

## Policy Network Actors as Units of Public Policy Analysis

Rizky Ilhami

Universitas Pasundan

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Email :

[rizky.ilhami@unpas.ac.id](mailto:rizky.ilhami@unpas.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

Developments that have occurred over the last few decades have had an impact on shifting the role of government in shaping public policy, from being the only key actor to becoming one actor among other actors, both government and non-government, who work interdependently through a series of networks. This research aims to explain the emergence and development of the concept of policy network actors as a unit of analysis in the realm of public policy. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The research results show that the formation of a policy network that is responsive to community needs requires strong collaboration between various key actors such as government, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. The importance of openness, transparency and active participation in the policy-making process also stands out as a determining factor in achieving responsive and inclusive policies. In addition, effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are key in ensuring that the policies produced remain relevant and can adapt to existing dynamics in society. This conclusion emphasizes the importance of understanding and managing complex dynamics between actors and ensuring that the resulting policies take into account the diverse interests and values in society

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the last three decades, the world has witnessed a series of profound and broad developments in various fields, from politics to economics and social affairs. This development was largely triggered by the phenomenon of globalization which has eliminated national boundaries in trade, investment and cultural exchange (Winarno, 2016). Countries around the world are engaged in adapting themselves to these global dynamics, which in turn have forced them to revise their traditional roles and functions. Modern governments are faced with pressure to function as catalysts of economic development, guardians of political stability, and providers of efficient public services (Mardiasmo, 2021).

Along with changes in the global political and economic landscape, the concepts of government and public governance have undergone significant evolution. Adoption of a good and transparent governance paradigm has become the main focus, with an emphasis on community participation in the decision-making process and government accountability to the public (Kurniawan, 2007). In addition, the threat of terrorism and conflict between countries has encouraged governments to increase their capacity to maintain security and stability, both at the national and international levels. These new trends in government

administration reflect the need to adapt to the complexity of global challenges and find a balance between national interests and the demands of an increasingly connected global society (Sururi, 2016).

Changes in the role of the state have given new impetus to increased interactions between governments and other non-state actors. The private sector, as the main economic agent, has been increasingly involved in the policy formulation process through public-private partnerships aimed at accelerating economic development and the provision of public services (Prianto, 2011). Civil society organizations, on the other hand, have played an important role in fighting for community interests and strengthening government accountability through advocacy, monitoring, and participation in decision-making processes (Sandy, 2020).

Collaboration with international organizations is also increasingly important in addressing global problems, from climate change to poverty. This increasingly intense interaction between states and various non-state actors has provided the background for the concept of "policy networks", which refers to patterns of formal and informal interactions between various stakeholders involved in the process of formulating and implementing public policy (Coleman, 2001). This approach recognizes the complexity of public policy dynamics which are not only influenced by government decisions, but also by interactions between the various interests involved, both at the local and central levels. As a result, a more holistic understanding of the role and impact of these policy networks has become a focus of research and practice in modern public administration (Baumann & Stengel, 2014).

The network concept has been introduced as an important framework in the fields of politics and administration, especially in the context of public policy analysis (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992). Many recent trends underline the importance of understanding public policy as the result of complex interactions both formal and informal between various actors at various levels, both local and central (Koliba et al., 2017). There is a growing understanding that public policy can no longer be understood in isolation from a network of relationships involving different, interrelated actors.

Public policy experts and practitioners have identified that the decision-making process in the context of public policy involves various organized interest groups, such as government institutions, private institutions, NGOs, and civil society (Considine, 2005). They argue that public policy is not the result of a single decision, but is the result of dynamic interactions between actors involved in a complex network. This policy network concept highlights the importance of understanding the relationships between various actors in determining policy direction, as well as the importance of understanding how these relationships influence the process of policy implementation and evaluation (Atkinson & Coleman, 1992). Thus, the policy network approach has become an important framework that enriches understanding of the complexity of public policy dynamics in various political and administrative contexts (Kharisma, 2014). Top of Form

Top of Form

Recent research has deepened the analysis of the policy network concept as a framework that focuses on the complexity of governance through the interdependence of various actors that influence the formation and implementation of public policy (Klijn &

Koppenjan, 2000). These concepts specifically include an understanding of network issues which refers to patterns of linkages between various stakeholders, policy sub-systems which reflect interactions within a particular sector or policy domain, and knowledge societies which highlight the role of information and knowledge in the policy formation process ( Sandstrom & Carlsson, 2008).

In this perspective, a policy network is defined as “a set of formal and informal institutions with a number of different linkages” (Moran et al., 2008). This approach allows recognition of the complexity of the relationships between actors involved in the policy process, as well as the interdependence between interests, values and knowledge that shape public policy. Research that focuses on the policy network concept emphasizes the importance of understanding the structure and dynamics of the links between the various institutions and individuals involved, and how this influences the process of policy making and implementation (Enroth, 2011). By exploring this framework, researchers can dig deeper into how public policy is actually formed and implemented in a broader context and is related to the surrounding social, political and economic environment.

## **METHOD**

This research is descriptive and based on qualitative analysis. This method explains the results of research observations using word descriptions, not statistical processes. The author uses a literature review. According to Sugiyono (2011), qualitative research is based on the ideology of postpositivism (search for meaning behind data). According to Anggito and Setiawan (2018), qualitative research uses the natural environment to understand phenomena by describing the phenomena and discussing the influence of actions on living phenomena. The results of analysis in qualitative research refer to the logic of analysis, starting from the research point of view, the subjects observed, data collection, and analysis to the systematics of writing which cannot be separated from attention in writing. Researchers are essential instruments and data collection techniques that use combinations (triangulation) to research scientific objects. The nature of data analysis is inductive and qualitative and the research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (general conclusions). The research instrument is a human instrument. This means that the person who plays a role or acts as an instrument is the researcher himself. Researchers try to write to explain policy networks as a unit of public policy analysis. sourced from books and journals. Where the researcher takes the research focus, then looks for sources, analyzes the data, and obtains conclusions or meaning from the results of the literature study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Policy Network Actors as Public Policy Analysis Units**

Based on the previous explanation, policy networks can be seen as a series of formal and informal institutions involved in the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating public policies. Policy networks as a unit of public policy analysis focus attention on the complex interrelationships between various actors, including government, the private sector, NGOs, and civil society, as well as the interactions between those that form policy networks. In this context, policy networks view public policy as the result of the

dynamic interactions between these actors, both formal and informal, who work together to influence the direction and implementation of policy in diverse social, political and economic contexts. The following is an explanation of the actors involved in forming the policy network, they include state institutions tasked with developing, implementing and evaluating policies. In this regard, the following institutions are considered key actors:

## **Executive Authority.**

In the context of policy networks as a unit of public policy analysis, the executive authority plays a crucial role as one of the key actors in the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating public policy. Executive authority, This includes individuals working in the government bureaucracy in various institutions, bodies, committees and administrative units, who often carry out policy implementation, have primary responsibility in carrying out government functions and ensuring public policies are implemented effectively. As the main actor, the executive authority has broad authority in determining policy direction in various sectors, such as economic, social and political.

In the context of policy networks, executive authorities often interact with various other stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society organizations and international institutions. These interactions enable executive authorities to gain important input into the policy decision-making process, as well as to ensure that policies adopted take into account the diverse perspectives and needs of society. In addition, collaboration between executive authorities and other actors in policy networks is often the key to successful policy implementation, as this collaboration allows for increased resources and a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.

However, there are also challenges in the role of executive authorities as part of a policy network. Sometimes, different political interests or internal policies between executive authorities and other actors can complicate effective coordination and cooperation processes. Therefore, a deep understanding of the dynamics of interactions between executive authorities and other actors in policy networks is important to ensure that the resulting public policies are able to reflect the needs of society as a whole, while also taking into account the various interests involved.

## **Legislative Institution**

In the context of policy networks as a unit of public policy analysis, legislative institutions play a crucial role in the process of democratic and inclusive policy formation. As the main legislative body, this institution has the responsibility to formulate laws and regulations covering various aspects of public life, including political, economic, social and health policies. Through the legislative process, this institution brings people's voices and aspirations into the formation of laws that can influence the daily lives of citizens.

In policy networks, legislative institutions often interact with executive authorities, community advocacy groups, and the private sector in the consultation and discussion process regarding the formation of laws. Collaboration between legislative institutions and other actors in policy networks is important to ensure that the resulting policies reflect the needs and aspirations of diverse communities. By accepting input from various interest groups, legislative institutions can achieve more holistic and inclusive solutions to the problems facing society.

However, the challenge often faced by legislative institutions in policy networks is ensuring a transparent and accountable legislative process, while also considering the diverse interests of the various actors involved. In addition, efforts to ensure that the policies produced are in line with democratic principles and human rights are often an important focus in their interactions with other actors. Therefore, a deep understanding of the dynamics of interactions between legislative institutions and other actors in policy networks plays an important role in ensuring that the resulting policies meet the standards of democracy and justice.

### **Private Sector**

In the context of policy networks as a unit of public policy analysis, the private sector plays a significant role in shaping and influencing the policy-making process. As the driving force of the economy, the private sector is involved in the public policy process through economic contributions, innovation and technological development. Through active participation in policy networks, the private sector provides important input regarding market conditions, industry needs, and the role of the economy in the formation of sustainable and competitive policies.

The involvement of the private sector in policy networks also brings its own challenges, especially related to conflicts of interest between company profitability and the interests of society. Therefore, it is important to ensure that private sector involvement in the policy process is in line with the principles of business ethics and sustainability, while also ensuring that the interests of society and social justice remain the main focus in policy formation.

Collaboration between the private sector, government institutions and other actors in policy networks enables mutually beneficial exchange of information, as well as strengthening capacity in responding to social and environmental issues facing society. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between the private sector and various stakeholders in policy networks is important to ensure that the resulting policies are able to achieve the right balance between economic growth and social welfare.

### **Civil Society**

Within the policy network framework as a unit of public policy analysis, civil society plays a crucial role in ensuring community representation and participation in the decision-making process. Civil society, through its network of voluntary organizations and NGOs, represents the voices and aspirations of communities that are often not directly represented by government or the private sector. The active role of civil society in policy networks ensures that the interests of wider society, especially those of vulnerable and marginalized groups, are taken into account in the policy formation process.

Civil society participation in policy networks also enriches policy discussions with diverse perspectives, considering the diversity of values, needs and aspirations represented by civil society organizations. By bringing input from various segments of society, civil society helps ensure that the resulting policies reflect the urgent needs and social justice of all groups in society.

However, the challenges faced by civil society in policy networks are often related to limited resources, access to information, and access to decision-making forums. Therefore, it is important to ensure that government institutions and the private sector support the

active participation of civil society in policy processes, and that collaboration between civil society and other actors is based on the principles of openness, participation and accountability. Thus, an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of interactions between civil society and other actors in policy networks is important in ensuring that the policies produced reflect justice and the interests of society as a whole.

### **International Organization**

In the context of policy networks as a unit of public policy analysis, the role of international organizations becomes increasingly important in shaping policy direction at the global level. International organizations, such as the UN, WTO, WHO, and others, play a central role in coordinating cooperation between their member countries to address global issues that cross national boundaries. With a focus on areas such as trade, health, the environment, and human rights, international organizations provide guidelines, standards, and regulations that shape policy at national and regional levels.

The involvement of international organizations in policy networks also strengthens dialogue between member countries, and facilitates the exchange of information and best practices in handling complex global problems. By providing a platform for negotiation and cooperation between countries, international organizations play a key role in establishing a sustainable and inclusive global cooperation framework.

However, the challenges faced by international organizations in policy networks are often related to the complexity of political dynamics between member countries, as well as differences in approaches and diverse national interests. Therefore, it is important to ensure that cooperation between countries and international organizations is based on the principles of mutual benefit, justice and sustainability. In this case, a deep understanding of the role and interaction of international organizations in policy networks is important in ensuring that the resulting policies are able to handle global challenges effectively and responsively.

### **Factors that influence Policy Networks as a unit of Public Policy analysis**

Several factors that influence policy networks as a unit of public policy analysis include:

1. Complexity of Interactor Relations:

The complexity of relationships between actors is a central factor that influences policy networks as a unit of public policy analysis. In this context, interactions between key actors such as executive authorities, legislative institutions, the private sector, civil society and international organizations can form complex patterns of cooperation, sometimes characterized by rivalry or intense information exchange. The involvement of various actors with different interests and goals in the policy-making process can create complex dynamics and requires careful coordination. At the same time, this complexity also creates opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and resources between actors, which can enrich policy formulation with diverse perspectives and experiences. However, challenges lie in managing these complex inter-actor relationships, as conflicting interests and differing approaches can slow down the policy-making process and hinder the achievement of the consensus necessary to produce effective and inclusive policies. Thus, an in-depth understanding of the complexity of relationships between actors in policy networks is

important in ensuring a cooperative policy-making process that is responsive to the needs of diverse communities.

2. Openness and Access to Information:

Openness and access to information factors in policy networks have a significant impact on the ability of actors involved in the policy-making process to participate effectively. The level of openness in terms of access to information, data and other resources can directly influence the level of involvement of these actors. Good information disclosure allows wider participation from various interested parties, thereby enriching discussions and producing more holistic policies. On the other hand, limited access to information can be an obstacle in achieving inclusive engagement and impact the ability of actors who lack access to contribute significantly. Therefore, to ensure optimal responsiveness of policy networks, it is important to encourage greater openness and ensure fair access to the information and resources necessary to participate effectively in the policy-making process. Thus, awareness of the importance of openness and access to information in policy networks is the key to achieving responsive and sustainable policies.

3. Political Dynamics.

Political dynamics between various actors in policy networks is a crucial factor that influences the formation of public policy. The involvement of executive authorities, legislative institutions, the private sector, civil society and international organizations is often influenced by different political interests. Differences in political power, political agendas, and ideological orientations between actors can create complex dynamics in the policy-making process. Interactions between these various actors can create opportunities for collaboration and coalitions, but they can also generate conflict and competition that can hinder progress in policy formation. Therefore, a deep understanding of the political dynamics between actors in policy networks is important to ensure that policy formation is carried out by considering diverse interests fairly and allows for agreements that are beneficial to society as a whole to be reached. By taking these factors into account, policy networks can work effectively in overcoming political differences that may arise and achieving the consensus necessary to formulate sustainable and inclusive policies .

4. Differences in Values and Interests.

Differences in values and interests between various actors in policy networks play a key role in shaping the policy-making process. The actors involved often represent groups that have different values, goals, and interests, which can create challenges in reaching mutually beneficial agreements. Conflicts that arise from these differences can slow down the policy-making process and influence the final policy results produced. However, awareness of these differences can also provide opportunities for in-depth discussions and exchange of views that enrich the policy-making process. By taking into account the diversity of values and interests that exist, policy networks can work to find points of agreement that accommodate diverse perspectives and needs in society. It is important to promote open dialogue and mutual understanding between the various actors, as well as to facilitate constructive negotiations in order to reach agreements that are beneficial for all parties involved. Thus, managing differences in values and interests in policy networks is a key factor in efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable policies for society as a whole.

5. Technology and Innovation.

Effective monitoring and evaluation systems play an important role in ensuring the responsiveness of policy networks to societal needs. With regular monitoring mechanisms in place, actors involved in policy networks can proactively identify emerging changes and challenges, enabling them to respond quickly and appropriately. Continuous evaluation also allows measuring the impact of policies that have been implemented, thereby providing valuable insights for future policy improvements. In addition, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation can enable the identification of successes and failures of various policy initiatives, thereby providing valuable learning for the actors involved. By carrying out a continuous monitoring and evaluation process, policy networks can increase adaptation to changing situations and the continuously developing needs of society, thus ensuring that the policies produced remain relevant, effective and responsive to the dynamics that exist in society.

With this approach, policy networks provide a more holistic understanding of the role of various stakeholders in the public policy process, allowing the development of more responsive and inclusive strategies in response to evolving societal demands and global challenges.

## CONCLUSION

Policy networks as a unit of public policy analysis are a complex framework and consist of interactions between various key actors such as executive authorities, legislative institutions, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. Factors that influence policy networks include the complexity of relationships between actors, openness and access to information, political dynamics, differences in values and interests, and effective monitoring and evaluation systems. A deep understanding of these factors is important in ensuring that policy formation is carried out with fair consideration of diverse interests, while also ensuring optimal responsiveness to the evolving needs of society. Therefore, in building a responsive policy network, cooperation between various actors is needed as well as efforts to ensure openness, participation and accountability in the policy-making process in order to achieve policies that are inclusive and sustainable for society as a whole.

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