

# What does governance mean? From conception to elaboration

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## 1 Introduction

The mission of sustainable development is in several respects extra demanding for the guidance of societal change (Bressers & Rosenbaum 2000: 532-536). This is one of the reasons that in social science studies on sustainable development, even more than in other domains, the concept of 'government policy' often has been more or less replaced by the broader concept of 'governance'.

In recent decades there have been many changes in how the term 'government policy' is understood. Views on government policy have changed in recent years through a growing recognition that government alone does not determine the future development of sectors in society, but that this is shaped through the interaction of many actors. Within such networks of actors, the government can adopt a position that is more central and dominant or one that is less so. This change in view represents a shift in accent from government policy, or 'government', to 'governance'. The 'governance' pattern consists of all the consequences of the interplay between attempts to intervene by all the actors involved (Kooiman 1993: 258).

In addition, interest is growing in the fact that sectors in society are not governed on one level, or on a number of separate levels, but through interaction between these levels. These levels often reflect the various tiers of government, but do not have to; other powerful actors may be present that provide direction at a certain level where no government authority is active. In the same way, actors may also operate on more than one level. One reason for this is a growing recognition that the problem situation itself often contains various interacting levels (such as environmental problems). This whole has been called 'multi-level governance'.

Governance is a broad term, making it suitable for our purposes; but it is also a confusing term which is used in many different ways in the literature (Peters & Pierre 1998, Lynn et al. 2000-a, 2000-b: 234, O'Toole 2000: 276). Björk & Johansson (2000: 1) state in their review paper: 'There are almost as many ideas of governance as there are researchers in the field.' So there is clearly a need for a more synthesizing elaboration of this conception.

This chapter develops such an elaboration a model of 'governance' as an aid for comparing governance structures. Various current approaches in policy science focus on changes in government policy when making comparisons (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993, 1999; Baumgartner & Jones 1993). Next to such focus on (long-term) changes in policy (diachronic study), also comparing policies in a certain sector in different areas (synchronic study) should be supported by the elaboration of 'governance' that we develop in this chapter. As far as developments in time are described, this is primarily intended to provide indications of the relations between the various elements

of the governance structure. The model is furthermore concerned less about the actual interaction processes (activities and interactions between actors) than the more structural elements of governance, which form both the inputs and outputs of such policy processes. In the context of this volume we will give some extra attention to the distribution of governance between the various scales and levels.

The questions examined by this chapter are:

1. Which elements make up a governance structure?
2. In what ways do these elements influence each other?

In section 2 we develop a model of governance based on various approaches taken in studies of public administration. In developing our vision on the elements of the term 'governance', we start with the term 'policy' and expand this, using various elements, into 'governance pattern'. Section 3 presents a vision of the mutual influences between the elements of governance, including the multi-scale issue. Section 4 provides a short conclusion. The model as developed theoretically here will be applied to the comparison of water management in Florida and the Netherlands in Chapter 6.

## **2 Elements of governance**

### *2.1 Introduction*

In this part of the chapter we will try to develop as complete a model as possible of the elements of a 'governance pattern'. Using this model, we can compare the governance patterns and the changes they undergo in different sectors and/or different places. We develop this model through a synthesis of policy science approaches, and the different emphases in various approaches each have a place in the model. When developing the model we start from the concept of 'policy', which we build up using the various elements until we arrive at a 'governance pattern'.

For this purpose we will draw on different literatures. Both in the literature that sails under the flag of 'governance' and in the more general policy science literature there is an overwhelming load of various aspects that can and should be considered for including in a synthesis model of governance. At first glance this may seem to make this endeavor a 'mission impossible'. But here it is helpful that there is a considerable amount of 'old wine in new sacks'. Many new approaches present only one or two new aspects or a new emphasis on one or two known aspects. So it makes sense to first state our own starting point explicitly, and then expand it with specific additions from the literature.

### *2.2 Interaction processes and 'instrumentation theory'*

The policy science approach as it developed at the University of Twente emphasizes the character of policy processes as social interaction processes. Over the years attention has shifted from viewing policy as a sort of production process with semi-finished products and an end product to a vision

in which the actors participating in the process are the central concern. In this vision the course and outcomes of the processes depend not only on the inputs to the process but mainly on the characteristics of the actors involved, particularly their objectives, information and power. All other factors that influence the process do so because and in so far as, they influence the characteristics of the actors involved. This also applies to the influence of policy instruments. Not all characteristics of actors, however, are determined by policy, and so it is not possible to describe a policy without paying attention to the actors involved in that policy themselves (Bressers, 1983).

Moreover, the processes in this vision are not only linked in one series or cycle, but are part of a large number of societal processes in which government authorities sometimes participate and sometimes do not. All these processes are connected to other processes in a complicated web via their inputs and outputs, and possibly indirectly linked to *all* other processes. Each definition of a sector of society draws a more or less arbitrary boundary round a cluster of processes in this web. While the boundaries between policy development and policy implementation often are somewhat diffuse in research practice they are often drawn to coincide with those between a higher and lower tiers of government (Bressers & Honigh 1986).

The 'instrumentation theory' which stems from these perspectives, focuses on the application and effects of instruments on the target groups of policy (Bressers & Klok 1988, Klok 1991, Bressers 2001). It also takes account of the fact that instruments do not influence the characteristics of the actors involved separately but rather as a package or as an 'instrument strategy'. Instruments and strategies have various properties, for example a certain proportionality between target group behavior and government reaction to this behavior, or giving resources to the target group or taking these resources away from the target group. Such properties of instrument strategies affect their applicability in practice. Klok emphasizes that some of the instruments are designed to give those implementing the policy the power to apply other instruments (Klok 1991: 176-194) and also that the implementing organizations depend on being equipped with sufficient capacity and expertise (idem: 163-164; see also Bressers 1983: 218-237 and 256-274). In his thesis, Arentsen (1991) exhaustively discusses the relation between the policy organization and policy implementation.

Later publications on this approach (Bressers & Kuks 1992; Bressers, O'Toole & Richardson 1994; Bressers, Huitema & Kuks 1994) have paid more attention to the interrelations between the actors, including actors that do not directly participate in the processes under examination. Klok (1995) gives primary importance to the allocation and removal of resources in such relations and in the classification of policy instruments. The mutual relations between actors within such policy networks are seen as an important factor in the development of the content of policy (Bressers 1998, Bressers & O'Toole 1998, Ligteringen 1999). In addition, the relation between policy processes at the various administrative levels is explicitly dealt with (Bressers, Kuks & Ligteringen 1998). During this theoretical development, the approach to policy as an interactive process and the instrumentation theory based on this gradually grew into an integrative policy science approach, uniting elements from a variety of other approaches.

This discussion brings us to the following provisional elements of governance: (1) Administrative- and other scale levels, (2) Actors in the policy network, (3) Objectives, (4) Strategies and instruments, (5) Organization and resources of implementation. In the next subsection we'll compare these elements with the issues that are emphasized in a part of the literature that deals explicitly with 'governance'. While doing this we will also make some limitations of our elaborated model explicit.

### 2.3 Governance literature

If you examine the literature in which the term 'governance' is prominent, the first impression is of the many ways the term is used and the range of different contexts in which it is used. Although our goal is to broaden this policy concept, we must inevitably make an initial choice from among this diversity of approaches. The following discussion is an introduction to the way we use the term 'governance' in relation to the diversity of uses in the literature.

Rhodes (1996) lists six categories of publications on governance. Our impression is that two of these differ rather strongly from the other categories, in both interpretation and context (compare Björk & Johansson 2000: 1). 'Corporate governance' comprises a large number of theories and studies on the management of companies, often from a stakeholder perspective. 'Good governance' is a term that is often used in development studies to indicate the administrative capacity as the context for sustainable or otherwise successful development. In these two categories of publications the term is generally used without a very specific meaning, in about the same way as we would use the term 'administration'.

The other four categories are, in our opinion, more closely related to each other and to the debate within the policy science community. We will return to these later. But first, there is a seventh school represented by numerous publications, that of 'international governance'. Within the field of international relations it has long been usual to refer to the administrative relations within and between various international organizations and associations by the term 'governance'. Many of these publications use the term without further explanation and implicitly meaning much the same as 'public administration' (e.g. Marks et al. 1996, Hovden 2000, Jordan 2000). Other publications do make specific use of the term 'governance' (e.g. Young 1994, Rosenau 2000), and these are assigned to the other categories depending on the meaning given to the concept. The *first limitation* on the way in which we use the term 'governance', therefore, is that we ignore the use of the term in business administration, development studies and international relations in so far as it simply means 'administration', or in any case has a place in debates outside the public administration or policy science disciplines.

The other four categories of publications that Rhodes identifies are: the minimal state, new public management, socio-cybernetic systems theory, and self-regulating networks. The common factor in all these is that they search

for forms of coordination that do not fit comfortably with the ‘market’–‘hierarchy’ distinction (compare Arentsen & Künneke 1996, Rosenau 2000: 11–16). At the beginning of the 1980s there was talk of ‘overloaded polities’ in which ‘regime stability is threatened by...the related problems of governmental effectiveness and popular consent.’ (Rose 1980). The reaction to this was ‘less state and more market’. But this in turn raised further questions. Thinking in terms of governance is also an answer to the ‘erosion of the state’ during the 1980s. Rhodes (1997: 19) writes: ‘The process of hollowing out...is central to understand the shift from a unitary state to a differentiated polity.’ Instead of discussing these four categories separately (see e.g. Börk & Johansson 2000: 3–7) we prefer to introduce another distinction.

Each of these approaches is built to a greater or lesser degree not (only) on an empirical vision but also, and more importantly, on a normative vision. This normative vision or (bias) almost always implies that a more limited role or presence of government authorities delivers better governance. This bias is weakest in the ‘socio-cybernetic approach’ (e.g. the work of Kooiman (1994), which we think is proposed as a rather one-sided exponent of this bias) and most obvious in the idea of the minimal state. However, in this article the normative debate is not our greatest interest. Here we investigate the administrative aspects, which are highlighted under the banner of ‘governance’, and which possibly deserve a place in a broad description of the administration of a certain field at a specified time and place. Therefore, the *second limitation* on the way in which we use the term ‘governance’ in this article is that we ignore the normative debate on the role of government authorities, in which the term is often used (as it is elsewhere, see Kuks 2000). Implicitly, our position in the debate is that ‘governance without government’ (Peters & Pierre 1998: 223) is not a goal in itself.

The *final limitation* is related to this issue. Some authors are looking mainly for a more or less stable institutional arrangement in addition to the market, in which communities of private actors are able, without ‘outside intervention’, to promote their collective interests. In contrast, our interest does lie in such ‘outside interventions’, irrespective of whether they are intentional or not, or undertaken by one or more government authorities with horizontal or vertical (hierarchical) relations. In doing this we concentrate more on change than stability. It also means that many of the rules-in-use, customs and traditions, property rights, etc. are seen more as the subject matter of governance to be influenced – and as such part of the instrumental strategy – rather than as being the main business of the governance system (compare Young 1994: ix and 163<sup>1</sup>).

It is because these institutional rules can be considered as a description of the arena in which the actors operate, and so can be linked to the modules of instrument theory (Fenger & Klok 2000), that we are looking for their context:

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<sup>1</sup> Although Young looks for the substance of governance in institutional arrangements, March & Olson (1995: 11) put thinking in terms of governance *opposite* the institutional perspective, as a consequence of the ‘exchange’ perspective. For them ‘the core artistry of governance is winning coalitions and policies’. Clearly, we do not agree with either.

a broader concept of governance. If, for example, research into the implementation of policy shows that many people do not apply for rent rebate because they do not realize that they fall within the scope of the regulations, or do not want to ask for money, or do not feel they have the right to a rent rebate, this provides direct explanations for their behavior. But it raises a further question: what is the explanation-behind-the-explanation? In the next section, therefore, we will not treat institutional approaches instead of other policy science approaches, but alongside them.

#### *Multi-level coordination & multi-faceted problems*

The term 'multi-level' has become the most common prefix attached to 'governance'. It relates not only to its multiple nature but also particularly to the mutual interdependence between levels (Smith 1997). According to Lundqvist (2001) the challenge of 'environmental governance' is to develop 'social choice mechanisms that combine two ostensibly incompatible qualities: authoritative (including the possibility of state intervention) and flexible, self-adjusting and "reflective", with a considerable influence on those governed.' Further, there is a 'more encompassing multi-level view of governance needed', for one reason because 'problems (like sustainability issues) are multi-faceted'. The component problems 'require different scales .. and the interactions between the scales require multi-level coordination'. Without such coordination there may be a 'race to the bottom', with disastrous implications for the social problem. But this does not have to involve a higher authority. In certain circumstances, multi-level or 'inter-level games' can lead to a 'race to the top' (Scharpf 1997). Blomquist & Schlager (1999: 7, 39–43) also emphasize the relation between the many facets of the problem and the horizontal and vertical coordination this requires. The same goes for Rosenau (2000: 10–11).

#### *Multi-actor networks*

Rosenau (2000: 5) also assumes the multi-level character of governance. He talks of '...evolution of "multi-level" governance, a form of rule in which authority is voluntary and legally dispersed among the various levels of community where problems are located and local needs require attention.' But a little later he adds a second element, the '...shifting the balance between hierarchical and network forms of organization, between vertical flows of authority and horizontal flows.' He also draws on Rhodes (2000: 60), citing: 'Networks are the analytical heart of the notion of governance in the Study of Public Administration.' One of the advantages ascribed to networks is that they are essential for learning processes (Knoepfel & Kissling 1998). Kickert (1997), in his overview of 'public governance in the Netherlands' (and in his other work), pays much attention to network approaches.

#### *Multi-instrumental steering mechanisms and multi-resource-based implementation*

O'Toole (2000: 276–279) treats governance in the context of studies of the implementation of policy strategies. He calls governance 'difficult to denote with precision', but as well as the multi-level and multi-actor aspects he points to 'the multivariate character of policy action'. He refers to Milward & Provan (1999: 3), who state: 'The essence of governance is its focus on governing

mechanisms – grants, contracts, agreements – that do not rest solely on the authority and sanctions of government.’ He also points to the work of Lynn et al. (2000-a&b), who approach governance from the public management perspective, with roots in the political economy literature. Although they set themselves the task of developing a broad and comprehensive model of governance, their background is clearly present in their thinking. They begin by stating that policy programs are implemented in a web of many diverse actors, an assumption about policy implementation that marks it out from the rest of the literature. As a consequence, the model of governance they go on to develop concentrates not only on the objectives (including output indicators) and instruments (‘treatment’) of policy, but also emphasizes the resources and organization of implementation. The model differs from more usual overviews mainly because it clearly shows that these aspects of organization and resources can take a wide variety of forms and have a multi-functional character (p. 257–258). Peters & Pierre (1998: 226–227) also consider, besides the emphasis on networks, the ‘blending of public and private resources’ and ‘the use of multiple instruments’ to be features of the governance concept.

This exploration of the governance literature has not turned up much in the way of new elements for the five aspects mentioned at the end of section 2.2, but it has slightly broadened our definition of them. In our opinion, the elements of governance are:

1. Levels (not necessarily administrative levels): governance assumes the general multi-level character of policy implementation.
2. Actors in the policy network: governance assumes the multi-actor character of policy implementation.
3. Perception of the problem and objectives (not just the objectives): governance assumes the multi-faceted character of the problems and objectives of policy implementation.
4. Strategies and instruments: governance assumes the multi-instrumental character of policy strategies for policy implementation.
5. Resources and organization of implementation: governance assumes the complex multi-resource basis for policy implementation.

Using these five elements, we believe the governance pattern can be described for a certain policy field in a specified place and time. But what should be described within the framework of these five elements? Which questions (or indicators) can operationalise these elements (or dimensions). As the governance literature itself has given no clear answer to this, the obvious step in this situation is to work from a broader inventory. In the next section we describe these five elements of governance in more detail.

#### 2.4 *Visions and synthesis*

These elements were further developed using various policy science approaches. Of course, many of these approaches have other purposes than identifying elements of the content of policy and governance. For example,

they may be used to explain long-term policy changes, or the effectiveness of policy instruments. It was not the intention to do justice to the approaches in their own right, but to use these approaches as sources of inspiration for our goal of building as complete a model as possible of governance structures

Moreover, an 'injustice' was done to most approaches in the sense that they were not left intact, but only the most specific features highlighted. Aspects that are also to be found in other approaches and that generally tend to soften the bias in these specific features in a certain approach were not treated. The intention was not to judge these approaches but to enrich our approach to 'governance' in the light of the wealth of aspects brought to light by the policy science approaches examined. The extended analysis was published separately in Dutch (Bressers & Kuks 2001). Here we only report on some conclusions.

In their classical treatments of decision making Herbert A. Simon (1997 (1945)) '*bounded rationality*' and Lindblom's '*incrementalism*' (Lindblom 1959; Braybrooke & Lindblom 1970 (1963)) emphasize the limited human capacity to process information. Opening up the possibilities of non-incremental policy changes has to do with '*megapolicy changes*' (cf. Dror 1971), that involve a recognition of new problems, or other ways to frame them, or a new conception of the task of government. Allison's (1971) '*bureaucracy model*' specifically addresses the standard approaches and repertoires of organizations, which restrict flexibility in conducting policy.

The 'rule-based' *institutional rational choice approach* (Kiser & Ostrom 1982, Ostrom 1990, 1999) draws a/o. the attention to the way in which actors enter the policy network or are excluded from it. Furthermore 'scope' rules determine the extent of certain positions, competencies and other sources of power. Another aspect of Ostrom's approach is that she makes a distinction between the different levels of analysis. This layered structure of the rule context is not the same as a classification of administrative layers. A compromise between both interpretations of the term 'level' could be to speak about levels within a concept of 'multilevel governance', in which the other level often, but not always, and not by definition, also has its own characteristic administrative level.

In the '*advocacy coalition framework*' (Sabatier 1988, 1991, Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1999) what is of particular importance is the idea that there are coalitions of actors in the policy network that do not just simply represent the division between government and other actors, but contain actors from both of these groups and are based on common beliefs. Regarding the beliefs of actors, we can identify various layers. In the 'deep core' issues are relating to fundamental values. The 'policy core' contains positions relating to the perception of problems, the division of the costs of policy implementation, the desirability of contributions from experts, politicians and the general public and other relevant values and preferences. The 'derived aspects' contain elaborations for each given situation. Besides this layered structure what is also important to us is the importance that is attached to the perception of the problem. Next to 'advocacy coalitions', there are actors who are more likely to

have objectives that relate to policy processes than to the content of policy, and these actors are referred to by Sabatier as political brokers.

The *flow model of the policy process* (Kingdon 1995 (1984), Zahariadis 1999) examines how three relatively autonomous flows come together each time a decision has to be made. Political 'entrepreneurs' promote this by making use of 'windows of opportunity' (or creating them). From a multi-scale perspective the convergence of problem perception, policy opportunities and political salience should not take place at different levels (as, for example, when there is concern about a problem at a single state level while solutions are being sought at the federal level).

In the '*actor centered institutionalism*' of Scharpf (1997) explanation takes place primarily in terms of the distribution of preferences for alternatives. Much attention is also paid to information, but only to direct information and not so much to frameworks for interpretation (see below).

A large number of current theories in policy sciences can be characterized as *cognitive approaches*: 'cognitive maps' (Axelrod 1976), 'frames' (Schön 1983 and Schön & Rein 1994), 'discourses' (Dryzek 1987, 1997), argumentation and the 'social construction' of reality (Fischer 1995 and with Forrester 1993, Milbrath 1993) and 'cultural theory' (Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky 1990, Schwarz & Thompson 1990). Characteristic for these theories is that they all emphasize that the behavior of actors rests on their subjective interpretation of reality. And furthermore that this subjective interpretation is formed because observations of actors are given a place in frameworks of interpretation that provide meaning to these observations, but also distort them. Think of the well-known adagio: 'What is believed to be real is real in its consequences'. The differences between the various theories are to be found especially in the way in which the frameworks of interpretation are conceptualized. In this respect one can observe a certain tendency from more individual to more collective frameworks of interpretation. For our model the above theories have the consequence that we will pay attention in the first element to the access to the societal debate and the acceptance of the role of government. With the problem perception there should be attention for the images of reality that act as filters with the interpretation of observations and for the degree to which uncertainties are accepted as one of the indicators for the degree in which one is in need of such images in order to prevent a feeling of uncertainty. With the strategies it is important to view whether the chosen instruments provide incentives to learn, in other words to exceed existing images of reality. Often for that purpose flexible instruments and indirect steering methods are used.

## 2.5 *A model of governance in five elements*

At the end of this section we come to the conclusion that the approaches examined have added some specifications to the identified five elements of governance, but that these in themselves remain intact. Based partly on the previous discussion and partly on a slightly more detailed representation of

the specifications from the previously examined approaches, we arrive at the following description of the five elements of the governance structure we have identified. In its shortest form the 'governance model' consists of five questions: Where? Who? What? How? and With what? A characteristic feature of modern 'governance' systems is that they have many aspects. They are: multilevel, multi-actor, multifaceted, multi-instrumental and multi-resource-based.

#### (1) Levels of governance

Where? – Multilevel

Which levels of governance dominate policy and the debate on conducting policy, and in which relations? What is the relation with the administrative levels of government? Who decides or influences such issues? How is the interaction between the various administrative levels arranged?

#### (2) Actors in the policy network

Who? – Multi-actor

How open is the policy arena in theory and practice, and to whom? Who is actually involved and with what exactly? What is their position? What is the accepted role for government? Who have relevant ownership and use rights or are stakeholders in some other capacity (including policy-implementing organizations)? What is the structural inclination to cooperate among actors in the network? Are there actors among them who operate as process brokers or 'policy entrepreneurs'? What is the position of the general public versus experts versus politicians?

#### (3) Problem perception and objectives

What? – Multifaceted

What are the dominant maps of reality? What is seen as a problem and how serious is this considered to be? What do people see as the causes of this problem? Is the problem considered to be a problem for individuals or a problem for society as a whole? What values and other preferences are considered to be at stake? Which functions are allocated to the sector? Is the problem seen as a relatively new and challenging topic or as a topic in the 'management' phase without much political 'salience'? To what degree is uncertainty accepted? Where are the recognized points of intervention? What relations with other policy fields are recognized as coordination topics? Which policy objectives are accepted? What are levels to which policy makers aspire (ambition) in absolute terms (level of standards) and relative terms (required changes in society)?

#### (4) Strategy and instruments

How? – Multi-instrumental

Which instruments belong to the policy strategy? What are the characteristics of these instruments? What are the target groups of the policy and what is the timing of its application? How much flexibility do the instruments provide? To what extent are multiple and indirect routes to action used? Are changes in the ownership and use rights within the sector anticipated? To what extent do they provide incentives to 'learn'? What requirements do they place on the

availability of resources for implementation?<sup>2</sup> How are the costs and benefits of the policy distributed?

(5) Responsibilities and resources for implementation

With what? – Multi-resource-based

Which organizations (including government organizations) are responsible for implementing the policy? What is the repertoire of standard reactions to challenges known to these organizations? What authority and other resources are made available to these organizations by the policy? With what restrictions?

In the next section we examine the types of connections that can be expected between the five elements of the governance structure.

### **3 Patterns and dynamics**

#### *3.1 Introduction*

In this section we describe the relations between the five elements of governance. The assumed relations between the five elements described in this chapter are based on the basic principle that the elements of policy each form the context of the other elements and that they will tend to adjust to each other if not affected by outside influences.

By choosing mutual adjustment as a basic principle, emphasis is placed on stability rather than change. Nevertheless, such a model also offers a framework for explaining change. Changes in the external context of factors that are not considered to be part of the governance model can influence one or more of the elements. Through the same mechanisms of mutual interaction this can in turn lead to changes in all the elements of the governance model.

Of course there are various other theories with basic mechanisms to explain stability and change (e.g. Lindblom 1959, Wildavsky 1982, with Thompson & Ellis 1990, Hogwood & Peters 1983, Kingdon 1984, Luhmann 1984, Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993, 1999, Baumgartner & Jones 1993 etceteras, etceteras). Some emphasize forms of conflict, some more gentle forms of adjustment. Some emphasize external shocks, some internal dynamics. Some emphasize interactions between actors, some confrontations or merges of visions. Nevertheless, what struck us in all these theories was that through all their different emphases, there shimmered a joint basic conception, namely that of a basic assumption of 'more or less vulnerable equilibrium'. As a consequence they all share the idea that there is a tendency that the better a development in one aspect 'fits' with the context of other aspects, the more likely is the development to continue and vice versa. That this doesn't lead to a static situation is because of numerous external inputs that fuel almost continuous change processes that seem so

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<sup>2</sup> For example, some systems of emission charges or tradable licences may require so much information that it makes them almost impossible to apply. The fine tuning of the instrument is very important in this respect, and can make the difference between an effective intervention and a dead end.

ubiquitous that that character as ‘adaptation processes’ gets almost hidden. So we take up the old idea of ‘mutual adaptation, but this time not restricted to the adaptation of actors or interests like in the ‘Lindblomian’ sense, but in a broader sense encompassing all the elements of governance we developed in the above section.

The idea of mutual adjustment also offers the possibility of explaining differences between the situations in two or more countries (see Chapter 6 on the differences in governance in the field of groundwater protection and drinking water policy in Florida and the Netherlands). Differences in external factors, for example in geological and hydrological features, or in solidly grounded aspects of governance, for example the constitutional allocation of competencies to government authorities, will, according to this idea, indirectly bring about a series of differences in (other) elements of governance.

There is a certain ‘logical’ relation between the five elements of governance. This, however, means no more than that it is easy to see why each previous element imposes harder or softer limitations on aspects of the following element. In this sense, these influences create a situation in which the elements are adjusted to suit each other. In our opinion, however, there is no a priori reason for thinking that the mutual influences between the elements is restricted to this alone. In principle, the idea of mutual adjustment means that there is every reason to believe that all 25 mutual influences are possible. All elements form the context for the others and can therefore be both independent and dependent variables. This means that we can distinguish 25 hypotheses.

### 3.2 Premises

The premises and mechanisms that lie at the heart of these hypotheses are as follows.

(1) The best predictor of the status of an element at t2 is its status at t1. Each change takes up energy and will not take place if the governance system is in balance. Only changes in other situations (within and outside the ‘governance system’ and via the efforts of the actors) can bring about changes. This idea forms the basis for the five ‘continuation’ hypotheses, in which an element influences itself.

(2) The elements in the model mentioned earlier form a more or less limiting or determining context for later elements. The division of the conduct of policy between administrative levels activates networks that are active primarily at these levels. Those participating in these policy networks are, of course, those who give shape to the perception of the problem and the ambitions in the public debate and subsequently in the policy itself. These in turn are the focus of the discussion about policy strategies, for one reason because certain actors are considered to be a target group while others are not because certain intervention points in the policy field are utilized while others are not. The selected strategies and the instruments that are part of these in turn require the availability of an implementation structure and resources to make implementation possible (see also footnote 1 by the diagram below).

These ideas form the basis for the four 'logical order' hypotheses. The five elements form a sort of cascade of influence.

(3) This 'logical order' of influence, however, is not the only way in which (changes in) elements of the 'governance cascade' can influence each other. In fact, we believe that all the other conceivable 16 relations are possible, including the influence of elements mentioned later on earlier mentioned elements. All 25 relations should be considered because it is possible that the influence of the 'network' on the strategy works via the influence of the former on the 'ambition', etc.

(4) The general idea behind all these relations is that they promote the mutual adjustment of elements. According to this idea, dynamics will always have an external sources, which may consist of (a) major social developments, such as demographic, cultural, economic or physical (technological and spatial) developments, and (b) developments in other policy fields (Ligteringen 1998: 214-215 and following).

(5) All these mutual influences do not occur of themselves but need processes of social interaction to bring them about. In the description of the governance system here, however, we do not explore further the process side of the system, but only go into the elements that are (re)produced by these processes (as outputs of processes) and which in turn again form a context for other processes (as inputs to processes). By accepting that the relations actually work through processes of social interaction means that we can best explore the assumed relations between the elements on the basis of what we see as the central factors in such processes (Bressers 1983; Bressers & Klok 1988; Klok 1991, Bressers 2001).

(6) An adjustment may take place along three possible perspectives, referring to: objectives ('desire', ultimate basis: values), information ('knowledge', ultimate basis: cognition) and power ('ability', ultimate basis: resources). The mechanism of mutual adjustment, distributed over the five elements of the governance system, will tend to make values consistent, to make cognitions fit better into a common framework for interpretation and to make resources act to mutually facilitate the elements. But take note: just as in mechanism 1 and 2, these are not compulsory determinants but probabilistic influences, taken for the moment to be preliminary working hypotheses. In essence, the influences also play a role in the 'logical order' of the elements in the model.

(7) In principle, of course, every relation can be conceived as working from all three perspectives described above. An attempt will be made to do this later.

Before we discuss each hypothesis separately we examine the three perspectives (desire, knowledge, ability).

### 3.3 *Values, cognitions and resources*

Why are objectives, information and power (with values, cognition and resources in the background) the useful perspectives when examining the relations between the five elements of the governance model? As we have indicated above this has to do with the fact that the relations between the elements are brought about by processes of social interaction. These three perspectives have proved themselves to be exceptionally useful in explaining the dynamics of such processes. First look at what is needed to make a relatively simple object: making a chair requires the carpenter to have an object in mind, and it requires expertise and resources, such as tools and materials. In a multiple-actor process goals also relate to the position relative to other actors as well as do information and resources (the last providing 'power'). There is also a long tradition of thinking in terms of these perspectives (Bressers 1983: 352-328).

A second way of clarifying the three perspectives is to link them to ideas on policy instruments. Policy instruments are often classified into rules, incentives and communication. This, in our opinion, does not so much reflect different policy instruments but different ways in which they exert their influence. Regulations are not always couched in terms of compulsory rules but may also work by influencing the outcome of balancing the costs and benefits of alternative patterns of behavior (incentives) and ensuring that attention is given to certain alternative forms of behavior (communication). Subsidies are not only incentives but are also linked to conditions (rules) and information (communication) as well. Communication, certainly two-way communication, often leads to agreements being made, such as covenants or voluntary agreements (rules) and the exchange of concessions, for example acceptance of change in exchange for flexible timing (incentives). In other words, these are aspects of all policy instruments rather than separate groups of instruments. The fact that this classification of instruments still remains so important has more to do with their connections with the perspectives based on societal interaction processes than with their usefulness for this purpose.

A third way of illustrating their rich significance is to relate the three perspectives even broader to social science disciplines. There is a certain connection between these disciplines and the three perspectives mentioned above. This connection is partial, though, and relates to the core principles of these disciplines rather than any details, making a distinction in principle between individual and social methods of considerations.

The fundamental concept in economics is the scarcity of resources and the decisions and bartering that result from this. In its most classical version, the complexities of all other aspects (the social, cognitive and value aspects) are reduced to assumptions of 'methodological individualism', 'complete information' and 'individual behavior that maximizes benefits'. If 'benefit' cannot simply be equated with money, multiple objectives are formulated, for example 'bureaucrats strive to obtain as large a budget as possible'. This is, in essence, an unethical and pragmatic premise. So, to sum up: 'A: that which gives the greatest benefit will be chosen.'

In political science the social aspect of the distribution of resources, and so the power of one actor over another, are emphasized. Reasoning,

then, is about the question of who is going to dominate the field. To sum up: 'B: Whoever has the most power is free to choose.'

Sociology is partly about understanding social problems and psychology is partly about human skill in collecting and processing information. To sum up: 'C: It is not the facts that are important, but how what is observed is interpreted.' (Or: 'What is believed to be real is real in its consequences.')

Social psychology and communication sciences emphasize the transfer of information in mutual communication processes. Also, the role of information collection and processing is often emphasized in the process of making choices and power relations (and of the development of values). Also the 'argumentative turn' in policy sciences (Fischer & Forrester 1993) fits largely into this track. To sum up: 'D: Interpretations of reality are the product of a social construction.'

The value aspect is pivotal in ethics and other areas of philosophy. To sum up: 'E: People should want what is good.'

Regarding normative social aspects, imposing values on others, for example the whole community, we enter the domain of the law. To sum up: 'F: The limits to what is good are set by rules.'

Of course, this characterization of perspectives (and certainly of associated disciplines) is too simple when forced into a simple matrix. Each scientific discipline can borrow elements from the other cells. In doing so, though, it is often clear that they reject some of their own principles and integrate some of the principles of other social sciences into their own set of considerations.

| <i>Scientific Perspectives</i> | Individual  | Social   |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Resources (power)              | a. Choosing the greatest benefit  | b. Those with most power can choose                                  |
| Cognitions (information)       | c. It is not the facts that are important but how what is observed is interpreted | d. Interpretations of reality are the product of social construction |
| Values (objectives)            | e. People should want what is good  | f. The limits to what is good are set by rules                       |

All in all, the above shows, in our opinion, the value and significance of following these perspectives when quite a complete picture is required of the relations between social science concepts, such as the elements of the governance system identified by us. After this account of the power and significance of the three perspectives used in this chapter, we now formulate the assumptions and hypotheses used in this study.

### 3.4 Assumptions

*Main assumption:* The influences that the five elements of governance exert on each other will promote the mutual adjustment of these elements in a governance system.

*Subsidiary assumption:* Changes within a governance system occur because other factors 'from outside' alter characteristic features of one or more of the five elements to a greater or lesser degree, and the other elements adjust themselves to this.

The main assumption rests on three mechanisms. These can be formulated as secondary assumptions and applied in hypotheses on the relations between elements of governance.

*Secondary assumption 1:* The influences that the five elements of governance exert on each other arise partly from the tendency towards an increase in the mutual consistency of the values that play a role in these elements if there are no disturbances from outside.

*Secondary assumption 2:* The influences that the five elements of governance exert on each other arise partly from the tendency of the cognition that plays a role in these elements to fit into a common framework for interpretation if there are no disturbances from outside.

*Secondary assumption 3:* The influences that the five elements of governance exert on each other arise partly from the dependence in each of these elements on resources from the other elements.

The hypotheses that are based on these assumptions are informative and not tautological because, in the first place, it is conceivable that 'disturbances from outside' are so numerous nowadays that the tendencies listed are not recognizable in the empirical data, even when they are in principle not

incorrect. In the second place, the core ideas can also be questioned, for example from a 'post-modern' perspective in which the autonomous tendency towards fragmentation and coexistence of values and cognition is emphasized.

The hypotheses are testable because the mutual relations between the elements, both in comparisons between cases and comparisons in time, can be mapped and can be compared with what is to be expected according to the hypotheses. To this end it is necessary to specify the expected relations between the elements of governance using all three mechanisms at the same time. This will be done in the next sub-section, followed by a summary table. We will limit ourselves here to the influences from and on the level aspect of governance, since these are especially relevant for this volume on 'governance across social scales'.

### *3.5 The interaction between the level aspect and the other elements of governance*

The influence of the level aspect on the relevant actors in the policy network is a 'logical' one, in the sense that the relative importance of various levels translates in the multi-scale setup of where to seek the relevant policy network(s). The other four relations we will examine in some more detail. Below the arrows in the headings represent a tendency for the second named element to adjust to the first named element.

#### *Level → Problem and ambition*

From the value perspective we can expect that the sort of values that characterize a certain level of administration will work through in the perception of the problem and the policy ambition. Many values are not peculiar to a particular administrative level, but the administrative level provides an indication of the level at which equality or balance is sought. From the cognitive perspective (interpretation frameworks) the problem will be perceived at the level from which it is viewed. The problem of waste, for example, looks different at the national level (e.g. safe processing) than at the local level (e.g. impact of waste processing plants).

From the perspective of resources the dominant level, as 'owner' of the problem, will tend to conduct the debate about the problem and policy ambition as it affects that level. If there are other levels that have a strong position this may lead to fragmentation of the perception of the problem and policy ambition.

In the end, the composition of aspects that play a role in the perception of the problem and policy ambition will be partly determined by the status of the various levels. When the position of the European Union strengthened at the domain of energy policy it became a problem not only of secure delivery and reducing the environmental burden, but also of domestically restricted markets that should be liberalized.

#### *Level → Strategies*

From the perspective of values, there are not many values linked to the selection of the administrative level, except the values held at the level at which a balance is desired (equality). The choice of strategy will reflect this. From the cognitive perspective, strategies will be developed primarily for dealing with the problem at the level at which the policy is being developed or at least from which there is a clear view of the problem. If governance is divided between a number of levels, policy strategies will be developed at more than one level.

From the resources/dominance perspective there will be a tendency to select policy strategies that do not threaten the distribution of responsibilities for developing policy at the various levels.

In the end, we see here, too, that the characteristics of the chosen strategies will to a certain extent reflect the distribution of responsibilities between the various levels. Negotiations with Dutch importers and producers of 'white goods' failed in first instance because the sector was afraid that EU guidelines would again change the deal. Also the - multinational - mother companies were hoping that EU guidelines would be more relaxed than the evolving negotiated agreement and withdrew the sector's associating from the negotiations. When a regulation was installed fixing the (almost) negotiated deal, the sector embraced it nevertheless and thereafter tried to promote 'the Dutch solution' to become EU standard guideline; so both public and private governance were involved in an intricate multi-level game.

#### *Level → Resources*

This concerns a big leap over the more stepwise relations between these two elements. This means that there may not be much left for a direct influence of one element over the other.

From the values perspective an attempt will be made to create a certain balance, not only in the way the problem is tackled but also in the allocation of resources between the various sub-areas of the administrative levels.

From the cognitive perspective the allocation of resources will mainly reflect what the problem is perceived to be, but this is an indirect relation via the problem perception.

From the resources perspective, the resources distributed will mainly be those that are available at the level concerned.

When the Dutch government wanted to strengthen the implementation of environmental laws by the local authorities after several other attempts it turned to providing these with very substantial additional money flows, because other approaches simply didn't work well enough. This was done even though some professional observers labeled it as "the one public authority bribing other authorities into obeying the law".

#### *Resources → Level*

From a values perspective we can expect the administrative level that gets the most resources, related to the to problem domain, (continues to) feel most responsibility for the problem.

From a cognitive perspective we can expect the administrative level that gets the most resources to strengthen its own interpretation of the problem as one belonging primarily to that administrative level.

From a resources perspective we can expect that the administrative level that gets the most resources will, partly as a result of this, retain the strongest position.

All in all taking up responsibilities in the multi-level governance setup depends partially on the possibilities to gather the resources necessary for the action that is perceived as a consequence.

#### *Strategies → Level*

From a values perspective we can expect that the division of responsibilities between administrative levels associated with a particular strategy influences what people think about who should have these responsibilities, also concerning administrative level.

From a cognitive perspective we can expect that the strategy raises the level of knowledge of the problem and the possible responses mostly in the administrative level that has most to do.

From a resources perspective we can expect that the position of the administrative levels that have a more important role in the selected strategy will be strengthened relative to other levels.

When the national level in Italy proved incapable of concluding negotiated arrangements due to various (self)restrictions, the regional and local levels jumped in the gap by concluding a wealth of agreements taking over the initiative on various fields of the environmental problematic.

#### *Problem and policy ambition → Level*

From a values perspective we can expect that the way in which the problem is described has implications for the administrative level that ought to feel most responsible for the problem.

From a cognitive perspective we can expect a similar effect to occur regarding the question of what is considered to be the most suitable administrative level in the dominant paradigm, given the scale of the problems.

From a resources perspective we can expect that, for a particular problem, a certain paradigm will strengthen or weaken the relative position of administrative levels in relation to the others.

All these phenomena appear to be present in the Netherlands because of the rise of the National Environmental Policy Plan and the target group approach. These have strengthened the national level (at which most covenants are agreed) with respect to the provincial and local levels (where most of the licenses are issued and which carry out most of the enforcement duties).

#### *Network → Level*

From a values perspective we can expect that the dominant values of the actors in the network (as opposed to their own interests) can be relevant for the distribution of governance over the various levels.

From a cognitive perspective we can expect that the dominant policy vision of the actors in the network can be relevant for the distribution of governance over the various levels.

From a resources perspective we can expect that the dominant actors in the network will also influence the distribution of governance between the

administrative levels and that this distribution will be a reflection of the relative position of the dominant actors.

Scientific 'epistemic' communities that are able to enter the policy network can have a considerable impact on the level where the problems are defined and measures are taken, for instance to take the Mediterranean as an ecological unity (Haas 1990).

## 5 Conclusion: three mechanisms

In this chapter we have developed a model of governance to allow us to compare governance systems in different states or countries as they relate to a certain policy arena. We identified five elements of governance, one of which relates to the multilevel aspect. Moreover, we made a main assumption that mutual adjustment will take place between the five elements of governance and that this mutual adjustment can be traced back to three internal mechanisms (secondary assumptions) in the governance system. Changes in a governance system take place when outside factors intervene in one of the five elements of the governance system and the other elements adjust to this new situation.

Differences between times or jurisdictions work consistently through the governance subsystem from one element to another. This is a feature that typically leads to adjustment between elements of a governance system, thus giving that system a 'genetic' imprint. It is also interesting to examine which mechanisms are at work during this process. We stated that our main assumption rested on three mechanisms (secondary assumptions).

The first mechanism (secondary assumption 1) is that adjustment arises from the tendency of actors to act from a set of constant values. The second mechanism (secondary assumption 2) is that adjustment arises from the tendency of actors to use a common reference frame to interpret cognition. The third mechanism (secondary assumption 3) is that adjustment arises from the dependence of actors on each other's resources. Such dependence is clearly expressed in the demarcation of powers between administrative levels and between administrative actors.

The analysis in this chapter has shown that 'governance' involves more elements than policy objectives and the means to implement policy. These elements are not simply the sum of individual aspects but are closely linked. We have tried to illustrate how these interrelations work.

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