

Book Review

Governance Networks in the Public Sector **By Eric Hans Klijn and Joop Koppenjan**

Shabana Naveed

shabananaveed@ucp.edu.pk

The book *Governance Networks in the Public Sector* provides the latest theoretical and empirical insight into management of governance networks in public administration. It is the most recent and a highly valuable contribution that serves as an essential text for the students of public administration, public policy and political studies.

Working with interdependencies and networked relations is an emerging area having lots of scope in public administration particularly with the recent developments geared towards privatization, decentralization and deregulations resulting in increased fragmentation in public sector. With the variety of autonomous bodies from public, private and non-profit sector, the inter-organizational relations in public sector are shifting from top-down vertical arrangements to horizontal interdependencies in the form of networks. Furthermore, the growing nature of complex problems is also calling for *inter-governmental*, *inter-sectoral* and *inter-organizational collaborations* and network arrangements can serve as important policy tool for handling complex issues. However, network management strategies are crucial to handle complexities and interdependencies among actors. Addressing these recent issues in public management debate, this book is a very timely and desirable contribution to public management literature in general and network governance in particular.

Most of the books in the area of governance network are edited volumes of research papers with the exception of Koliba, Meek and Zia's (2010) book. Therefore, a text book which could provide a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual literature on governance networks was much

needed. Although the book is especially written and designed for students in public administration, public management, public policy and planning, however, it is useful and relevant for variety of audience including students, researchers, policy makers, public administrators and donor institutions alike. With international orientation, the authors have provided practical examples and small case studies from various countries which further expands its audience globally. Authors define the central question of the book as:

“How can the substantive, strategic and institutional complexities that characterize governance networks be analyzed and managed in an effective, democratically legitimate, and accountable way, given the features of these complexities and the sources from which they stem?” (p.16)

The book successfully answer the central question raised in well-organized parts and chapters. It spans over thirteen chapters, organized in four parts. All the chapters fit logically into the topic of the part and each part plays an important role in the achievement of central question of the book. The last chapter comprehensively wraps up the discussions generated throughout the text and provides future trends in public administration literature.

Part I of the book elaborates the theoretical principles and key building blocks of governance network theory which makes good conceptual base of the reader to understand the nature and functioning of governance networks. At the very outset, Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) very clearly present “governance networks as the answer to complexity” (p.1) to introduce governance networks as policy tool/ solution to handle growing wicked issues faced by governments. By giving practical examples of wicked problems such as “debates on hydraulic fracturing” and “multiple problem clients in youth care” (p. 2-3), the authors engages the reader forcing them to think of new ways to handle public issues by establishing the need for “shift from traditional top-down way of problem solving to a more horizontal cooperative approach” (p.4) and later convince the reader that governance networks are crucial to serve this purpose. Chapter 1 presents a classic comparison between three dominant perspectives in public administration: Traditional Public Administration, New Public Management and Governance Network Perspective. Moreover, some core concepts are defined and differentiated from each other including governance networks, network governance, (self-) governance and network management. Definition of governance networks is provided as

“We define governance networks as more or less stable patterns of social relations between mutually dependent actors, which cluster around a policy problem, a policy

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program, and/or a set of resources and which emerge, are sustained, and are changed through a series of interactions” (p.11).

Another significant contribution of authors is defining ‘complexity’ while also differentiating ‘complexity’ from complicatedness (Walker, 2000) and providing operational definitions of three types of complexity that characterize governance networks: substantive complexity, strategic complexity and institutional complexity. Such conceptual clarity enables to deepen their understanding of further theoretical concepts unfolding in later chapters.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on networks by capturing the intellectual history of networks under three traditions of research including research in political science, inter-organization theory and public administration. Each tradition of research focuses on different type of network which are comprehensively compared (p. 23). This chapter provides the foundations for development of governance network theory. Chapter 3 addresses the nature and sources of substantive complexity caused by involvement of various actors, diverging and conflicting perceptions of the nature of problem and knowledge conflict. The typology of “wickedness” of problems is addressed. Authors rightly argue that it is not the lack of information rather information overload that makes the situation complex and the solution is framing joint meanings of the situation. Chapter 4 deals with explaining strategic complexity which is caused by multiple actors, perceptions and strategies that result in policy games. The process of development of policy games and their fragmented nature is well elaborated with the help of figures. Elaboration of coupling between arenas and processes (Figure 4.5) is very impressive. Various concepts are further operationalized such as types of strategies, types of resources and types of inter-dependencies among actors. Chapter 5 covers institutional complexity which deals with interaction patterns, institutional rules and trust among network actors. Building on the work of March and Olsen’s (1989) distinction between logic of consequence and logic of appropriateness, the authors have presented institutional network perspective to explain institutional complexity in governance networks. Special attention is paid on characteristics of rules, types of rules and the role of trust. Five-item measure of trust is also provided originally developed by Klijn, Steijn and Edlenbos (2010).

Part II presents network management strategies for each category of complexity. Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 deal with opportunities for managing substantive complexity, strategic complexity and institutional complexity respectively. Presenting the contrast between principles that underlie traditional approaches to handle problems with governance network approach, the

authors argue that complexity cannot be handled with traditional approaches. Part III is devoted to the normative issues in network arrangements including actor's accountability, democratic legitimacy and value judgment of actors' success/failure. This discussion enhances the value of governance network framework later presented in the book. Although networks are presented as policy tool to handle complexity and wicked problems but at the same time normative side is addressed by the authors.

Part IV contains synthesis of central ideas presented in the book and develops a theoretical framework i.e. 'Governance network framework' for managing complexity in such networks. This part wraps up the discussion meeting the objectives of the book successfully. In Chapter 12, Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) have presented 10 steps to analyze networks. Each step contain methods, measures and operational definitions of the concepts. These steps are very practical and useful to measure and analyze three categories of analytical activities in network: actor analysis (to measuring substantive complexity), process analysis (to analyze strategic complexity) and network analysis (for institutional complexity). Table 12.1 (p.261) summarize all these steps and is highly useful for researchers in the area of network analysis. Chapter 13 presents the framework of governance network theory as new approach for public policy making and service delivery under the umbrella of new public governance reforms in public administration.

Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) have successfully met the objectives of the book. The book is highly useful and an updated current resource for students conducting advanced research in public management and public policy. With a highly accessible and practical approach, the book keeps the reader involved throughout the text. The reader gets engaged in the ideas, apply those ideas and deepen their understanding of concepts with examples. Lot of figures, tables and boxes accompany the text for conceptual and theoretical understanding of the reader. Authors' style of contrasting and differentiating various concepts, is highly valuable for conceptual clarifications such as governance networks versus network governance; complexity versus complicatedness; wicked versus complex.

To summarize, Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) have done a remarkable job paying attention to conceptual building blocks of governance networks for the interest of the students; theoretical explanation of actor's dependencies and interactions through complexity theory for the interest of the researchers; governance network framework and practical implications valuable for policy makers; and guiding principles to operate successfully in network arrangements worthy for

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public managers. Thus, the book is equally useful for policy, practice and academic environment and a very timely contribution in the field of governance networks.

References

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