Policy Networks and Policy Communities:
Conceptual Evolution and Governing Realities

Grace Skogstad
Department of Political Science
University of Toronto
skogstad@chass.utoronto.ca

First Draft. Comments welcome.

Policy Networks and Policy Communities:
Conceptual Evolution and Governing Realities

Introduction
The purpose of this panel is to review and reflect on Canadians' theoretical contribution to understanding policy communities and public policy, to suggest where the literature could go, and, further, where Canadian political scientists could take it. Given this mandate, I will take an historical overview of the development of the concepts of policy community/policy network and advance two central propositions, neither of which I believe is controversial.

The first proposition is that the concepts of policy community/policy network have evolved over time, in keeping with both intellectual developments in political science and transitions in domestic and international political economies. From the beginning, the concepts were driven by a desire to capture the `realities' of governing and policy making in a way that conventional accounts that focused on formal state institutions did not. Insofar as the concepts of policy community/network signaled not so much a new analytical perspective as they did "a real change in the structure of the polity" (Borzel 1998a: 260), as that polity has changed, theorizing around policy communities/networks has also evolved.

The second proposition is that theorizing around policy communities/networks is driven by the objective of providing not only an empirical lens on how governing proceeds but also a rationale for why it proceeds as it does. Policy network analysts presume that policy networks matter for effective and legitimate governing. Even if the structures and context of the polity have changed over time, the imperative that governing be both legitimate and effective has not. In all democratic polities, the procedures and substantive outcomes of decision-making must be widely perceived to be appropriate and consistent with values and norms in the political community. Moreover, all governments strive for effectiveness and are judged by their citizens in terms of their capacity to address issues confronting the political community in a cost-effective and timely fashion. It is the linkage of policy networks to the imperatives of legitimate and effective governing–the contribution they make to enhancing it, or, alternatively, undermining it–that has underwritten theoretical and empirical inquiry around policy communities and policy networks and continues to constitute a strong rationale for their investigation.

My comments are organized in four parts. First, I examine the conceptual foundations and some central tenets of the policy community/network approach. Second, I address the evolution of theorizing around policy communities/networks in response to critics of these concepts' shortcomings as explanatory tools. Third, I trace how theorizing around policy communities/networks has been affected by changes in domestic and international political economies that have brought issues of legitimate and effective `governance' to the fore. And fourth, I suggest some lines of inquiry for scholars of Canadian politics that confirm the continuing salience of the policy community/network approach.

The overview that follows is not comprehensive of either the voluminous international literature or even the smaller Canadian body. It is especially selective in terms of reference to empirical case studies to illustrate theoretical formulations. I focus on the literature that speaks to the role of policy communities and networks in the public policy and governing process (rather than in other areas of social activity), and with that which appears to have had the greatest impact or to be most promising in terms of its theoretical insights. Canadian contributions have clearly been part of the theoretically innovative literature on policy communities/networks and their conceptual development. The innovative work by Atkinson and Coleman, as well as that subsequently by Coleman, his co-authors, and other Canadians--built upon and extended what was, and continues to be, principally a European literature.[1] I do not think it is undue Canadian modesty to say that it is European scholars, rather than Canadians, who should be given most of the credit for the current international analytical popularity of the policy community/network approach.[2] It is the European understandings of policy communities/networks that are most widely cited in the burgeoning literature on policy networks in developed and transitional political economies. Even so, Canadians continue to make important contributions to their conceptual development, and, by extension, to these concepts' utility to understanding contemporary governing realities.

I. Conceptual Foundations

An effort to trace the conceptual development of policy communities/networks requires an opening caveat. As many have noted, there is no single policy network approach in public policy. The policy network literature divides roughly into two strands: the one conceives of networks as interpersonal relationships; the other, which has dominated among political scientists and public policy analysts, conceptualizes networks as structural linkages between corporate public and private actors.[3] Within and across these two strands, there is methodological and epistemological pluralism. Some scholars rely on qualitative methods to map policy communities/networks while others adopt more quantitative methods. Network analysts' theories of human behaviour span rational actor, institutionalist, and constructivist approaches. The overview which follows concentrates on the structural (not interpersonal) approach to policy networks which dominates among students of governing and public policy. It is here where the Canadian literature fits. But even within the structural approach, there is no consensus on the meaning of the key concepts of policy community and policy network. This conceptual diversity notwithstanding, there are some common points of agreement among those who adhere to a policy community/network approach.

The policy community/network approach is driven by the belief that these concepts provide an empirically compelling description of the *process* of policy-making. Policy networks, state Daugbjerg and Marsh (1998: 55), "are crucial political structures through which we are governed or ruled." Using similar language, Rhodes (1997: 10) declares that policy networks tell us "`Who rules?', `How do they rule?' and `In whose interest do they rule?'" Further, Borzel (1998b) describes networks as "one, if not the, predominant mode of governance in modern societies." Accordingly, the study of policy networks is driven by the belief that uncovering them will identify who makes decisions and why decisions have the content they do.

When the concepts of policy network and policy community first gained currency in the

1970s and especially the 1980s, they drew inspiration from developments in domestic politics that suggested that policy making had become more complex, specialized, and fragmented as states had expanded their involvement in society and the economy. In this context of complexity and specialization, activist governments sought both predictability and stability in their policy-making environments, and the resources and cooperation of non-state actors. Interventionist states, it was argued, simply cannot function unilaterally; they need the informational resources and acquiescence or active support of societal actors for effective governing. The emergence of policy sub-systems in which state (principally bureaucratic officials) and non-state actors were both implicated in policy formulation and implementation was seen as a functional response to this context. The underlying premise of the policy community/network approach is that it is in these decentralized, and more or less regularized and coordinated, interactions between state and societal actors that policy making unfolds. Focusing on formal and macro-level decision-making bodies like parliament, cabinet, and first-ministers conferences thus ignores the realities of the policy process and obscures the imperatives for effective and legitimate governing.[4]

At the inception of network theorizing, the focus was on linkages between state and business or other economic interests; over time, it has been extended to encompass other societal actors. However, not every analyst argues that non-state actors are a crucial component of policy networks. A leading proponent of policy networks, the British academic, R.A. Rhodes, for example, often focuses on linkages among state actors alone, and believes networks are more likely to be found in policy implementation than in policy formulation. Still most analysts, including Canadian scholars, conceive of networks as a model of interest group intermediation that can be found in either the policy formulation or policy implementation stages. While some policy community/network analysts argue that networks are so ubiquitous as to constitute the dominant pattern of governance in certain polities like the European Union (Ansell 2000 but also Peterson 2001 and Pfetsch 1998), Canadians have generally been more cautious, suggesting that whether policy making proceeds via policy networks is a possibility that must be empirically investigated and established. There would seem, however, to be few policy arenas in which one or more policy communities do not exist.

The early Canadian literature made an important distinction between policy communities and policy networks. Borrowing from British scholars, Coleman and Skogstad (1990) used the term `policy community' to refer to the set of actors, public and private, that coalesce around an issue area and share a common interest in shaping its development. They adopted Pross's (1986) sub-division of the policy community into two parts: `the attentive public', who maintains a watching brief on developments, and `the sub-government', those actively engaged in policy design or implementation. The term policy network captures the structural or power relationship between the actors in the sub-government of this policy community (Coleman and Skogstad 1990). This conceptualization had the advantage of drawing attention to those (the attentive public) who were excluded from the sub-government/policy network. The framework has resonated with Canadian scholars, and the term `policy community' has moved into the lexicon of practitioners no less than it has into that of academics.

The observation that modes of interaction between public and private actors differed across policy domains (and countries) spurred the construction of typologies to delineate these different patterns of interest intermediation. Atkinson and Coleman were early typology builders

who demonstrated that the binary distinctions between strong and weak states, and between pluralism and corporatism, failed to capture the range of patterns of interest intermediation and state-societal linkages.[5] Their 1989 delineation of eight different policy network prototypes, subsequently used in the edited collection of case studies in Coleman and Skogstad (1990), distinguished networks on the basis of the structural resources of state and society actors: more specifically, the bureaucratic autonomy of societal interests, coordination capacity of state actors, and the mobilization or organizational development of societal actors. In their prize-winning book, *The State, Business, and Industrial Change in Canada*, Atkinson and Coleman linked these structural attributes directly to the adoption and success of different types of industrial policies. The Atkinson/Coleman/Skogstad typology postulated a variety of different power relationships between state and non-state actors, including hierarchical relationships (state directed networks), those where societal actors were in the driver's seat (clientele pluralist networks), and those where there was a more equitable balance between state and economic actors (corporatist networks). The typology has itself been refined by other Canadian scholars (Haddow 1999; Lindquist 1996; Pal 1992) but they have not abandoned its two structural axes (of state capacity/autonomy and organizational development of societal actors) or the premise that these attributes shape the power dynamic between state and society in a policy sector.

Whatever its appeal to Canadian analysts, the Canadian typology and distinction between policy communities and policy networks has not been equally embraced outside Canada. There are a number of other typologies, constructed on such dimensions as the number and type of participants, the functions performed, and the balance of power in the network (see, for example, Van Waarden 1992). Arguably the most widely referenced schema is the continuum developed by Rhodes and Marsh (1992) and refined by others (Daugbjerg 1998, Bressers and O'Toole 1998, for example). It contrasts policy networks in terms of their degree of integration, membership, and distribution of resources among members. At one end of this continuum are policy communities, as integrated, stable and exclusive policy networks; at the other end are issue networks of loosely connected, multiple, and often conflict-ridden members.[6] The appeal of the Rhodes and Marsh categories, and their reference to `policy community' as a specific type of policy network, has relegated the Canadian usage of `policy community' more or less to the fate of the Betamax video. Despite critics' complaints that the formulation is not very helpful (Atkinson and Coleman 1992; Peters 1998), the British distinction between policy communities and issue networks has emerged as the predominant one in the literature, and continuing efforts at typology development represent modifications of the British policy community-issue network continuum (see, for example, Daugjberg, 1998, Bressers and O'Toole 1998).

The debate about the merits of various network typologies continues, as do problems with operationalizing existing categories of networks. Identifying the type of network in place is often difficult and there is arguably too much discretion left to the analyst in terms of putting a label to a network. Nevertheless, delineating the salient dimensions on which policy communities/networks differ appears necessary if these concepts are to take us beyond a description of different sectoral patterns of interaction across public and private actors to an account of how the latter shape policy developments, including policy change. If policy networks are to serve as an independent variable, they must, after all, vary on some theoretically significant dimensions.

II. Criticisms and Re-conceptualization
However helpful the policy community/network concepts may be in providing a descriptive snapshot of a policy process at a given point in time[7], critics suggest there are important limits to their power to explain policy outcomes until three matters in particular are attended to. First, it needs to be demonstrated that it is attributes of the network itself, rather than the characteristics of the parties to the network, that is the primary explanatory element (Dowding 1995). Second, policy networks as explanatory factors must be linked more systematically to contextual factors. The latter are the source of not simply the policy ideas and agendas that generate change, but also explain why particular types of networks and communities, privileging certain actors and policy outcomes, arise. And third, recognition must be given to the role of `agency' in policy communities/networks; that is, the capacities of individual actors to reflect and act on their interests and preferences. Efforts to respond to the first and second criticisms, and demonstrate that the constraints (and opportunities) posed by the network and/or broader context shape behaviour and policy outcomes, underplay the independent impact of strategic actors on modes of interaction within the network and ultimately policy outcomes. What is called for, critics say, is an approach that views political actors, policy network structures, and contextual factors in interaction.

1. Policy Networks as Independent Variables
Drawing on insights from a wide body of literature-- including neo-institutionalism, ideational frameworks, and policy learning theories–analysts have attempted to explicate more fully the attributes of policy networks that shape behaviour of actors and that are, in turn, consequential for policy making and policy outcomes. Doing so has entailed incorporating into network analyses factors previously ignored or under-theorized.

The structural approach to policy networks favoured by Canadians and many British scholars posits that the structural attributes of the network shape the behaviour of the parties to the network. As Atkinson and Coleman (1992: 172) phrased it, "Networks are governed by sets of rules which determine how decisions are made and who participates in policymaking." Atkinson and Coleman did not, however, suggest where these rules that govern network activity come from or how they shape policy making. Implicit in the attention to the distribution of organizational and other (technical knowledge) resources across state and non-state actors is the premise that the resource or power dependency within the network shapes how decisions are made and by whom. By extension, networks in which actors are mutually dependent on the resources of one another to realize their objectives would then have a different mode of behaviour and different consequences for policy-making than those in which resources are unevenly distributed.

Efforts to specify how policy networks matter for policy making-- by, for example, shaping definitions of policy problems, the selection of appropriate solutions and thus the substance of public policies[8]–have been advanced by drawing on a wide body of literature which elaborates how formal and informal rules, procedures, and norms condition actors' behaviour. Consistent with institutionalist premises, and as relationships that are continuous over time,

5

policy networks can be conceived as structures that both "define the roles which actors play within networks" as well as" prescribe the issues which are discussed and how they are dealt with (Marsh and Smith 2000: 4). A number of analysts argue that networks that are stable over time and characterized by dense interactions among network members (what British scholars call policy communities) can foster shared values and beliefs. Ideas about desirable goals and instruments to realize them, as well as appropriate rules of conduct, become institutionalized over time to shape actors' behaviour within the network (Marsh and Smith 2000:6; see also Bressers and O'Toole 1998, and Daugbjerg 1998).[9] By contrast, they argue that such a transformative effect of network interactions is much less likely in less integrated and less institutionalized `issue networks.' Work by Canadian scholars has also contributed to how these dynamics vary, depending upon the power dynamic and stability of the policy network (Coleman et al. 1995)

This attention to the cognitive dimension of policy networks has been stimulated, at least in part, by two bodies of literature that posit shared cognitive and normative beliefs as a constituent basis for networks. These literatures are those on epistemic communities (Haas 1992) and advocacy coalitions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). The theorizing on advocacy coalitions, in particular, has been instructive in reminding policy network scholars of the strong ideational component to policy networks. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) argue that policy sectors are dominated by a winning advocacy coalition whose members share core beliefs about desirable policy objectives. The existence of other coalitions in the policy sub-system, advocating for other sets of ideas, creates an environment for learning within and across contending advocacy coalitions. The epistemic community approach also assumes that there are multiple and competing communities attempting to affect policy through their ideas.

This effort to bring a cognitive/normative element into analyses has added ideational factors as a second structural feature of some policy networks, normally those that are tight integrated (Marsh and Smith 2000: 6). Doing so strengthens the case that it is the existence and characteristics of networks themselves, rather than the properties of constituent actors, that shape behaviour, and ultimately, policy outcomes. But it may also undermine the contribution that individual actors make to the internal functioning of policy networks - a subject to which I turn in a moment.

2. Too much sectoral analysis, not enough macro context
Policy network analysts have been criticized for paying insufficient attention to the broader context of macro political, ideological, and economic structures within which policy networks themselves are situated. Those who attribute importance to broader structural factors–the nature of the political economy, for example–argue that these factors define the composition of policy communities and the pattern of interactions among network partners to a far greater degree more than adherents of this approach are willing to admit (Marsh and Smith 2000; Haddow 2002;). Their arguments are perhaps most compelling when posed as the following questions. Why do policy communities/networks exist in the first place? What explains who is included and excluded from the network? And why has this type of network and not another taken shape? These questions cannot be answered by recourse to the criteria on which network typologies are constructed without engaging in a tautological argument.

In fairness, Canadian scholars have long situated policy communities and policy networks within the broader structural and macro context. When Coleman and Skogstad (1990: 314) reviewed the empirical evidence of policy communities in Canada in the late 1980s, they concluded that "policy networks and policy communities are best understood when attention is paid to first, the broader political, economic, and ideological environment within which they function; and second, the legacy of history." In their appraisal of the literature on policy communities/networks in the early 1990s, Atkinson and Coleman (1992) signaled the need for further incorporation of the influence of macro-political institutions and dominant political discourses. They argued that these broader contextual factors helped explain the existence of particular types of networks. Subsequent case studies, for example Montpetit's (2002) comparative study of agro-environmental policy networks in Canada and the US, shows how macro political structures, like variations in federal arrangements, shape policy networks and interact with them to affect policy design. In other institutional settings, other scholars make a persuasive case for incorporating other institutions, including parliamentary institutions, into policy network analyses (Daugbjerg 1998).

What is missing in these case studies, some would argue, is more systematic theorizing about how agency, networks, and contextual factors together interact to shape policy making and policy outcomes. Phrased differently, there is a compelling need, critics say, to integrate micro-level explanations of human behaviour with macro-level accounts of the state and the political economy. British scholars have proposed a dialectical model that they claim does just that.

3. Networks as Agency, Structure, and Context in Interaction
Hay (1998, 2000) lays the theoretical groundwork for a model of policy networks that takes both agency, and structure–where the latter refers both to the pattern of relations of policy community actors as well as macro-level structures–seriously and integrates micro-level theories of human behaviour with macro-level accounts. Individuals, says Hay (2002: 131-132), act strategically to realize their intentions and preferences, and these preferences are not solely determined by contextual factors, be they material, ideational, or institutional. Individual courses of action are "informed by a strategic assessment of the relevant context"' in which individuals find themselves. The context favours certain strategies over others and therefore influences actors' ability to realize their objectives. Accordingly, actors modify their strategies, and sometimes their intentions as well, as they learn what is or is not feasible within a given context. But contexts are not `given'; their implications for behaviour are not always clear so that actors have only a partial understanding of them. At the same time, individual actors have scope `to appropriate' the context, assign it meaning, and through their actions change it. Hay (2002: 116-117) describes the dynamic interplay between structure and agency in the following way: "Actors influence the development of [a structured] context over time through the consequences of their actions. Yet, at any given time, the ability of actors to realise their intentions is set by the context itself."

Hay (1998) argues that policy networks should be seen as sites of strategic action whose modes of internal governance and ultimate impacts result from the interactive effects of context and agency. Such an interactive approach has been incorporated into a `dialectical' approach to

7

policy networks by Marsh and his colleagues (Marsh and Smith 2000; Daugbjerg and Marsh 1998; Toke and Marsh 2003). Although policy networks define the roles which actors play within networks, "resource dependencies are not fixed and ... the way in which they are discursively constructed by the participants affects their behaviour and the policy outcomes. So it is agents who choose policy options, bargain and conflict and break up networks; although all of these are also affected by the broader context" (Marsh 1998: 195).

The argument that there is a two-way relationship between network structures and political actors, as well as between the context within which networks operate and the network itself, is helpful in emphasizing that policy outcomes have feedback effects on the structure of the network and actors' strategies. Few would deny that contextual factors exogenous to the network affect policy communities/networks, but most would also agree that there is always scope for interpreting the `meaning' and implications of the context for human behaviour. In this respect, this dialectical model is a more intuitively satisfying account than structuralist accounts.

4. Policy Networks and Policy Change
Even as evidence mounts that policy communities/networks are helpful in explaining policy outcomes, a longstanding criticism remains that these concepts are not of much utility when it comes to accounting for policy change. After all, policy networks are, by definition, regularized patterns of social interaction whose constituent actors and modes of exchange are stable over time. Instances of appreciable, indeed paradigmatic, policy change in policy communities that had seemed impenetrable and whose networks were highly institutionalized provoked the criticism that the concepts explained everything until they explained nothing. The model of routine decision-making that the concepts of policy community/network are designed to capture is not necessarily deficient because it cannot accommodate non-routine decisions. Even so, if policy communities/networks are intermediary variables between broader contextual developments and policy outcomes, their role in both incremental and more radical, paradigmatic change must be theoretically specified. What is necessary is a model of policy change that assigns an independent role for the attributes of policy communities/networks rather than one that accounts for policy change solely in terms of the (shifting) resources and interests of network actors.

At least three theoretical thrusts are evident. One, suggested by Atkinson and Coleman (1992: 172), is to focus on changes in the composition and boundaries of the policy community: that is, the movement of new actors into the policy community, and within it, between the influential core or sub-government, and the periphery or attentive public. Developments exogenous to the policy community, like transitions in prevailing belief systems and political institutions, are a principal catalyst to these `boundary shifts' in policy communities (Coleman and Skogstad 1990: 320-326; Coleman and Atkinson 1992; Coleman and Perl 1999). Using different terminology but thinking along similar lines, Howlett (2002) elaborates the pathway from the injection of new ideas and actors in the policy community to either incremental or paradigmatic change. He posits policy networks as a crucial intervening variable; paradigmatic change occurs only when they are penetrated by new ideas and new actors.

8

A second line of theorizing about the intermediary role of policy networks in policy change focuses on the functional logic or internal modes of governance of the network. Network analysts have made an important distinction between networks that are governed by a consensus-based problem-solving calculus as compared to those where a self-interested bargaining dynamic is uppermost (Scharpf). Networks within which a problem-solving calculus is operative, like corporatist networks, are likely to engender a different path to policy change/innovation than are those where actor exchanges are motivated by self- and not collective interests. Drawing on these insights and using the example of agricultural policy change, Coleman et al. (1996) demonstrated that corporatist policy networks are more likely to facilitate a process of incremental and cumulative paradigmatic change as compared to pluralist policy networks where paradigmatic change is likely to be more abrupt.

The British, dialectical approach, introduced earlier, is a third line of theorizing around how policy networks evolve over time, with consequences for policy change. Hay (1998:49) suggests that network formation, transformation, and failure is linked to the willingness and capacity of "the various partners in this constitutive strategic alliance" to "find new foundations for, and bases of, collective strategic action." Their imperative to do so is triggered by changes in the broader context within which networks are embedded; as this context shifts, so does the perceived strategic interests of individual network partners and the balance of strategic resources among them. Says Hay (1998: 49, "Networks are transformed, then, in response to: *perceptions* of the changing external context; *perceptions* of network failure; or, indeed, the perceived realization of strategic goals." Discourse thus play a large part in Hay's account of the circumstances under which networks are likely to undergo piecemeal adaptation versus failure. Hay does not link network evolution directly to policy change, but it is not hard to arrive at propositions of this nature from his theorizing.

III. Keeping up with Developments in the `Real' World
The policy community/network approach originated, as I observed at the outset, as an effort to describe policy processes as they functioned in practice, rather than as formal lines of institutional and political authority implied they did. The world of `real' politics was defined to be one in which routine policy-making takes place in discrete and specialized policy subsystems with limited political visibility and in which state actors are dependent on the resources and/or support of non-state actors to accomplish its objectives. Policy networks are a response to this reality; they provided a means to coordinate resources of information, support, and authority across state and non-state actors. In this fashion, they also promised more effective government, and arguably-although this possibility was always more suspect–legitimate government as well.

The context and structures of contemporary governing have altered significantly in the past two or three decades. The internationalization of domestic policy-making, new structures and processes of multi-level governance, and new conceptions of governance constitute the new terrain of governing. Given these developments, what analytical purchase on policy making and governing is captured by the policy community/network concepts? And if the concepts remain theoretically salient, how does our understanding of their functioning have to be adjusted in light

of structural transformations in the domestic and political economies?

In answer to the first question, most, if not all policy network scholars, conjecture that policy communities/networks constitute as much a part of the institutional architecture of the domestic policy process today as they did in the past. The internationalization of the domestic policy arena and the emergence of multiple orders of government create a highly complex decision-making environment in which the interests and activities of a plurality of governmental and non-governmental actors need to be aggregated and coordinated. This context makes state actors as dependent as ever, if not more so, on the resources and support of non-state actors to realize their governing objectives.

The argument as to the centrality of policy networks in an institutional framework of fragmented political authority, high legitimation requirements, and limited state resources is arguably most advanced in accounts of governing in the EU. German scholars have long conceived of policy networks as an alternate mode of governing to markets and hierarchies; that is, to the hierarchical chain of command where the state alone delivers public goods and to the absence of coordinated action when discrete, uncoordinated actors are given the task (Borzel, 1998 for an overview). In an extension of this argument, several scholars describe governing via networks as the standard pattern of routine policy-making in the EU (Ansell 2000; Peterson 1995; Eising and Kohler-Koch 1999; Jonsson et al. 1998; Pfetsch 1998). In another context, Rhodes (1997) argues that network governance in the delivery of public goods is the dominant pattern in the UK. Rhodes describes this pattern as "governing without government" and attributes it to a number of developments, including new public management principles and the "hollowing out" of state capacity. There is a large literature, much of it published in the British journal, *Public Administration*, which details the existence of policy implementation/public management networks and speculates on their manner of functioning.

There are at least three interesting lines of theorizing and empirical inquiry about the functioning and role of policy communities/networks in the current context of internationalization, multi-level governance, and new `privatized' models of governance. One is to argue that transnational policy communities–some composed of experts, others of civil society actors–are more likely to emerge to link actors in the national and international arenas. Transnational policy communities are associated, in particular, with the delegation of authority to supranational institutions which are normally highly dependent on the resources and support of other actors for information and expertise, the implementation of policies, and indeed legitimacy. These transnational policy communities do not necessarily displace national policy communities, but they do inject new interests and new ideas into them, and can thereby cause policy network shifts as well. Coleman and Perl (1997) are instructive in hypothesizing these effects, delineating how transnational policy communities are likely to differ from national policy communities, and the types of policy networks that one can expect as transnational policy communities become important. Separately, Bernstein and Cashore (2000) have theorized and demonstrated empirically how the type of domestic policy network in place mediates the influence transnational actors have in domestic policy development.

The second thrust is to argue that policy networks are the crucial linchpin in the capacity

of governments to adjust their economies and public policies to the constraints and opportunities posed by globalization. In an argument that is highly reminiscent of Atkinson and Coleman's thesis on the linkage between policy networks and industrial policy, Weiss (1998, 2003) advances the proposition that globalization requires states to undertake transformative industrial strategies and that doing so is only possible in the presence of closely coordinated linkages between state and business. To the extent that globalization constrains domestic (elected) states' degrees of freedom, policy networks take on added importance as vehicles through which state officials can extract and coordinate the resources of information, support, and/or compliance that are necessary for both effective and legitimate governing.

A third body of literature points to the emergence of governing arrangements that bear similarities to policy networks in the form of entailing "horizontally coordinated governing arrangements" but differ in the crucial respect that state actors are not a prime factor behind their construction or even dissolution over time. This species takes the form of self-regulatory regimes or private interest governments in which interdependent organizations are the salient actors. They share attributes of policy networks in the sense that they form because of the mutual resource dependency across these private actors and they survive, in no small part, because of the trust that builds up as a result of these actors' continuing interactions. (For an example of the phenomenon, see Cashore 2002). The implications of these arrangements for theorizing around policy communities/ networks–do they supplant them?--are yet to be fully explored.

IV. An Agenda for Policy Network Inquiry in Canadian Politics
The preceding overview of the Canadian and international literature on policy communities/networks has summarized a number of propositions about how these concepts can help us understand who is involved in making public policy and why public policies have the substantive content they do. The claim is that if we can identify the actors in the policy community, the ideas and interests that dominate within it, and the nature of the power exchange across these actors, then we are well on the way to understanding why we get the public policies we do. We are only "well on our way" and not "fully there" by way of an explanation because we also need to know how policy community members interpret the broader context within which the policy network is embedded and how that context directly constrains or facilitates network formation and functioning. There is, of course, more to policy network analyses than this, as the literature survey reveals, but at its core, these are the central tenets of a policy community/network approach. As such, the approach provides a set of constructs for a systematic examination of public policy development.

Where might students of Canadian or comparative politics focus their efforts to capitalize on the insights of scholars who work within the policy community/network approach? First, I think it is important to recognize the diversity of policy networks. In their early typology building, Atkinson and Coleman pointed out that the resource-dependency across state and societal actors–and thus the power dynamic--varied considerably, depending upon the policy issue. To some extent, this recognition that policy networks diverge in terms of the symmetry/asymmetry of the power relationship between state and non-state actors has been eclipsed by a convergence around a conceptualization of policy networks as relationships that

are governed by a logic of consensus-building and in which consensual knowledge, shared values and beliefs, and trust are the predominant dynamic. Certainly there are some policy networks in which such a cooperative dynamic is present. But in many, if not most other policy networks, strategic actors are seeking to maximize the interests and ideas of those they represent. Conflict is thus inevitably a feature of policy networks, including those which are well institutionalized and share a common frame for addressing problems.

Second, there is a need to explore the role of policy networks in the implementation of government programs and the delivery of public goods and services. Students of Canadian public administration have observed the embrace (even if not to the same extent as in other Anglo democracies) of principles of new public management and their emphasis on delivering public programs through mechanisms other than the traditional bureaucracy. On the face of it, these initiatives provide fertile ground for the emergence of program/policy implementation networks. Indeed, Pal(1997: 214) has observed that "Policy communities and networks are important today not because they represent interests that have to be integrated into the policy process, or information that is crucial to analysis, but because they are relatively untried sinews for implementation and delivery." Is this the case? Further, do public-private partnerships, for example, resemble a market mode of governing more than a policy network (where the latter is a case of joint public-private action with the state retaining ultimate authority)? This question needs addressing and doing so will require empirical case studies.

Third, where do policy networks fit in with other patterns of state-societal relationships and other modes of democracy? Policy networks are an instance of functional democracy; the parties to these relationships are there by virtue of their representation of a constituency that performs economic or social functions closely linked to the policy issue or domain. Other modes of democracy are also fully evident in Canada, including representative democracy and participatory democracy. The latter term captures the initiatives by governments to extend their consultative efforts to a broad segment of the public, for example, via advisory committees or website comments.[10] To what extent do these modes complement or undermine one another in terms of not only their participants but their implications for effective and legitimate governing? This question is most pressing when functional democracy (policy networks) and representative democracy are juxtaposed with one another. Are those whose interests are articulated and aggregated in parliamentary committees, for example, the same groups who are at the centre of policy network exchanges? Students of Canadian policy networks, in my view, need to pay more attention to the role of parliamentary forums and parliamentary support in shaping exchange relationships within pluralist policy networks.

Fourth, and further to the last point, the contribution that policy networks make to effective and legitimate governing must be constantly weighed. A major premise of the policy community/network approach is that governments cannot govern without non-state actors. They need the latter's resources of information, knowledge, cooperation, and sometimes, administrative capacity. However, it is also evident that some policy networks are arguably barriers to effective governing; that is, they make exceedingly difficult policy reforms that would result in a more efficient or more just allocation of public resources. This observation is certainly not novel but it takes on added import when the contribution of policy networks to legitimate

governing is addressed simultaneously. Policy networks clearly have the potential to enhance output legitimacy (acceptability of policy outcomes) by virtue of their members' expert knowledge and their performance of important economic functions. They also have potential to enhance the input legitimacy (acceptability of decision-making processes) by virtue of their incorporation of representatives of `the public' directly into policy formulation or implementation. Nonetheless, they remain in uneasy tension with democratic norms of legitimation in representative democracies that vest ultimate authority in directly accountable elected representatives (Skogstad 2003).

And finally, there is a pressing need to investigate policy networks in the context of multi-level governance and internationalization. In my view, the emphasis on the intergovernmental dimension of Canadian federalism–and summit federalism-- has unduly and inappropriately neglected non-state actors and the role of policy networks in accounting for policy developments. There needs to be much more attention given to interactive relationships between policy networks and functional federalism in a context of multi-level governance where the supranational (or sub-provincial) order is an important site of decision-making. There are a number of hypotheses–many of which have been laid out earlier in this paper--regarding the impact of internationalization and multi-level governance on the formation of (transnational) policy networks, the de-stabilization of existing networks, their role in successful adjustment strategies, and so on. This is where my own work on agriculture and trade policy is currently focused and where I hope to have something interesting to say before long.

References

Ansell, Chris. 2000. The Networked Polity: Regional Development in Western Europe, *Governance*, 13(3), 303-333.

Atkinson, Michael M. and William D. Coleman. 1989a. Strong States and Weak States: Sectoral Policy Networks in Advanced Capitalist Economies*, British Journal of Political Science*, 19, 47-67.

Atkinson, Michael M. and William D. Coleman. 1989b. *The State, Business, and Industrial Change in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Atkinson, Michael M. and William D. Coleman. 1992. Policy Networks, Policy Communities and the Problems of Governance, *Governance*, 5, 2, 154-180.

Bernstein, Steven and Cashore, Benjamin. 2000. Globalization, Four Paths of Internationalization and Domestic Policy Change: The Case of Eco-Forestry in British Columbia, Canada, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 33, 67-99.

Borzel, Tanja A. 1998a. Organizing Babylon - On the different conceptions of policy networks, *Public Administration*, 76, 253-273.

Borzel, Tanja. 1998b. Rediscovering Policy Networks as a Form of Modern Governance, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 5, 2, 354-359.

Bressers, Hans Th. A. and Laurence J. O'Toole Jr. 1998. The Selection of Policy Instruments, *Journal of Public Policy*, 18, 213-239.

Campbell, John Creighton et al. 1989. Afterword on Policy Communities: A Framework for Comparative Research, *Governance*, 2, 1, 86-94.

Cashore, Benjamin. 2002. Legitimacy and the Privatization of Environmental Governance: How Non-State Market-Driven (NSMD) Governance Systems Gain Rule-Making Authority, *Governance*, 15(4), 503-529.

Coleman, William D. and Grace Skogstad, eds. 1990. *Policy Communities and Publ*ic *Policy in Canada*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman.

Coleman, William D. and Grace Skogstad, 1995. Neo-Liberalism, Policy Networks, and Policy Change: Agricultural Policy Reform in Australia and Canada, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 30, 242-263.

Coleman, W.D., G. Skogstad and M.M. Atkinson. 1996. Paradigm shifts and Policy Networks: Cumulative Change in Agriculture, *Journal of Public Policy*, 16, 273-301.

Coleman, William D. and Anthony Perl. 1999. Internationalized Policy Environments and Policy Network Analysis, *Political Studies*, 47, 691-709.

Daugbjerg, Carsten. 1998. *Policy Networks under Pressure: Pollution Control, Policy Reforms and the Power of Farmers*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

Daugbjerg, Carsten and David Marsh. 1998. Explaining policy outcomes: integrating the policy network approach with macro-level and micro-level analysis, pp. 52-71 in David Marsh, ed., *Comparing Policy Networks*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Dowding, K. Model or Metaphor? A critical review of the policy network approach, *Political Studies*, 43(2), 135-158.

Eising, Rainer and Beate Kohler-Koch, eds. 1999. *The Transformation of Governance in the European Union*. London: Routledge.

Haas. P.M. 1992. Introduction: Epistemic communities and international policy coordination: *International Organization*, 46, 1-35.

Haddow, Rodney. 2002. Interest Representation and the Canadian State: From Group Politics to Policy Communities and Beyond, pp. 501 - 522, in James Bickerton an Alain-G. Gagnon, *Canadian Politics*, third edition. Peterborough: Broadview.

Hartley, Sarah and Grace Skogstad. 2005. Regulating Genetically Modified Crops in Canada and the United Kingdom: Democratizing Risk Regulation, *Canadian Public Administration*, forthcoming.

Hay, Colin. 1998. The tangled webs we weave: the discourse, strategy and practice of networking, in D. Marsh, ed. *Comparing Policy Networks*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 33-51.

Hay, Colin. 2002. *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*. Houndmills: Palgrave.

Heclo, H. 1978. Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment, in A. King, ed. *The New American Political System*. Washington: American Enterprise Institute.

Howlett, Michael. 2002. Do Networks Matter? Linking Policy Network Structure to Policy Outcome: Evidence from Four Canadian Policy Sectors 1990-2000, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 35(2), 235-267.

Jonsson, Christer, et al. 1998. Negotiations in Networks in the European Union, *International Negotiation*, 3, 319-344.

Jordan, Grant. 1990. Sub-governments, policy communities and networks: refilling the old bottle? *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 2, 319-338.

Jordan, Grant and William A. Maloney. 1997. Accounting for Sub-Governments: Explaining the Persistence of Policy Communities, *Administration and Society*, 29(5), 557-583.

Lindquist, E.A. 1996. New agendas for research on policy communities: Policy analysis, administration, and governance, pp. 219-241 in L. Dobuzinskis et al., eds. *Policy Studies in Canada: The state of the art*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Marsh, David and Rhodes, R.A. W., eds. 1992. *Policy Networks in British Government*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Marsh, David, ed. 1998. *Comparing Policy Networks*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Marsh, David. 1998. The utility and future of policy network analysis, chapter 11 in David Marsh, ed., *Comparing Policy Networks*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Marsh, David and Martin Smith. 2000. Understanding Policy Networks: towards a Dialectical Approach, *Political Studies*, 48, 4-21.

Montpetit, Eric. 2002. Policy Networks, Federal Arrangements, and the Development of Environmental Regulations: A Comparison of the Canadian and American Agricultural Sectors, *Governance*, 15(1), 1-20.

Montpetit, Eric and William D. Coleman. 1999. Policy Communities and Policy Divergence in Quebec and Ontario, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 32, 691-714.

Pal, Leslie A. 1992. *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction*. Second ed. Scarborough: Nelson.

Pal, Leslie A. 1997. *Beyond Policy Analysis: Public Issue Management in Turbulent Times*. Scarborough: International Thomson Publishing.

Pemberton, Hugh. 2003. Learning, governance and economic policy, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5(4), 500-524.

Peters, Guy. 1998. Policy networks: myth, metaphor and reality, pp. 21-32 in David Marsh, *Comparing Policy Networks*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Pfetsch, Frank R. 1998. Negotiating the European Union: A Negotiation-Network Approach, *International Negotiation*, 3, 293-317.
Peterson, John. 2001. The choice for EU theorists: Establishing a common framework for analysis, *European Journal of Political Research*, 39, 289-318.

Pross, Paul. 1986. Group Politics and Public Policy. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Rhodes, R.A.W. 1997. *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity*

and Accountability. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Rhodes, R.A.W. 2002. Putting People Back into Networks, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 37, 3, 399-416.

Richardson, J.J. and Grant Jordan. 1997. *Governing under Pressure: The Policy Process in a Post-Parliamentary Democracy*. Oxford: Martin Robertson.

Sabatier, P.A. and Jenkins-Smith, H., eds. 1993. *Policy change and learning; an advocacy coalition approach.* Boulder: Westview.

Skogstad, Grace. 2003. Who Governs? Who Should Govern?: Political Authority and Legitimacy in Canada in the Twenty-first Century, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 36(5), 955-973.

Thatcher, Mark. 1998. The Development of Policy Network Analyses: From Modest Origins to Overarching Frameworks, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 10(4), 389-416.

Toke, David and David Marsh. 2003. Policy Networks and the GM Crops Issue: Assessing the Utility of a Dialectical Model of Policy Networks, *Public Administration*, 81(2), 229-251.

Van Waarden, F. 1992. Dimensions and types of policy networks, *European Journal of Political Research*, 21, 29-52.

Weiss, Linda. 1998. *The Myth of the Powerless State: Governing the Economy in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Weiss, Linda. 2003. Introduction: bringing domestic institutions back in, pp. 1-33 in Linda Weiss, ed. *States in the Global Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Walker, Jack. 1989. Introduction: Policy Communities as a Global Phenomena, *Governance*, 29, 1, 1-14.

Wilks, S. and Wright, M., eds. 1987. *Comparative government-industry relations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Endnotes

---

1. Americans have made important contributions, but not so much to the concept of policy networks as to those of issue networks (Heclo 1978), advocacy coalitions (Sabatier 1988), and epistemic communities (Haas 1990). However, Peters (1998: 32) observes that the concept has never had the traction in US public policy analyses that it has had elsewhere. He states that this is because "the network metaphor does not work particularly well in the United States" where interest groups have less legitimacy in the political process than they enjoy elsewhere.

2. Richardson (2000: 1022) describes the policy network approach as `a genuinely independent British approach.' It would be more accurate to indicate its patrimony as well in German literature. See van Waarden (1992) for a view of its origins in German scholarship.

3. See Rhodes (1998: chapter two) for a good overview. Marsh (1998) identifies four distinct approaches (the rational choice, personal interaction, formal network, and structural) which he says can be distinguished in part by how much weight they attribute to agency versus structure as a constituent feature of networks.

4. Much of the literature draws a distinction between the early Anglo and German literature, arguing that the former was driven by the objective of identifying how interest groups related to the state, whereas the latter identified networks as modes of governance (see Borzel 1998). I think this distinction exaggerates the differences between network scholars. Clearly, the assumption of those who focused on patterns of interest (group) mediation was that interest groups were potentially a vital actor in policy-making.

5. There are several good overviews of the history of the approach and concepts, including that by Thatcher (1998). See also Jordan and Maloney (1997) who trace the term `policy community' to American scholars. For the latter, see Walker (1989) and Campbell et al. (1989: 86) who use the term policy community to designate "those organizations and individuals in and around government who specialize in a particular policy area."

6. See Rhodes (1998: 44) and Jordan and Maloney (1997) for a detailed comparison of policy communities and issue networks.

7. Some who work within a network approach are still reluctant to accord networks explanatory power when it comes to policy outcomes. Rhodes (1997: 142), for example, states that networks are important in policy/program implementation, but questions whether they make a contribution at other stages in the policy process.

8. These examples of how the nature of the policy network affects policy-making does not do justice to the literature. Bressers and O'Toole (1998), for example, draw a link between policy networks and choice of policy instruments.

9. It is an important question, however, whether a shared cognitive and normative framework is not as much a prerequisite to membership in the policy community as it is an artefact of its

functioning.

10. See Hartley and Skogstad (2005) for elaboration of the three democracy models and an empirical application.