can make possible a dynamic analysis of the games that are connected with the decision at issue but also an analysis of loosely coupled games elsewhere in the policy network, which influence the ecology of games around the issue or decision that is being studied.

As Tsebelis (1990) correctly states, the existence of the ecology of games means that the choice of strategies of individual actors is affected by other games in which the same actor participates. This also means that the strategies of an actor that seem to be costly from a researcher's point of view are perfectly understandable if other games in which an actor is engaged are taken into account. There are, however, more consequences. The existence of an ecology of games leads the actors to accept implicit or explicit rules of behavior. The existence of ecologies of games that, in their turn, are connected to other ecologies of games, leads to the development of social patterns between actors.

By playing the same types of games over and over, actors create social relations between each other and structural characteristics<sup>13</sup> that belong to those patterns. They create a meaningful structure that is both a necessary condition for further interactions and games (without rules, no game can exist) but at the same time is being reproduced, sustained, and changed in the concrete games actors play. Some rules of the game can be explicated by actors, but some cannot. Thus these rules provide the normative basis on which actors interact with each other. This theme is explored in the next section.

## FROM GAMES TO NETWORK: INSTITUTIONALIZATION

In the ecology of games, actors create certain mutual shared expectations of each others' behavior and rules that constitute situation definitions and behavior. Many of these rules are created without actors being aware of it. The network is the more lasting but nevertheless constantly changing setting for the games that are being played between actors.

### INSTITUTIONALIZATION AS A PROCESS

Institutionalization processes are constantly developing because actors regularly interpret and reinterpret the structural characteristics of the network. They are constantly trying to figure out which rules are appropriate to the game situation they are in (March & Olsen, 1989), and they are constantly drawing upon resources in the network to achieve ends or to participate in or create (new) game situations. In doing this, they recreate and sustain the rules and resources that constitute the network. Both rules and resources are important in the constitution and recreation of networks. Rules, understood as generalizable procedures applied in the enactment or reproduction of games, constitute meaning and provide sanctioning modes for social conduct. They establish, as Weick (1979, p. 3) stated, "agreement concerning what is real and what is illusory." Resources are a necessary factor in producing social practices. Actors draw on these resources in their actions to achieve goals they want to reach and when they try to influence other actors.

For instance, if sanctioning acts are being performed, they can only be performed in the context of existing rules that specify what situation the actors are in and what behavior is appropriate in this situation, but these sanctioning acts can only be performed when actors draw upon resources of the networks (material resources or authority). This example makes clear that rules and resources can be separated from each other only analytically. In both strategies and games, they are inseparable. Power differences between actors are thus related to the positions these actors occupy within the network. They are related to the resource division in the network and the position of an actor in the existing set of rules that characterizes the network.

The observations that a network shows stability means that actors in their concrete games interact in rather similar ways and reproduce more or less the same sets of rules and resources. This means that actors do not

radically change their perceptions and strategies. It is not unlikely that, in more institutionalized networks, periods of relatively little change are interrupted by periods in which perceptions are changed radically. Sometimes, this situation is being addressed as *paradigmatic change* (Hajer, 1989; Rein & Schön, 1986).

What causes changes in perceptions? Analytically, four sources of changes can be found:

1. Changes in perceptions can be caused by interactions in a game or a limited number of games. By a confrontation with strategic behavior of one or more actors, perceptions of other actors can change.
2. The entrance of new players in the game can cause changes in perceptions. New players bring in other perceptions and can cause changes in game interactions and game patterns.
3. Perceptions can also change by (un)foreseen consequences of former games, which bring about a change in the game situation, which leads actors to interpret their situation differently.
4. Consequences of other games outside the policy network can change perceptions and game patterns within the network.

#### **STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK: THE SEARCH FOR RULES**

Rules are an important dimension of the structure of a network. They can take many forms. Some are formal rules, agreed upon by legislative actors, but more of them are informal rules developed by actors in a network during the ecology of games. These rules concern the interaction of actors (who is important, what is allowed in interaction, who is allowed to interact in games) but also the way actors perceive their reality. These rules regulate professional judgments, perceptions on what the important issues in a network are, and so forth. An example can clarify the function of rules in networks.

In the mid-1970s, urban renewal began in Rotterdam. This process was quite unique in the sense that the restructuring of old prewar neighborhoods involved a process in which local government and specific local civil servants worked together with neighborhood inhabitants in project groups. The civil servants were directed by their departments, and the project leader had direct contact with the city alderman. During the years following the start of the urban renewal, an impressive set of rules and beliefs was developed. It was, for example, quite normal for conflicts to arise between parties. But it was standard procedure that after the plan was made the discussion was closed. Everybody took his or her losses, and

trying to break a consensus that had already been reached was not done. At the same time, rules were developed concerning the participation of actors. At first, housing owners were not allowed to participate in project groups. Later, in the beginning of the 1980s, housing associations, but not commercial owners, were allowed to participate. This was not so much a formal rule but something actors just would not do.<sup>14</sup> Only recently, now that the classical sets of urban renewal rules in Rotterdam are losing their relevance because of major changes in the central and local housing network in the Netherlands, have these commercial owners and developers become active in the urban renewal processes.

Rules specify which actions are allowed or obliged; they specify the positions of the actors, and so forth (Burns & Flam, 1987; Ostrom, 1986). What are the characteristics of rules? If some of the literature<sup>15</sup> on this topic is explored, one can distinguish four main characteristics:

1. Rules constitute social practices. Behavior is rule-guided behavior. Without rules, no game would exist. Rules offer the context in which games are possible and offer the players a context for interpretation.
2. Rules have to be followed. Rules are not self-executing. They do not presuppose that behavior is determined, but they do presuppose that regularities in behavior exist. Rules can only exist and sustain when actors follow those rules. Actors can change rules by no longer follow existing rules or by creating new rules. The application of social rules in concrete action settings is not without problems. It requires that actors make sense of their situation and apply the relevant rules. This requires translation of rules into concrete actions. In this translation process, rules can be changed.
3. Rules require knowledgeable actors. Actors have knowledge of rules. They are, in other words, capable of making the right interpretations: They understand what rules are suitable for a specific situation. They learn this in the socialization processes (Burns & Flam, 1987). Most of this knowledge of rules is implicit. This makes the analysis of rules in networks very difficult.
4. Rules are trans-situational and interpersonal characteristics of networks. Rules are involved in forms of conduct that are reproduced many times and that are performed and recognized by many actors in a network (Cohen, 1989). This means that actors are part of a collective community no matter how loose this community is organized.

These four characteristics mean that to analyze the rules of the network, the researcher must dig into the actor's perceptions and regularities of behavior. Rules do not exist, in the sense that they can be observed; they have to be constructed by the analyst. Classifications, such as the one that Ostrom has given<sup>16</sup> (see Ostrom, 1986), can be helpful in the analysis to

focus the attention of the researcher. Focusing on institutionalization processes in networks in general or on rules in networks can clarify why certain rules have developed, how they affect the interaction processes in networks, and in what way these processes can be changed.

Rules give a network a certain stability. Because rules only change if a reasonable segment of the actors stop following the rules, they usually change gradually. The fact that interactions in games would be very difficult if actors began to question all the rules also creates stability; in games, only a small part of the existing rules in a network is at stake. Stability is also created by the fact that new rules mostly develop gradually over time. Rules are a by-product of normal game interaction and not created consciously in special separate games.<sup>17</sup> Only in special situations can explicit games be traced in which only the rules of a network are at stake. These games primarily concern formal rules.

## MANAGING GAMES AND NETWORKS

Steering or managing networks is not an exclusive activity of governmental agencies. It means management in a shared power world (Bryson & Crosby, 1992). In a network, everybody steers and tries to influence the strategic decisions of other actors. The management of networks means that actors try to change a game or patterns of games by strategic behavior. It means that actors know their way in the enormous variety of games and know which games are crucial for reaching selected goals (Lynn, 1981; March & Olsen, 1976). It also means that actors reflect on the game and the network they are in. This means that managing policy processes in networks is quite different from the ordinary views on management.

### A DIFFERENT TYPE OF MANAGEMENT

Traditionally, when the word *management* is used, most people have the management of separate organizations in mind. The word points at a "system controller, concerned (depending on the individual's position in the organization) with the total system called the organization or more frequently with a part of the organization" (Hunt, 1972, p. 25). In this vision, management is a top down activity involving strategic planning, structuring and designing the organization (organizing), and getting the job done (leading) (see Keuning & Eppink, 1985; Robbins, 1980). It is based on a view of policy and organization processes as orderly phased



processes involving the formulating of problems, generating of alternatives, making of decisions, and evaluating of outcomes. In this classical perspective on management, the central questions of management—where to go and how to get there—are solved by hierarchical control and planning. The top of the organization makes decisions on goals (planning where to go) and on how interactions have to be coordinated (organizing), and then supervises those daily interactions (leading).

This classical (strongly intraorganizational flavored) perspective on management is also often used to analyze external management situations where organizations interact with other organizations. However, it is not very suitable in a situation in which there are more actors involved and no one actor has enough steering capacity to determine the strategies of other actors. In such a situation, management is a more interactive interorganizational activity (Lynn, 1981; Mandell, 1990). The interactive or network perspective on management stresses the unpredictability of (policy) processes. Managing aims at participating in the right games (Lynn, 1981); making interorganizational arrangements to structure interactions (Rogers & Whetten, 1982; Teisman, 1992), and activating participants for new games (Scharpf, 1978). In the network perspective on management, more attention is paid to the interaction process between actors and the ways these processes can be stimulated, sustained, and changed when necessary.

Not only do the two perspectives on management have the tendency to stress different management strategies, but they also stress different causes for the failure of public policy processes. In the classical perspective, policy processes fail because of insufficient control of governmental actors and because goals are not clearly defined and policy measures are not effectively implemented (see, for this view, the classical book of Pressman & Wildavsky, 1983). In the network perspective, the causes for policy failure are seen in blocked interaction between different actors and failures in linking ties between these actors.

Table 1 summarizes the main differences between the classical perspective and network perspective on management.

As it has been said, management is no longer an exclusive strategy for one actor (the manager). Management should be seen more as an activity. The management role can be performed by every actor, by several actors simultaneously, or even by an outsider (the facilitator or mediator). Each actor, however, has different possibilities to manage policy processes in networks. The management strategies actors choose depend on the resources actors can mobilize, their knowledge, and the strategic insights they have in the games that are being played. Some possible management



**TABLE 1**  
**Classical and Network Perspective on Management**

	<i>Classical Perspective on Management</i>	<i>Network Perspective on Management</i>
View on (policy) processes	Policy processes proceed in orderly stages, phases of problem formulation, alternative specification, and decision Processes are characterized by clear authority structures Problems are the basis of policy processes	Policy processes are complex interaction processes between different actors No clear undisputable authority structures (authority and power depend on resources and rules in the network) Problems and solutions are being developed during the policy process
Role of the manager	System controller Top down (getting the job done and organized)	Mediator/process manager Shaping and changing conditions for successful interaction between actors
Activities of the manager	Planning (strategy formulation) Organizing Leading	Seeking agreement between actors (building coalitions) Selecting other actors Creating and sustaining communication channels between actors

strategies will be reviewed briefly in the next section (see, e.g., Klijn & Teisman, 1991, 1992).

#### MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: A TYPOLOGY

As do all strategic actions in networks, management involves using and changing structural characteristics of networks in games. It means using and changing rules and resources in the network to start new games or to influence existing games. In the literature, many management strategies for managing networks can be found (e.g., Gage & Mandell, 1990; Hanf & Scharpf, 1978; Rogers & Whetten, 1982). These strategies can be categorized according to two criteria: the level at which management strategies are used and the aspects of the game/network at which the strategies are aimed.

Management strategies can be aimed at changes in a separate game or series of games, or at changes of the network. The first category can be

labeled *policy management*. Strategies in these category treat the game as given and seek to influence the behavior of other players within the limits of the game. Management of policy processes at this level means influencing goals and strategies of other actors in the game. The second type of strategies can be labeled *process management*. They try to influence the setting of the game or try to change ecologies of games. They are not aimed at specific outputs but are aimed at changing interaction processes between actors. The last category is labeled as *network constitution* because the strategies in this category are aimed at changes in the network as a whole—that is, to change the number of actors or the relation patterns involved.

On those different levels of network management, the manager, whom-ever he or she may be, can choose a variety of ways to target strategies to invoke change in network policy processes. From a game point of view, three aspects can be taken as a focus point of management: actors (players in the game), perceptions (their images, preference, and knowledge in the game), and institutions (the context of the game: the institutions, such as permanent organizational linkages or [formal] rules that have created before). Although these aspects cannot be entirely separated, they represent different starting points for management. Table 2 shows the possible categories with their strategies, without the illusion that this list is exhaustive.

It would be very difficult to elaborate extensively on all the strategies that have been mentioned in Table 2. A brief discussion will be all that is presented here.

Policy management strategies treat the game as a given. This means that strategies to change the number of actors or the context of the game are not used here. Two management strategies, which are frequently mentioned, fit in this first category. The first is the search for congruent goals between actors in a game (Klijn & Teisman, 1992; Teisman, 1992). It follows from the perspective of resource interdependency that packages of goals have to be found that actors can agree upon. Only by securing that there is something in it for everybody can one guarantee the procession of policy making and the production of results. Looking for packages of goals is not the same as a compromise. Goal congruency has to do with the creativity of the network manager; to create a support for a policy in which the different goals of different actors can be achieved at the same time. Another important strategy is trying to change or influence the strategies of other actors by bargaining or by incentives. Incentives, like subsidies, aim at affecting the costs and strategies of other actors (Scharpf,

**TABLE 2**  
**A Typology of Strategies of Network Management**

<i>Targets/ Aspects of Management</i>	<i>Level of Management</i>		
	<i>Policy Management</i>	<i>Process Management</i>	<i>Network Constitution</i>
Actors	—	Selective activating Selecting games Influencing inter- dependencies	Bringing in new actors Changing positions of existing actors
Perceptions	Promoting goal congruency Bargaining Providing incentives to affect strategies of other actors	Innovating: changing perceptions on content and interaction of concrete policy processes by elaborating existing perceptions (introducing new ideas by third actor; organized brainstorm)	Reframing: changing perceptions fundamentally (on goals, interaction rules or relations between actors)
Institutions	—	Creating/changing (ad hoc) arrangements to secure couplings between interactions of actors (project group, facilitator/ mediator, etc.) Setting interaction rules for series of games	Changing (formal) laws that distribute material or authoritative resources Changing (laws on) permanent organizational arrangements (example: changing advisory bodies, consultation procedures, etc.) Changing (formal) interaction rules (example: conflict regulating mechanisms)

Reissert, & Schnabel, 1978), thereby trying to establish new patterns of strategies between actors.

Process management strategies try to establish or change conditions that influence interaction processes between actors—in other words, they try to change the game situation or create new games or an ecology of games. This means changing the perceptions players have in the games, introducing new actors into the games, or making an attempt to change the organizational arrangements that actors use in the games. Here, one of

the important strategies is Scharpf's (1978) selective activating. A network consists of a variety of actors, arrangements, and interdependencies. Attention is limited, and the actor has to carefully choose his participation in games. If he wants something, he has to activate certain parts of the network. The number of actors he has to activate depends on his ambitions and the required resources. Successful activation depends, according to Scharpf, on "the correct identification of necessary participants in policy-congruent networks, upon their willingness to invest time and resources in a particular inter-organizational policy process (in competition with other interests and demands), and upon the relative desinterests of other parties with potential influence over one or more necessary participants" (1978, pp. 364-365). Instead of selecting actors for a new game situation, it is possible to influence the dependencies between actors. Influencing the dependencies between actors basically means influencing the resource dependencies of actors. Examples are trying to get resources from other actors, changing targets, and so forth (See Aldrich, 1979). Other strategies for process management include developing organizational or contractual arrangement for interaction between different actors (Gage & Mandell, 1990; Teisman, 1992) or trying to bring new elements into the perceptions of the actors who are in the games that are being played. Currently, changing the perceptions of actors in policy processes is becoming an important topic in policy studies (Argyris, 1976; Rein & Schön, 1986; van Twist & Termeer, 1991). Changing perceptions is a management strategy that is aimed at changing the views of actors on the interaction processes and what they want to achieve in these processes. It can be done, among other ways, by brainstorm sessions, mediators, and providing (new) information (Termeer, 1993; van Twist & Termeer, 1991). I have discerned two types of strategies to change perceptions. If management strategies are aimed at radically altering the perceptions of actors in the network, the positions of the actors in the network, or what should be achieved, I have labeled these strategies as reframing. If strategies are more aimed at making small innovations in the perceptions, I have labeled these strategies as innovation. The difference between these types of strategies resembles somewhat the difference Argyris (1976) makes between single loop and double loop learning.

Network constitution strategies aim at changes at the network level. They try to influence the context in which separate games or an ecology of games take place. It is, for instance, possible to introduce new actors into the network. By using this strategy, it is possible to influence relation

patterns in the network. It is also possible to use strategies that try to influence the perceptions of actors on the network as a whole: what it does, what it stands for, and what the relations are between actors in the network. One way to do this is by promoting new concepts and ideas on what the network should achieve or to propose new task divisions between actors. Strategic documents are often used for this kind of management strategy. In such a situation, the document itself probably is not the most important element. More important is the discussion it causes in the network and the way the document is used by responsible political actors to create change and promote new ideas. Changing institutions can be done in various ways (some examples are given in Table 2). One must bear in mind, however, that nearly all these strategies use formal laws at the starting point for management. If the network manager wants to change more informal rules, intensive interaction with other actors is needed.

Strategies of network constitution are not exclusive for governmental agencies. It is conceivable that other actors in the network try to incorporate new actors into the network. Governmental agencies, however, often have resources, such as legal power, which make it easier to implement these strategies. Strategies of network constitution usually take a lot of time, especially when legal changes are needed. That makes them unsuitable when fast changes are needed.

### **THE CHOICE OF MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

What is the use of the strategy categories that have been presented above? The distinction between these strategies is, to some extent, non-existent because of the interconnection of strategies, games, and network. Changing patterns of games constitutes an eventual change in the network. Even changes in some connected games may do so in the long run. In the short run, however, this distinction between management strategies can be useful in identifying the strategic behavior of actors in networks. In this way, it can be a tool to analyze different management strategies used in networks as well as their effects.

It is, however, very unlikely that one best management strategy does exist. The effect and success of a network management strategy depends on the interaction of this strategy with the strategies of other actors in the game. This makes predictions of effects very difficult, if not impossible. The typology of management strategies, however, can be a useful guide for the choice of management strategies. It makes clear that the manager has to make two crucial decisions:

- which level is chosen for network management
- and on what aspects will the management strategies be directed.

Different answers to these questions will lead to the consideration of different strategies. It will also raise the question of the mixing of strategies. Different strategies can support each other. Searching for congruent goals between actors can be facilitated by organizational arrangements in which actors interact with each other and which can create more stable interaction patterns. In this way, policy management can be supported by process management. The potential manager must make an analysis of management possibilities and choose sensible strategies for change. Additionally, he must be flexible enough to use more than one kind of strategy at the same time.

This leaves one question open: Who has the right to manage policy processes? From a game point of view, it is possible that it is one of the actor's functions as the manager, but it is also possible that the question of who manages the process is a subject of intense bargaining. If this struggle is a difficult one, it can lead to long gridlocks in policy processes. It is, however, more likely that the question of who has the authority to do at least some of the activities that have been labeled as network management in this article is governed by more or less accepted working rules in the network. That is one of the reasons why the analysis of complex policy processes and the use of management strategies should be embedded in an analysis of the network and its sets of relevant rules.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article has argued that, although the concept network and policy network are useful in the description and explanation of policy making in complex settings, they can be criticized. The main criticism concerns the static character of the concepts. Insufficient attention has been given to the relationship between structure and action. Also, more attention is needed for the management strategies to cope with the problems in complex policy processes in networks.

The concept policy network seems to be a promising concept for a dynamic analysis of policy making in complex settings. For that propose, it needs to be reformulated. This article has defined policy networks as a changing pattern of social relationships between interdependent actors, which takes shape around policy problems or policy programs and which

is being formed, reproduced, and changed by an ecology of games between these actors. When conceptualized in this way, the concept stresses the dynamics of policy processes and the interaction between the structure of the network and the concrete games that have taken place in it. Policy processes take shape in a series of games, which result in patterns and structures. These patterns and structures form, at the same time, the context in which further games are being played.

Empirical research should be aimed at the analysis of the network as a pattern of relations and the network as a continuous series of games in which actors use strategies to reach certain outcomes. The research should be able to clarify how patterns of relations between actors are sustained and changed and how actors strategically act within the context, possibilities, and constraints of the network.

Analysis of policy networks means analyzing the perceptions of actors, their strategic behavior, and the interaction of the strategic behavior of a series of actors in a series of games. Research should also be directed toward management strategies that the various actors use in their interactions and their results. In this article, some possible management strategies were discussed.

Thus network analysis focuses on the processes in which actors, drawing upon rules and resources of the network, make and change policy. Analysis of policy networks also means analyzing the sets of rules and resources that are implicated in the production and reproduction of the network and that are reflected in the games that are being played in the network. This means analyzing institutions, the rules and resources that characterize these institutions, and the influence these rules and resources have on the strategic behavior of actors.

Static and dynamic methods of analysis should thus be connected to each other in the research on policy networks, which could improve our knowledge of and methods to improve policy making.

## NOTES

1. The central question in this discussion was, What is the power structure of Western democracies? The elitists stated that power was distributed in an unequal way. Power was possessed by a relatively small and stable elite. Pluralists stated that power was dispersed among many groups. In fact, this was a very complicated and sometimes confusing discussion. Not only did the two groups of theorists disagree on the theoretical concepts that had to be used in their views, but they also had different opinions on which method of research should be used and they had different normative views of society.



2. A discussion between different theoretical points of view tends to be, as mentioned in Note 1, more than a theoretical difference of opinion. Most research on interorganizational networks, policy communities, and subsystems has been done with a paradigm that may be called positivist, or at least postpositivist, whereas the author of this article favors a position that comes closer to a constructivist paradigm (for a review of the different paradigms, see Guba, 1990). This, however, should not mean that a discussion between different theorists who belong to different schools is not relevant. But it is a point that has to be taken into consideration in the discussion.

3. Benson (1982) emphasized that policy networks were being characterized by a policy orientation, a way of looking at and interpreting a policy field. Ripley and Franklin (1987) and Laumann and Knoke (1987) both stress the relative power of well-organized interest groups to secure their interests and they, like others, (Freeman & Parris Stevens, 1987; Milward & Wamsley, 1985) stated that relatively dense systems of interorganizational interactions exist.

4. At first, this link was made in the bottom-up perspective of policy implementation (Hjern & Porter, 1981) and intergovernmental and interorganizational policy making (Hanf & Scharpf, 1978; Hanf & Toonen, 1985; Rhodes, 1981). Later, policy scientists expanded their scope to include in the analysis of complete policy areas the implementation of policy instruments or the forming of public policy (e.g., Grant et al., 1988; Hufen & Ringeling, 1990; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Milward & Wamsley, 1985; Rhodes, 1988).

5. In a lot of the literature, all or some of these features can be found. Some of this literature is mentioned—some of the most important: Aldrich, 1979; Benson, 1978; Crozier and Friedberg, 1980; Rhodes, 1981; Scharpf, 1978.

6. The concept of game is not entirely new in policy science. For instance, Allison (1971), Lynn (1981), and Rhodes (1981) already used it to analyze policy-making processes.

7. This tradition comes from the formal network analysis that derives from the content of interaction and seeks abstract patterns (see Cohen, 1989). Structure, then, is defined as a pattern of relations between social positions (e.g., Laumann & Pappi, 1976). But then there is no point in making a distinction between system and structure, because both refer to the “patternness” of social relations. In this meaning, structure is just the same as patterns of interactions. The word *structure* in this way does not add much to the analysis of social systems. Even more problems occur when theorists, as do some network theorists (Blau, 1982), speak of emergent structural properties that are the result of interactions. This suggests that structural properties come into being without humans' making them. This is logically a very difficult theoretical position. The way Giddens (1979, 1984) solves this problem is far more promising.

8. The main inspiration for this description has come from Giddens's concepts of system and practices, in which the system is the patterning of social relations sustained and reproduced by ongoing practices (Giddens, 1979, 1984). Of course, this description also draws heavily on the work of some interorganizational theorists, such as Aldrich (1979), Scharpf (1978), Benson (1978, 1982), and others. In the use of the concept of game, there are traces of the work of Allison (1971), Lynn (1981), and Rhodes (1981).

9. There are several formal and mathematical methods to map these patterns of interactions (for an overview, see Scott, 1991). These methods are very useful in showing the patterns of interaction. One must, however, realize that these mapped relations say nothing about the structure of these networks, or the rules and resources that are implicated in the interaction. These methods also do not say very much about the perceptions and strategies of actors in concrete games. So, if the researcher wants to get a clear picture of the



network (that is, not only of the relations but also of the structure and strategies) he or she must primarily use qualitative methods in addition to these quantitative methods.

10. Recently, Scharpf has turned to formal game analysis to analyze complex decision making (see Scharpf, 1989, 1993). The question of whether empirical situations can be adequately modeled in these formal game models remains. So far, I see that little empirical progress has been made, although the formal game theory has given some interesting theoretical insight into the difficulties of coordination.

11. For this concept of perception, one can find a lot of other concepts that try to make clear that reality is not objective and that actors use frames (Rein & Schön, 1986), sets of assumptions (Toonen, 1981), appreciation systems (Rhodes, 1988), or definitions of reality (van Twist & Termeer, 1991).

12. This also makes it difficult to analyze the complex ecology of games between actors. A few ideal formal types will probably not be sufficient to make these analyses, and it will be especially difficult to make clear quantitative analyses of costs and revenues. It will also be difficult to make a clear prediction of strategies in advance because actors have different perceptions of the game situation. It may be possible, however, to distinguish certain repeating patterns of strategic interactions between actors. It remains an empirical question whether these patterns look like any of the formal game models that have been developed so far.

13. Structure is conceptualized here, following Giddens (1984), as "rules and resources recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems" (p. 377). Structure, according to Giddens, exists only as memory traces and manifests itself in practices and systems. Structure is a precondition to action. But we also modify the rules and resources through the practices we sustain with others. Without these practices (in this article we use the concept of games) the structures would not exist.

14. In the author's current research, many interviews were held with participants in an urban renewal process. When they were asked why no commercial developers were activated in the process, some of them explicitly stated that they had never thought of it. This clarifies precisely the working of rules. Rules do not absolutely forbid actions; actors can always choose different actions. Rules make certain action unthinkable or at least make actions unlikely. Only if some of the actors challenge the rules, the discussion of their adequateness begins and changes are possible. This is happening at the moment in urban renewal in the Netherlands.

15. See Burns & Flam, 1987; Cohen, 1989; Duintjer, 1977; Giddens, 1984; March & Olsen, 1989; Morgan, 1986; Ostrom, 1986.

16. Ostrom (1986) distinguishes seven types of rules: position rules, scope rules, boundary rules, authority rules, information rules, aggregation rules, and pay-off rules. Two main criticisms can be made of this classification. The different categories are not clearly separated and overlap each other. Ostrom's classification also strongly focuses on rules connected with interaction but does not pay much attention to the reality constructing aspect of rules.

Personally, I would prefer a classification in two types of rules, which in some ways reflect Ostrom's classification: process rules and arena rules. The first category can include entry rules (who belongs to the network, who may participate in interactions) and interaction rules (which behavior and which strategies are acceptable). The second category can include construction rules (what is important or not—that is, they concern the way of perceiving the network), pay-off rules (rules that regulate [dis]advantages), and position rules (rules that specify positions of actors).

17. Some authors speak of constitutional games (see Kiser & Ostrom, 1982; Tsebelis, 1990). They seem to imply that rules are created in separate games as a purposive action of the actors. This may sometimes occur in national policy making when great changes are at stake; but in general, this is not the way rules in networks are created. Even the formal rules in networks are usually decided upon in policy games in which the content of policy is also at stake. The notion of a separate game in which rules are set gives an impression of deliberate policy making, which does not match reality. Even formal rules agreed upon by national parliament can be interpreted very differently during implementation games (e.g., Klijn, 1990). The implementation literature has shown this many times.

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