

Metagovernance, Network Structure, and Legitimacy: Developing a Heuristic for Comparative Governance Analysis

Administration & Society
2017, Vol. 49(9) 1223–1245
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DOI: 10.1177/0095399715581031
journals.sagepub.com/home/aas



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Abstract

This article develops a heuristic for comparative governance analysis. The heuristic depicts four network types by combining network structure with the state's capacity to metagovern. It suggests that each network type produces a particular combination of input and output legitimacy. We illustrate the heuristic and its utility using a comparative study of agri-food networks (organic farming and land use) in four countries, which each exhibit different combinations of input and output legitimacy respectively. The article concludes by using a fifth case study to illustrate what a network type that produces high levels of input and output legitimacy might look like.

Keywords

legitimacy, metagovernance, network governance, organic food policy

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Introduction

The literatures on network governance and Policy Network Analysis (PNA) have developed largely independently from one another (Blanco, Lowndes, & Pratchett, 2011) despite the fact that both schools share a concern for understanding policy networks, why they form, what influences their shape, and how they function (Klijn, 2008). Here, we take a key concern from each school—network structure from the PNA school and metagovernance, or steering capacity, from the network governance school—and combine them to examine their impact on levels of input and output legitimacy respectively. Although the relationship between legitimacy, network structure, and steering capacity has been analyzed independently, such as in the highly cited studies by Provan and Kenis (2008) and Ansell and Gash (2008), relatively little theoretical attention has been paid to how they may be combined. The heuristic developed in this article addresses this gap by examining the combined influence that network structure and metagovernance have on the levels of input and output legitimacy exhibited by different networked arrangements.

The heuristic developed in this article reflects a broader and growing interest in comparative research that more systematically explores how and why governance outcomes vary between different network types. For example, Baker and Stoker (2012) have recently argued that differences in the state's capacity to steer a network highlight the need for "a framework that can look at the capabilities of government to metagovern but can also capture the full range of resources that could be used by governments—from legislation through to story-telling" (p. 1029). We agree that access to resources and the ability to effectively deploy network management strategies are important in assessing the state's capacity to metagovern, but we also further develop this argument by examining how legitimacy varies when the capacity to metagovern intersects with the structure of a network. Here, it is worth briefly clarifying that we are using the term *heuristic* in this article to refer to an analytical tool that researchers can deploy as an approximate means of classification for helping them to make a more systematic comparison between a related set of case studies (Hay, 2004; Toke, 2010).¹ So, the heuristic that we develop is not a model or a theory; rather, it is a tool aimed at helping researchers to identify useful categories that they can use to organize their empirical findings and deepen their appreciation of how one set of variables relates to another.

The remainder of this article develops our argument at further length. First, we review how the network governance and PNA literatures have used the network concept to define three key concepts: metagovernance,

network structure, and legitimacy. We then use this discussion to outline a heuristic that examines how input and output legitimacy varies between different network types (inclusive and exclusive) and the state's capacity to metagovern (high and low). We illustrate this heuristic and its utility in the third section by examining how the networks that have developed around organic farming policy in Sweden, the United States, and Australia, and land use policy in Denmark, exhibit different levels of input and output legitimacy. The final section uses a fifth case, organic farming policy in Denmark, to illustrate a network type that has generated high levels of input and output legitimacy.

Network Governance and Policy Network Analysis

The network concept has grown in popularity over the past 20 to 30 years, leading to differences in the way in which it has been used. Despite these differences, most standard definitions use networks to refer to the formal and informal interactions that take place between public and private actors where both are interdependent on one another to achieve their policy goals (Börzel, 2011). Within this definition, metagovernance and network structure have been key concerns of the literature on network governance and PNA respectively. We recognize that there is much diversity within and between these two literatures not least between their American and European counterparts. Here, we place a particular focus on the European literature for reasons of space while recognizing that similar debates have been taking place in North America.² Through this discussion, we define the concepts that form part of our heuristic in the context of the broader governance literature. We begin by briefly defining how we are using the concept of legitimacy.

We recognize that there is a wide-ranging discussion about how to define, measure, and assess network governance outcomes, including their legitimacy (e.g., O'Toole, 2006; Sandström & Carlsson, 2008). Our approach focuses on the levels of input and output legitimacy that a network exhibits in relation to both the larger polity and the target population affected by a particular policy decision (see Lindgren & Persson, 2010, p. 463; Scharpf, 1999).³ Input legitimacy refers to the democratic quality of networks, including their inclusiveness, fairness, accountability, and transparency (see Klijn & Skelcher, 2007). This differs from output legitimacy, which refers to the effectiveness of networks, including their capacity to solve problems and deliver better policy outcomes (see Turrini, Cristofoli, Frosini, & Nasi, 2010). We accept that the input/output distinction is a simplification that does not capture all possible forms of legitimacy. However, our approach is broadly consistent with how legitimacy has been evaluated elsewhere in the network

governance literature such as in Provan and Kenis's (2008) concepts of internal and external legitimacy (other examples include Baker & Stoker, 2012; Börzel & Panke, 2006; Klijn, Steijn, & Edelenbos, 2010; Sandström & Carlsson, 2008). It is also supported by those frameworks that have explored how and why the capacity to deliver collective goods in a *legitimate* and *effective* manner varies between different settings and whether there is a trade-off or mutually reinforcing relationship between the two (e.g. Börzel, 2011; Klijn et al., 2010; Sørensen & Torfing, 2009).⁴ We now consider metagovernance and network structure as the two other key variables in our heuristic.

Network Governance School

The early literature on network governance argued that decentered and self-organizing networks had replaced hierarchy, and governance had replaced government (Rhodes, 1997). It is now widely acknowledged that this literature over-exaggerated the extent to which these trends had taken place (Marinetto, 2003). As a result, greater interest has been shown in how networks are steered with the aim of influencing and shaping particular forms of network governance. Metagovernance is a term that has emerged in response to this interest as "an umbrella concept that describes the role of the state and its characteristic policy instruments in the new world of network governance" (Bevir, 2013, p. 56). More specifically, metagovernance can be defined as the state's capacity to steer networks by influencing the context within which they function to ensure that its outcomes correspond with its broader interests, particularly in relation to the legitimacy of its policies.⁵

There is no "authoritative" account of the various strands in the literature on metagovernance (but see Sørensen & Torfing, 2006). There are accounts that examine metagovernance from the macro perspective of the "whole governance system" (e.g., Jessop, 2011; Kooiman & Jentoft, 2009;) and others that take a more meso- or micro-level perspective by examining how a network is steered and who has the authority to do so. For example, Sørensen (2006) argues that networks can be steered using a set of "metagovernance tools" (or network management strategies), including design, framing, management, and participation. The first and second tools are "hands off" because they can be implemented at a distance from the network, while the third and fourth tools are "hands on" because they are more interventionist. Although design and framing can be considered metagovernance strategies, management and participation are management strategies undertaken by the network manager *within* the network. This highlights how the act of network steering

is not just a purely technical matter. It is influenced by various factors, including the network's structure and who has the capacity to steer the network.

It follows that where political authority lies within a network is a key debate within the literature on metagovernance. For example, Torfing, Peters, Pierre, and Sørensen (2012) have argued that "the notion of metagovernance offers a way of balancing state-centred and society-centred views on how society and the economy are governed" in which metagovernors "cannot revert to traditional forms of hierarchical steering" but "must respect the capacity for self-regulation of the interactive governance arenas in order to preserve the commitment of the public and private actors" (p. 132). This reflects the extended debate, within what Sørensen and Torfing (2006) have called, "governability approaches to metagovernance." These approaches have stressed how metagovernance and network management take place in the shadow of hierarchy with a particular emphasis on how the state achieves effective and legitimate outcomes (see Note 5).

We capture this concern in our heuristic by assessing the *state's capacity to metagovern* on a continuum ranging from high to low. We draw on the distinction introduced by Torfing *et al.* above and associate different points on this continuum with state-centered and society-centered metagovernance respectively (see also Pierre & Peters, 2005, Chapter 2). Society-centric metagovernance lies at one end of this continuum. A society-centric approach refers to a situation in which non-state actors play a relatively dominant role in network steering. This may occur through design and framing as well as direct participation and management within the network. For example, Sørensen (2006) has argued that persuasion and storytelling can be used to shape the interests within a network, including "the formation of the meanings and identities that constitute the self-governing actors" (p. 101; see also Kooiman & Jentoft, 2009). Non-state actors may also help manage the interactions within the network by reducing the tensions that appear between participants by attempting to influence the policy agenda.

Conversely, state-centric metagovernance refers to a situation in which state actors play a relatively dominant role in network steering (e.g., Jessop, 2011). This could include attempts by the state to influence the strategic context within a network through either network design or network framing. Network design would involve attempts to influence the scope, characteristics, and procedures within a network by defining who can belong to the network and empowering certain actors within the network by giving them additional resources. Relatedly, the state could engage in network framing by formulating the goals to be achieved, allocating resources, and defining the legal basis for the network. The key point here is that it is the state that plays the key metagovernance role within the network.

As we have alluded to in the discussion above, state and society-centric approaches are often presented in opposition to one another (e.g., Bell & Hindmoor, 2009). However, thinking about where political authority and the capacity to steer a network lie in terms of a continuum, rather than a dualism, opens up more opportunity for comparative analysis. For example, both state and society-centric approaches to metagovernance share some common ground in recognizing the role that network steering plays in influencing the scope and potential outcome of a network despite disagreeing over who has the capacity to do so and how it can be achieved. This encourages a comparative focus when it comes to assessing how and why legitimacy varies relative to the state's capacity to metagovern a network.

Policy Network Analysis School

The PNA school and its many studies have demonstrated that legitimacy also varies according to how a network is structured. We are using network structure in this article in a similar way to how it has been used in the PNA school, namely, as a way of referring to the membership of a network (particularly its inclusivity/exclusivity), the forms of interaction that take place within a network, and the "rules of the game", norms and principles that guide and underpin it. This section briefly outlines the connection between this definition and the broader PNA school from which it is drawn.

The policy network school never really developed into a distinctive theory, and it has not been concerned with the macro issues that have animated those working in the network governance school.⁶ Furthermore, the state's capacity to steer policy networks has only attracted limited attention (Atkinson & Coleman, 1989; Smith, 1993). On the contrary, the PNA school has been mainly concerned with developing meso-level analytical frameworks.

The main debate within the policy network school has taken place between pluralists and structuralists. This debate has had a longstanding interest in exploring how certain interests and norms are privileged over others within particular policy networks and how this influences policymaking outcomes (Daugbjerg, 1998). This has led both sides of the school to develop heuristic devices to map policy networks and to suggest how the inclusion or exclusion of certain interests and norms affects policy outcomes, although other analytical dimensions can also be found in some network typologies. Table 1 shows one version of a network continuum, which is inspired by an earlier heuristic developed by Rhodes and Marsh (1992).

Table 1. Extremes on the Policy Network Continuum.

Dimensions	Policy community	Issue network
Membership	Very limited number of members Narrow range of interests represent	Large number of members Wide range of interests represented
Integration	Bargaining and negotiation Frequent interaction	Consultation Unstable pattern of interaction
Institutionalization	Consensus on policy principles and procedures to approach policy problems	Conflict over policy principles and procedures to approach policy problems

Source: Daugbjerg (1998).

Most network analysts use the policy community concept to characterize and describe a tight, closed, highly integrated and highly institutionalized network. These networks are established by a very limited number of actors who share a strategic policy agenda and possess resources, but are dependent on others to achieve their policy objectives. Policy communities involve the inclusion of some interests and the exclusion of others due to their institutional shape as well as the prevailing values and/or norms that underpin them. As Rhodes (1981) puts it, “Each policy community . . . has, in fact, an agenda of ‘relevant’ issues and problems. Only some matters will be deemed appropriate ones for decision” (p. 122). Moreover, each policy community will have “evolved its own approach to problems: established routines of contact, shared perceptions and values, and the stock of tried knowledge and policies [that] are brought to bear on new problems” (Rhodes, 1981, p. 118). These are derived from the network’s members who share a common view about the network and its broader social, political, and economic objectives. Hence, Rhodes highlights the way in which a network and its policies are shaped by both its norms and institutional structure.

The other extreme, an issue network, is characterized by relatively open access where the degree of integration and institutionalization is low and a lack of consensus exists on basic policy objectives, policy principles, and procedures. There may be occasional agreement on policy principles and procedures, but this does not rest on a deeply rooted consensus, set of norms, or widely held belief in the “rules of the game” (see Smith, 1993, pp. 126-127). This weak institutionalization and lack of agreement on beliefs makes it difficult for any one particular group to dominate the network.

The heuristics that were developed by the early PNA school continue to be used in empirical research and have been subject to further theoretical refinement (for recent examples, see Hindmoor, 2009; Osborne, 2010, Part V). At the same time, the PNA school has also been challenged by Dowding (1995, p. 142), and others,⁷ who have argued that any explanation of policy outcomes “lies in the characteristics of the actors,” rather than in the structural characteristics of the network itself. Marsh and Smith (2000) responded to this criticism by developing a dialectical model of policy networks in which they argued that an interactive and iterative relationship exists between network structure, context, policy feedback, and reflective agents. The dialectical model maintains that networks should be understood as political structures in which the capacity of actors to influence policy decisions varies according to “the institutionalization of beliefs, values, cultures and particular forms of behaviour” (Marsh and Smith, 2000, p. 6).

The PNA school has also analyzed legitimacy but with a tendency to focus on the relationship between network closure, input legitimacy, and the stability and robustness of the network, rather than output legitimacy. In particular, privileged access to a network is considered to be a major factor in biasing policy decisions towards the interests of insiders at the expense of outsiders and, thus, affecting input legitimacy negatively. This is based on the assumption that there is a positive relationship between inclusivity in a network and the level of input legitimacy that it exhibits.

A Heuristic of Four Network Types

Table 2 develops a heuristic of four different network types by combining network structure with the state’s capacity to metagovern to illustrate how different network types are likely to generate different levels of input and output legitimacy respectively.⁸

Table 2. Four Network Types.

		Network structure	
		Exclusive	Inclusive
The state's capacity to metagovern	High	I <i>State-centered exclusive governance</i> Medium input legitimacy High output legitimacy	II <i>State-centered inclusive governance</i> High input legitimacy Medium output legitimacy
	Low	III <i>Society-centered exclusive governance</i> Low input legitimacy Medium output legitimacy	IV <i>Society-centered inclusive governance</i> High input legitimacy Low output legitimacy

Source. Adapted from Fawcett and Daugbjerg (2012).

Cell I combines state-centered governance with a relatively exclusive policy network. State authorities play a central role in the network either through direct intervention or through the imposition of a shadow of hierarchy over its activities, but they prefer to interact with a limited number of actors to confer mainly output legitimacy on policy decisions. The limited number of actors in the network means that the network is more likely to have a stable institutional structure and agree on the norms and “rules of the game.”

This type of network is likely to produce medium input legitimacy and high output legitimacy. We expect medium input legitimacy because the state has the capacity to persuade, regulate, or change the network and its membership so that it considers the broader public interest, but this will take place at the same time as some actors will benefit from privileged access. We also conclude that this network type will tend toward generating relatively high levels of output legitimacy because decision making is likely to be more “efficient” and faster among a more exclusive group who may also be in a stronger position to ensure more effective policy implementation and delivery.

Cell II combines state-centered governance with a relatively inclusive policy network. The state will play a central role in this type of network, but the network’s relative inclusivity may hinder its members from reaching an agreement on the “rules of the game” or a shared set of norms about how best to proceed. This may require the state to undertake intensive and ongoing metagovernance to avoid policy deadlock.

This type of network will tend to produce high input legitimacy and medium output legitimacy. High input legitimacy results from the network’s relatively inclusive nature, although this may also increase the risk that the network is unable to develop effective policy solutions. At the same time, the state’s capacity to metagovern the network may enable it to reconstitute the network, create incentives for network actors to reach an agreement, or “force” network members to reach an agreement by imposing sanctions. Hence, medium-level output legitimacy is likely to characterize this type of network.

Cell III combines society-centered governance with a relatively exclusive policy network. The state’s capacity to metagovern this type of network is low, so societal actors may take a more active role in managing the network. This does not always mean that the state is entirely excluded from the network and its activities, but it is more likely that the network and its members will agree on a set of shared norms and “rules of the game.” We conclude that input legitimacy is likely to be low in this type of network because it is both exclusive and acts with relative autonomy from the state. However, the network may still deliver effective policy outcomes for many of the same

reasons outlined in Cell I. Nevertheless, we argue that this network type is likely to exhibit medium output legitimacy because there is a credible risk that non-state actors may capture the policy process and adopt measures that are narrowly focused on providing benefits for themselves (rent seeking).

Cell IV combines society-centered governance with a relatively open policy network, resulting in high input legitimacy, but low output legitimacy. Output legitimacy is relatively low because the network's inclusivity may lead to instability, policy deadlock, and stalemate due to weak institutionalization and the network's inability to develop a set of regulating norms. This will place a particular premium on ongoing attempts at metagovernance, although the state's weak capacity to metagovern means that this responsibility is more likely to fall to non-state actors who must have the necessary interest, resources, authority, and legitimacy to perform this role.

We have focused on the two different continuums and their extremes in the discussion above. In doing so, we have described the predominant position in the network governance literature, which states that there is a trade-off between input and output legitimacy. For example, Börzel and Panke (2006) have argued that "The more effective (network) governance is (or in Scharpf's terms: the higher the output legitimacy), the more problems of (input) legitimacy it suffers, and vice versa" (p. 154). However, others, such as Lindgren and Persson (2010), have argued the opposite, concluding that "input and output legitimacy are mutually reinforcing" (p. 450). This raises the question of whether network types that exist in intermediate positions on the two dimensions outlined in the heuristic above could deliver concurrently high levels of input and output legitimacy.

In terms of network structure, this balance appears to rest in-between the two extremes. In other words, policy networks should be neither too closed, such that they exclude certain interests and develop "rules of the game" that could potentially threaten input legitimacy, nor too open, such that they include all affected interests and result in policy deadlock, potentially threatening output legitimacy in the process. However, our conclusions are somewhat different when we examine the state's capacity to metagovern as state-centered governance appears to be crucial to achieving simultaneously high levels of input and output legitimacy. The state's role as a metagovernor is necessary for input legitimacy because it has the broader legitimacy necessary to make decisions about who to include and exclude from the network, although its flexibility will always be constrained by the broader structural and ideational context of the policy area in question. At the same time, the state also plays a crucial role in relation to output legitimacy because non-state actors are unlikely to command all of the necessary resources and authority to deliver high levels of output legitimacy. They are also unlikely to

be under the same obligation as the state to deliver collective welfare functions and may adopt rent-seeking behaviors. These considerations are particularly important in the current climate where non-state actors, particularly the voluntary sector, are being encouraged to undertake functions previously performed by the state, or, alternatively, in situations of “limited statehood” (Risse, 2011).

Comparing Legitimacy Between Network Types

In this section, four cases of agri-food policymaking are used to illustrate how the ideal network types in our heuristic can be applied in comparative governance analysis. Policy networks can be formal, formed in and around a committee, or informal, such as when a pattern of interaction has emerged around a policy or set of related policies. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide an extensive account of each case; rather, we use the cases illustratively to show how the heuristic can be used to examine variation in legitimacy across its four network types. We have examined the same policy sector, organic farming policy, in all but one of our cases to keep the policy variable as constant as possible. Organic farming has proven to be a very effective case for illustrating the relevance of our heuristic because policy convergence has been very limited, and significant cross-national variation remains in the type of networks and level of state capacity exhibited between different member states even within the European Union (Daugbjerg & Sønderskov, 2012; Michelsen, Lynggaard, Padel, & Foster, 2001). Unfortunately, we have not been able to locate a society-centered exclusive organic policy network (Cell III). Rather than leave this network type unexplored, we have used a related agricultural case, Danish land use policy prior to 1970. Of course, it would have been preferable to keep constant the policy area variable across all cases. However, there is still merit in using this case to illustrate Cell III in the table, because the cases have been selected on the basis of the two independent variables (in this case, exclusive network and low state capacity), rather than the particular nature of the policy area in question.

The cases were selected with the aim of achieving maximum variation in the state capacity and network structure variables from within the same policy field. From a research design perspective, we would have wished to maximize variance on the state capacity dimension (Peters, 1998) by including cases with inter-departmental competition. However, because organic food policy is considered the uncontested prerogative of agricultural ministries/departments, this variation is limited to those departments and their capacity to govern the policy sector. State capacity should be established at

the meso- rather than the macro-level, as it varies significantly across policy sectors within the same country (Atkinson & Coleman, 1989; Smith, 1993). In short, we have attempted to create as optimal analytical conditions as practically possible for illustrating the effect that these two variables have had on the level of input and output legitimacy respectively.

Cell I: State-Centered Exclusive Governance

Swedish organic farming policy is an example of a state-centered exclusive network in which farm interests have been privileged and the state has played a dominant role. Our heuristic suggests that this type of network will deliver medium input legitimacy and high output legitimacy.

The State Board of Agriculture (*Lantbruksstyrelsen* later *Jordbruksverket*) established the Committee on Alternative Farming in 1988. The Committee's membership included various organic farming interest groups, the established National Farmers' Federation (LRF), and the National Association of Consumer Cooperatives. The Consumer Cooperatives represented retailers on the Committee, but they rarely had a significant impact on its policy decisions despite their key role in promoting organic consumption.

The LRF quickly realized that it had a shared interest with the organic farmers in increasing the support for environmentally friendly farming. However, the state agricultural authorities were less dependent on the farm unions because they already had the administrative capacity to allocate grants and subsidies directly to organic farmers (Halpin, Daugbjerg, & Schwartzman, 2011). Thus, interaction within the network was mainly concerned with information exchange, even during the critical formative phase of the policy, which took place during the late 1980s (Rydén, 2003, p. 14). The State Board of Agriculture held the ring in the network and consulted organic producer interests largely on its own terms.

This arrangement continued at the same time as the Swedish government increasingly framed organic farming policy as an environmental policy measure. As a result, incentives were created for farmers to convert to, and maintain, organic production, but with little attempt to influence the actual demand for organic produce. Over time, the organic policy network became less formalized, but this did not affect the direction of policy due, in part, to the network and its underlying norms; it remained producer-oriented with generous organic farm subsidies and an objective to convert 20% of agricultural land to organic production by 2010 (Halpin et al., 2011).

However, the privileged position of organic producer interests did not go entirely unopposed. This is illustrated by the critical debate that followed the adoption of the 20% conversion target in 2001 in which existing norms were

increasingly challenged, particularly the idea that organic farming was an environmental good that benefited Swedish society. This suggests that the level of input legitimacy within this network was not very high, particularly given that most of the opposition to the target emerged from outside the network and the network itself continued to give low priority to retailer interests in most policy deliberations (Rydén, 2003).

Conversely, the fact that the conversion objective was reached suggests that output legitimacy was relatively high. However, by the early to mid-2000s, the policy focus on land conversion had reached its limits, as only a third to a half of total organic output was actually marketed as organic. This imbalance between production and consumption led the Swedish government to question the ongoing sustainability of its policy on organic farming (Swedish Government, 2006). This suggests that state-centered exclusive networks may struggle to achieve a high level of output legitimacy in the long term, particularly when that network responds to a relatively limited range of interests or is underpinned by certain norms that do not adapt to changing circumstances.

Cell II: State-Centered Inclusive Governance

The organic farming policy sector in the United States illustrates a state-centered inclusive network fairly well. Our heuristic suggests that this type of network is likely to generate high input legitimacy and medium output legitimacy.

The role of the U.S. government's role in the organic sector has been limited to the implementation of a set of government-endorsed baseline standards for organic food production and processing. This process was already underway by the 1990s and, by 1992, the United States had established the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on issues related to organic farming policy, including the development of a national set of organic standards. The Board had 15 members, including 4 farmers/growers, 2 handlers/processors, 1 retailer, 1 scientist, 3 consumer/public interest advocates, 3 environmentalists, and 1 certifying agent. This meant that the Board included representatives from all of the key stakeholder organizations even if its members were formally selected on the basis of their individual qualifications.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) used the NOSB's advice in 1997 to develop a set of baseline organic standards, but this occurred at around the same time as it contradicted the Board by introducing a proposal that would allow organic producers to use genetically modified organisms, irradiation, and bio-sludge (Boström & Klintman, 2006). According to

Boström and Klintman (2006), this reflected the USDA's view that the exclusion of "these . . . production processes (not "proven" to be unsafe) from the organic label would falsely imply an assumption that these three processes were less safe processes permitted under the organic label" (p. 173). From a broader perspective, it also reflected the USDA's view that organic food should be defined on the basis of product, rather than process-based standards, implying that only production processes that resulted in "measurable degradation" would be prohibited (Klein & Winickoff, 2011, p. 162).

The USDA's position confirmed the opinion of many within the US organic movement that it expressed the views of the conventional and biotech-intensive food industry (Boström & Klintman, 2006, p. 172). An intense debate followed in which the USDA received more than 275,000 responses from the public in what Boström and Klintman (2006) have called "the most controversial food issue in US history" (p. 172). The USDA was eventually forced into making a u-turn when it agreed to follow the NOSB's recommendations despite continuing to reserve its right to determine how antibiotics could be used in livestock operations (Klein & Winickoff, 2011, pp. 163 and 166).

In short, the 5-year policy deadlock on this issue illustrates that inclusive networks, characterized by high input legitimacy, may deliver relatively low levels of output legitimacy. Indeed, the deadlock was only broken when the USDA applied its capacity to metagovern and eventually sided with the organic industry by adopting a set of government-endorsed organic standards.

Cell III: Society-Centered Exclusive Governance

Our heuristic suggests that a society centered exclusive network type will exhibit low input legitimacy and medium output legitimacy. As explained above, we have used another agricultural case, Danish land use policy prior to 1970, to illustrate this.

The Danish government implemented a policy to cultivate moorland and "win back" the farmland that had been lost following its defeat in the second Schleswig war in 1864. Once most of the moorland had been cultivated, attention turned to draining wetlands and lakes and building dikes to reclaim land. An exclusive policy community was formed to implement this policy. It included a number of actors that supported land reclamation, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, farmer representatives, and the Heath Society (the association formed in 1866 to implement the cultivation of moorland), but it also excluded a number of other actors that were opposed to the policy, including the Nature Conservation Society, the Ministry of Fisheries, the

fisheries associations, the Ornithological Society, and the Outdoor Council (Pedersen, 2010, p. 352). The Land Reclamation Board became the main institutional venue for this network, which consisted of members who were affiliated to the Heath Society (Pedersen, 2010, pp. 350-52).

The Heath Society's pivotal role in the network meant that it was society-centered although it was officially formed around a government board. It initiated almost all proposals on land reclamation, persuaded reluctant land-owners to sign up to projects, and, with very few exceptions, won all of the contracts for such works, which were supported by generous state subsidies. These subsidies were ostensibly aimed at addressing high unemployment but, in practice, they were aimed at increasing agricultural production through the provision of additional farmland (Pedersen, 2006).

The exclusion of certain interests and the criticisms that they raised about land reclamation meant that this network exhibited low levels of input legitimacy. It was only when the policy suffered a steady decline in output legitimacy that the policy network and the norms that had formed around it were challenged, particularly the idea that it was in the national interest to increase the area of land suitable for cultivation. In a narrow sense, the network had actually been very successful in implementing reclamation projects with an average of one project a week being approved by the Board between 1940 and 1970. However, by the 1960s, the government was forced into making a policy u-turn mainly due to an increased awareness of the environmental damage caused by the reclamation projects, such as water pollution, loss of wildlife, and damage to aquatic life (Pedersen, 2010). This resulted in the program's closure in 1970 and the eventual termination of the Land Reclamation Board and the policy network that had formed around it.

Cell IV: Society-Centered Inclusive Governance

The policy network that surrounds organic farming policy in Australia illustrates our fourth network type, which is characterized by society-centered inclusive governance. Our heuristic suggests that this network type will deliver high input legitimacy and low output legitimacy.

The Australian organic farming policy network is a very loose construction, which suffers from contested relationships among its members, including the Organic Federation of Australia and Biological Farmers of Australia (Halpin & Daugbjerg, 2008, p. 199; Wheeler, 2011, p. 905). Certification companies have acted as *de facto* industry spokes groups, but they are also divided. This has meant that the network and its members have not been able to develop any particularly strong "rules of the game" or norms. As Halpin and Daugbjerg (2008) have argued,

Measured against the governmental desire for a united and encompassing organisational entity, these certifiers have geographical biases . . . Moreover, they have cultivated subtle differences in culture and ethic. For example they differ over distrust of supermarkets, their attitudes to governmental regulation, and their approach to information sharing. (p. 198)

The state has very limited capacity in organic farming policy and has not signaled its willingness to steer the network. On the contrary, the Australian government has consistently stated a preference for a society-centered approach, arguing that “in addressing its many challenges, the industry ‘ . . . must work together under the leadership of the Organic Federation of Australia to ensure continued success’” (former Parliamentary Secretary, as cited in Halpin & Daugbjerg, 2008, p. 200).

This suggests that the policy network surrounding organic farming in Australia has been characterized by high levels of input legitimacy and conversely low levels of output legitimacy. For example, whilst the sector has been able to agree on organic export standards, Australia has been unable to reach an agreement on mandatory minimum organic production standards for its domestic market unlike almost all other Western countries. In the absence of a set of government standards, an NGO, Standards Australia, issued its own set of voluntary standards in 2009 (Daugbjerg & Halpin, 2010, p. 146; Wheeler, 2011, p. 894).

Achieving High Input and Output Legitimacy in Networks

The four cases reviewed here have illustrated what our heuristic suggests, namely, that levels of input and output legitimacy are likely to vary between different network types. However, the more interesting question that we raised in an earlier section is whether this will lead to a trade-off or a mutually reinforcing relationship between input and output legitimacy.

The Swedish organic food policy and Danish land use policy cases both suggest that high output legitimacy can be achieved despite low levels of input legitimacy. However, our findings also indicate that this situation is unsustainable in the longer term. Conversely, the U.S. and Australian organic governance networks are inclusive and, thus, exhibit high levels of input legitimacy, but also relatively lower levels of output legitimacy. This indicates that a high level of input legitimacy does not necessarily lead to a high level of output legitimacy and that there is a potential trade-off between input and output legitimacy.

It would, however, be wrong to conclude that there is a necessary trade-off between input and output legitimacy on the basis of these four case

studies as they have been selected specifically because they are illustrations of the four network types depicted in Table 2. When the two dimensions of the heuristic are viewed more as continuums then our earlier theoretical discussion suggested that a state-centered relatively inclusive, but not entirely open, network could deliver concurrently high levels of input and output legitimacy. This is illustrated by the organic food policy network in Denmark.

The Danish Organic Farming Council (later renamed the Organic Food Council, OFC) was established in 1987 to advise the Minister of Agriculture/Food on proposals related to the promotion of organic farming, certification standards, and inspection activities. Initially, the Council was composed of representatives from the organic and biodynamic interest associations, the established farmers' associations, the Consumer Council, the Ministry of Agriculture (and its agencies), and the Ministry of the Environment (Lov no. 363, 1987, Article 2). Subsequently, the Council was enlarged to include representatives from the Agricultural Council, the Labor Movement, the Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs (later abolished), the food processing industry, the Nature Conservation Society, and the retail sector. This created a policy network that was relatively inclusive, although some of the smaller organic interest groups have been excluded.

The Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Fisheries was strongly committed to promoting organic farming (Daugbjerg & Halpin, 2010, p. 147). This is one of the main reasons why it moved to strengthen its strategic and operational capacity in organic food policy from a very early stage. The Ministry proactively metagoverned the network and played a lead role in delivering organic subsidies, encouraging the various parties to adopt a "shared vision", administering the state organic label, and inspecting all market actors in the organic food chain (Daugbjerg & Halpin, 2010, pp. 147-48, see also Lynggaard, 2001).

In this case, the Danish government appeared to be able to achieve relatively high levels of input and output legitimacy. Input legitimacy was high given the network's relative inclusiveness, but the level of output legitimacy was also high. This was helped by the substantial subsidies that the Danish government provided to market organic food and its role in helping the various parties to reach an agreement on key strategic issues such as the labeling and inspections regime. This relatively unique feature of Danish organic food policy contributed to increased sales and exports of organic produce and a comparatively high organic share of total food sales (Daugbjerg & Sønderkov, 2012). Furthermore, the state organic labeling scheme has generated much higher levels of consumer confidence than private organic labeling schemes in other countries (Sønderkov & Daugbjerg, 2011).

Conclusion

The heuristic developed in this article is a first attempt to classify why legitimacy varies between different network types using insights from the network governance and PNA schools. The five cases that we have outlined illustrate how our heuristic can be used in empirical research as well as how the state's capacity to metagovern and network structure may combine to produce different levels of input and output legitimacy. There is not necessarily a trade-off between the two forms of legitimacy—relatively high levels of both can be achieved simultaneously.

In relation to organic food, our analysis demonstrates the importance of designing networks that can attain both a high level of input and output legitimacy. The Danish organic food policy network demonstrates that this can be achieved, although legitimacy in the four other cases suggests that these network types deliver sub-optimal outcomes. This leads us to conclude that organic policy makers cannot rely on inclusive governance networks with high levels of input legitimacy to produce a high level of output legitimacy; rather, achieving high levels of input and output legitimacy depends on the state having both the capacity to metagovern and policy networks that are neither too open nor too closed. This raises potentially interesting questions, particularly in policy contexts where a government experiences difficulties in controlling a network's membership. It also raises the need for more systematic comparative case study research in other policy sectors before any further claims can be made concerning this heuristic and its broader applicability.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this article was presented at the 61st Political Studies Association Annual Conference, 19th to 21st April 2011, London. We would in particular like to thank Josie Kelly and the three anonymous reviewers of this journal for constructive comments.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Carsten Daugbjerg thanks the International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems for funding.

Notes

1. The debate between heuristics and models in Policy Network Analysis (PNA) is a longstanding one (see Dowding, 1995; Marsh & Smith, 2000).
2. This may suggest that our conclusions could be extended beyond the European literature, but we cannot explore these links in detail here. For example, there are obvious parallels between the concerns of the PNA school and those of the Advocacy Coalition Framework as well as similar debates around state capacity and network steering in the literature on network governance.
3. We also recognize that a further distinction can be made between outputs and outcomes, but we use these terms interchangeably here (O'Toole, 2006, p. 299). We would like to thank Josie Kelly for this point.
4. For example, Sørensen and Torfing (2009, p. 248) outline 24 different variables that contribute toward the democratic and effective functioning of governance networks whereas Klijn, Steijn, and Edelenbos (2010) distinguish between different "process" and "content" outcomes. The variables identified by these two accounts both map onto concerns related to input and output legitimacy respectively.
5. There are different approaches within the literature on metagovernance. For example, Sørensen and Torfing (2006) identify four: interdependence, governability, integration, and governmentality. The way that we use metagovernance is closest to the governability approach. Governability approaches stress how metagovernance and network management take place in the shadow of hierarchy. They also examine the resources that the state has to achieve effective metagovernance and how these resources are deployed.
6. For an exception, see Daugbjerg and Marsh (1998).
7. See also Bevir and Richards (2009) who challenge the PNA school from an interpretivist position.
8. This heuristic is developed for networks at the national level, but it can probably be applied to networks at other scales.

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