This article will discuss the contribution of Rod Rhodes to the research on networks. I will focus on networks as a typology of state/society relations and as a particular form of governance. It is not only here that Rhodes has left his deepest mark; most research on networks still falls in one of the two sub-fields. The typology of policy networks, which he developed with David Marsh more than 15 years ago, has become a classic and still forms a major reference point for studies on public policy-making. Rhodes also pioneered the concept of network governance in the study of British politics to capture the profound changes in the Westminster model since the late 1970s. Regarding more recent developments, Rhodes has been among the first to discuss the reflexivity of networks, introducing some postmodernist thinking into public administration research. Finally, Rhodes has helped advance the ‘ethnographic turn’ in network studies.

INTRODUCTION

The network concept has made quite a career in political science (and other disciplines, for that matter). Despite a Babylonian variety of different understandings and applications (for an overview, see Dowding 1995; Börzel 1998; Pappi and Henning 1998; Rhodes 2007c; Guarneros-Meza 2008), the literature can be organized along two dimensions. The first is about methods. Networks can serve as a tool to analyse interactions and relations between actors engaged in public policy-making using quantitative or qualitative methods. The second distinction is about ontology. For some, networks connote specific types of interest intermediation entailing different forms of institutionalized exchange relations between the state, business and civil society. Others have taken the concept one step further and consider networks as a new form of governance within and beyond the nation state. Rhodes has made seminal contributions to the various strands of the literature on networks. The typology of policy networks, which he developed with David Marsh more than 15 years ago, has become a classic and still forms a major reference point for studies on public policy-making. Rhodes also pioneered the concept of network governance in the study of British politics to capture the profound changes in the Westminster model since the late 1970s. Regarding more recent developments, Rhodes has been among the first to discuss the reflexivity of networks, introducing some postmodernist thinking into public administration research. Finally, Rhodes has helped advance the ‘ethnographic turn’ in network studies.

This paper will discuss the contribution of Rhodes to these various strands of the network literature situating them in the broader context of where the sub-fields have been moving and where they currently stand. I will focus on networks as a typology of state/society relations and as a particular form of governance. As has been said, it is not only here that Rhodes has left his deepest mark; most research on networks still falls in one of the two sub-fields.

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THE ‘RHODES MODEL’: NETWORKS AS A TYPOLOGY OF INTEREST INTERMEDIATION

The evolution of policy networks as a typology of state/society relations emerged out of a frustration with the traditional pluralism-(neo)corporatism dichotomy that used to dominate comparative politics and public administration research in the 1960s and 1970s. Rhodes and Marsh criticized both models of interest intermediation as logically inconsistent and of little empirical relevance given that they seemed too broad to capture the various forms of patterned interactions between public and private actors in democratic political systems (Rhodes and Marsh 1992, pp. 1–4; see also Jordan 1992). Rather than qualifying or refining the two models, Marsh and Rhodes developed a typology based on the network as a generic label embracing different types of state/society relations. The network concept should allow for a more ‘fine grain’ analysis by taking into account sectoral and sub-sectoral differences within the state, the role played by private and public actors, and formal as well as informal relationships between them.

The policy network is a meso-level concept of interest group intermediation which can be adopted by authors operating with different models of power distribution in liberal democracies. (Rhodes and Marsh 1992, p. 4; see also Jordan and Schubert 1992; Waarden 1992)

The various typologies, which subsequently evolved in the literature, share Rhodes’ understanding of networks as power dependency relationships between government and interest groups, in which resources are exchanged (see Rhodes 1986c). They differ, however, with regard to criteria along which they distinguish different types of networks. While some opted for up to seven criteria (see, for example, Waarden 1992), Rhodes kept it simple. He had based his original model only on one dimension, the degree of integration among the members of a network (Rhodes 1986a). Realizing that he had conflated the degree of integration and the dominance of a particular group, he later added the type of members and the distribution of resources among them. The combination of the now three dimensions resulted in five types of networks, which could be placed on a continuum ranging from highly integrated policy communities at the one end, and loosely integrated issue networks at the other. Professional networks, inter-governmental networks and producer networks lay in-between (Rhodes 1988). While Rhodes himself has predominantly used his model to analyse the intergovernmental relations between the local, national and European level (Rhodes 1986b, c, 1997b), others have applied modified versions of the ‘Rhodes model’ to state/society relations between government, business and civil society in a whole range of policy sectors and sub-sectors (Wilks and Wright 1987; Atkinson and Coleman 1992; Marsh and Rhodes 1992b; Marsh 1998; Guarneros-Meza 2008).

Rhodes’ work was instrumental to developing policy networks into a typology of interest intermediation. But he has not satisfied himself with using them as an analytical tool. After all, policy networks constitute structural relationships, interdependencies and dynamics between actors in politics and policy-making (see Knoke 1990). These structures, which may differ depending on the intensity, normalization, or frequency of interaction, shape the resource exchange between actors and form points of references for the formulation of their interests and strategies (Scharpf 1993). In other words, networks can deploy causal effects in public policy-making (Baumgartner and Jones 1991; Bressers et al. 1994; Kickert et al. 1997; Agranoff and McGuire 2003). The empirical
case studies in the volume which Rhodes edited with David Marsh in 1992 (Marsh and Rhodes 1992a, b), explored how the structure of a network could influence both policy process and policy outcome, for example, by affecting the logic of interaction between the members (Marin and Mayntz 1991; Marsh and Rhodes 1992b; Bressers et al. 1994). Yet, to date, no theory has been put forward that would systematically link a particular type of policy network with the specific character and outcome of the policy process (for a promising attempt, though, see, for example, Sandström and Carlsson 2008). This is because network analysis is no substitute for a theoretical explanation. It does not provide answers to questions, such as how and why networks change, what the relative importance of interpersonal and interorganizational relationships is, or which interests dominate.

The concept of ‘policy networks’ is a meso-level one which helps to classify the patterns of relationships between interest groups and governments. But it must be used in conjunction with one of the several theories of the state in order to provide a full explanation of the policy process and its outcomes. (Marsh and Rhodes 1992a, p. 268; see also Kenis and Schneider 1991, p. 44)

While networks still play a prominent role as analytical tools in public policy analysis and public administration, they have made another career in governance research, both within and beyond the nation state (see Rhodes 2011).

**NETWORKS AS NEW GOVERNANCE**

Using his network approach, Rhodes’ seminal study on changes in British public administration argued that the British policy system transformed into a differentiated polity, characterized by interdependence and the proliferation of self-steering policy networks undermining the power of the central state (Rhodes 1997b). Networks provided a conceptual lens to describe a situation in which ‘the state’, that is, the British government, was no longer able to produce effective public policies without relying on the resources of other, predominantly non-state, actors. Central state functions got lost ‘upwards to the European Union, downwards to special purpose bodies and outward to agencies’ (Rhodes 1997b, p. 17; see also Jordan 1990; Richardson 1996). The characterization of Britain in the 1990s as ‘governing without government’ did not only resonate with the emerging debate on ‘governance without government’ in the International Relations literature (see Rosenau and Czempiel 1992; Reinicke 1998). It built an important bridge between the Anglo-Saxon literature on policy network analysis to capture different forms of interest intermediation and the predominantly German literature on networks as a form of governance. Both share the assumption of networks as structures of interaction between public and private actors through which public policies are made. Governments have become increasingly dependent upon the cooperation and joint resource mobilization of policy actors outside their hierarchical control (Jordan and Richardson 1983; Hanf and O’Toole 1992; Kickert et al. 1997; Pierre and Peters 2000). While the analytical network concept is able to describe the context of, and factors leading to, joint policy-making, the governance approach focuses on the structures and processes through which joint policy-making is organized. Not the actors in the network but the patterns of linkages and interactions between them are taken as the main unit of analysis. Being heavily inspired by system theory, Renate Mayntz, Fritz Scharpf and other researchers working at the Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne in the 1980s and 1990s took networks as being constitutive
for governing modern societies. Territorial and functional differentiation resulted in a dispersion of resources and competencies necessary to make effective policies among a multitude of public and private actors (Kenis and Schneider 1991; Mayntz 1993). The separation between state and society becomes increasingly blurred:

Instead of emanating from a central authority, be this government or the legislature, policy today is in fact made in a process involving a plurality of both public and private organizations. (Mayntz 1993, p. 5)

This is why

the notion of ‘policy networks’ does not so much represent a new analytical perspective but rather signals a real change in the structure of the polity. (Mayntz 1993, p. 5)

In an increasingly complex and interdependent world, networks provide a solution to a whole variety of problems related to the setting and implementation of collectively binding norms and rules for the provision of public goods and services, that is, governance (Marin and Mayntz 1991; Kooiman 1993; Gales and Thatcher 1995; Reinicke 1998; Cutler et al. 1999). Networks allow governments to mobilize political resources in situations where these resources are widely dispersed between public and private actors, and governments cannot any more command their provision.

Since networks are based on non-hierarchical coordination and horizontal relations among the actors involved, they constitute a distinct type of social order or governance form, next to hierarchies and markets (Lindblom 1977; Williamson 1979; Powell 1990; Rhodes 1997a). While hierarchies coordinate social action by using command and control mechanisms, markets are spontaneous orders that emerge from the self-coordination of autonomous actors. Networks, in turn, function by non-hierarchical coordination based on the exchange of resources and/or trust (see Börzel 2010b).

Drawing on the distinction between government (hierarchy) and governance, Rhodes and others have equated governance with networks (Rhodes 1997b). Governance involves the ‘[f]ormulation and implementation of collectively binding decisions through the participation of state and non-state actors in public/private networks’ (Rhodes 1996, p. 660; Mayntz 2002, p. 21). In this view, networks are ‘governance without government’ (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992; Peters and Pierre 1998) which others have referred to as ‘cooperative’ (Mayntz 1998), ‘modern’ (Kooiman 1993), ‘interactive’ (Kohler-Koch 1997) or, as Rhodes did, simply ‘new’ (Rhodes 1996, 2007b). The concept of networks as ‘new governance’ has diffused into virtually all sub-disciplines of political science as will be shown in the remainder of this paper.

Network governance and the modern state

In the 1970s, the comparative policy and politics literature already showed that network governance might help to overcome problems of government (for a good overview of the literature, see Hanf and Scharpf 1978; Mayntz and Scharpf 1995b). Network governance became constitutive for the new paradigm of the ‘negotiating state’ in Germany (Hanf and Scharpf 1978; Mayntz 1993; Voigt 1995) and what Rhodes called a ‘differentiated polity’ in Britain (Rhodes 1997b). The direct participation of non-governmental actors in public policy-making was to compensate for the government failure and increases the intervention capacity of the state, respectively, by improving both the quality of public policies and the effectiveness of their implementation (see Kooiman 1993; Mayntz 1993; Jessop 1998).
Network governance and public-private partnerships, which are often (confusingly) referred to as networks (Osborne 2000; Rosenau Vaillancourt 2000), have also been associated with the ‘neoliberal agenda’ of new public management approaches, which are less interested in enhancing government capacities; rather, non-governmental actors are to substitute the provision of collective goods by governments. However, the idea of ‘rolling back the state’ not only entails an emphasis on market actors and competition systems but also a greater reliance on civil society networks (see Olson 1965; Ostrom 1990; Putnam 1993; Held 1995; for a critical view, see Rottenburg 2009).

Yet, despite the importance of market and civil society actors, government remains central. Network governance can be described as ‘state-organized unburdening of the state’ (Offe 2009, p. 555; original emphasis), which entails the transformation of the state rather than its demise. By putting non-governmental actors, who cannot resort to hierarchical coordination, on a more equal footing with public actors, networks give the former a real say in the adoption and implementation of political decisions. Accordingly, the role of public actors in the modern state changes from authoritative decision makers to negotiation partners of and mediators between private actors (Scharpf 1991; Kooiman 1993; Pierre and Peters 2000; Leibfried and Zürn 2005).

Network governance and the European Union
In the 1990s, students of European Politics discovered network governance. The concept seemed to capture the ‘sui generis’ nature of the EU as ‘a unique set of multi-level, non-hierarchical and regulatory institutions, and a hybrid mix of state and non-state actors’ (Hix 1998, p. 39) – without having to invent new terms that would apply to the EU only, such as ‘new, post-Hobsblian order’ (Schmitter 1991), or ‘post-modern state’ (Ruggie 1993; Caporaso 1996). While Beate Kohler-Koch was one of the first to call the EU network governance (Kohler-Koch 1994, 1999), the network concept had been used by several scholars to analyse EU policy-making previously, particularly in the field of structural policy (Marks 1992; Hooghe 1996; Heinelt 1996; Rhodes et al. 1996; Ansell 2000; Schout and Jordan 2005). The emerging interest in networks was partly a reaction to the critique of multi-level governance for predominantly focusing on the ‘multi-level’ aspect (relations between the territorial levels of government) thereby neglecting the ‘governance’ component (relations between the public and private spheres). Networks were a way ‘to put governance back into multi-level governance’ (Smith 1996). The European Union, then, is conceptualized as a multi-level system of ‘governance’, where private and public actors of the supranational, national, and subnational level interact within highly complex networks to produce policy outcomes (Peterson 1992; Mazey and Richardson 1993; Richardson 1994; Peterson 1995; see also Börzel 1997).

While early works on EU network governance focused on the ‘nature of the beast’ as a whole (Risse-Kappen 1996), the more recent literature on networks or what is often referred to as ‘new modes of governance’ (see Heritier and M. Rhodes 2010) explores to what extent the EU has made use of networks to govern its affairs. The ‘governance turn’ in EU studies (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006; see also Kohler-Koch and Larat 2009) is also reflected by the call of the White Paper on Governance published by the European Commission in 2001 (European Commission 2001) for more ‘modern forms of governance’ based on networks as the most appropriate way of dealing with the challenges the EU is facing in the 21st century (Schout and Jordan 2005, pp. 1–8; see also Joerges et al. 2001).

A systematic analysis of EU policy-making reveals that the EU features far less network governance than the literature would have us believe (see Börzel 2010a). EU policies are
largely formulated and implemented in multiple overlapping negotiation systems that can be described as multilevel policy networks. However, network relations that span across sectors and levels of government are not a *sui generis* characteristic of the EU but constitute a core feature of the modern state (see above). More importantly, like its member states, the EU can rely on a strong shadow of hierarchy cast by supranational institutions in adopting and implementing its policies (Héritier and M. Rhodes 2010). The key difference between the EU and the modern state lies in the subordinate role of private and public interest groups in the EU negotiation systems, which are largely dominated by governmental actors. While forms of private self-regulation or public-private co-regulation abound in the member states, we rarely find such forms of network governance at the EU-level. This does not imply that informal relationships between public and private actors should be discarded as irrelevant to EU policy-making (see Christiansen and Piattoni 2003; Kaiser 2009). However, these forms of informal politics are better described as governance ‘in’ networks than governance ‘by’ networks or network governance.

Instead of network governance, political competition has gained increasing importance, particularly since the introduction of the Open Method of Coordination and the application of the principle of mutual recognition to areas outside the Internal Market. While the number of transnational interest groups in Brussels is constantly on the rise (Eising 2007), they are often not strong enough to engage in the collective action required for private self-regulation or public-private co-regulation. Their weakness may be due to the heterogeneity of interests and a strong orientation towards national concerns. Finally, the member states may have little incentive to involve private actors in the policy process. Proponents of intergovernmentalist approaches to EU policy-making have argued that member states have delegated national policy competencies to the EU level in order to increase their autonomy *vis-à-vis* domestic interests (Milward 1992; Moravcsik 1994). The Commission, in turn, takes advantage of the private actor resources to increase its action capacity. At the same time, however, the Commission seeks to preserve its autonomy and has no interest in extending the involvement of private actors beyond informal and formal consultations. Against this background, it seems likely that the executive dominance in the EU will prevail. Thus, the findings of Rhodes’ study on the role of multi-level policy networks in Britain still hold – national governments remain central gate-keepers in EU policy-making (Rhodes 1997b, p. 154; see also Bache 1998; Bache and Flinders 2004).

**Network governance and international relations**

As we have seen above, networks as governance tools have a long-standing presence in the domestic affairs of highly industrialized states. More recently, the development and activities of networks beyond the nation-state, in the international context, have become the objects of research. For decades, research on international institutions has concentrated on inter-state regimes solving collective action problems and providing collective goods (Hasenclever *et al.* 1997). To the extent that non-state actors were taken into consideration at all, they appeared either as actors shaping state interests through domestic politics (Putnam 1988, Evans *et al.* 1993) or as transnational actors (such as multi-national corporations or international non-governmental organizations) lobbying international negotiations and/or international organizations (Wallace and Josselin 2002). While transnational knowledge-based networks (epistemic communities; see Haas 1992) and advocacy coalitions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Keck and Sikkink 1998) have featured prominently in the International Relations literature (for an overview, see
Risse 2002), non-state actors have only recently emerged as direct partners of national governments and international organizations (Reinicke 1998; Cutler et al. 1999; O’Brien et al. 2000; Hall and Bierstecker 2002; Kahler 2009; Woods and Martinez Diaz 2009). As in domestic politics (organized) business and civil society groups participate both in the setting and implementation of international policies and take on governance functions that used to come under the exclusive authority of the state.

Similar to the modern state, the proliferation of networks or public-private partnerships (PPP) as they are often called (Börzel and Risse 2005; Schäferhoff et al. 2009) is seen as a re-configuration of authority in international relations as a result of which sovereign states lose their monopoly over the provision of collective goods (Ruggie 2004; Slaughter 2004; Grande and Pauly 2005). In the absence of hierarchy in the international system, networks and PPP are celebrated as a solution to a whole variety of problems of governance beyond the nation-state, since governments and intergovernmental organizations are not capable of addressing global challenges (Reinicke and Deng 2000; Witte et al. 2000; Ruggie 2003). PPP help close the governance gap through providing public actors with a tool to obtain resources and competencies they do not have or do not control. By offering technical know-how and financial resources to address development challenges, business obtains access to public tenders and subsidies as well as new markets (Tesner 2000). NGOs, in turn, exchange their expertise and legitimacy for influence on public policies (Andonova and Levy 2003). Through the pooling of resources widely dispersed among public, market and civil society actors, PPP may increase both the effectiveness (problem-solving capacity) and the legitimacy of governance beyond the state in terms of democratic participation and accountability (see Conclusion, below). Yet, empirical studies present at best mixed results on the performance of PPPs, which also varies depending on their type (for a good overview, see Schäferhoff et al. 2009). Moreover, PPP have been criticized as drivers of the privatization and commercialization of world politics (Brühl et al. 2001; Hoodge and Greve 2005), as a political strategy through which business seeks to advance their special interests and secure corporate hegemony (Levy and Newell 2002), and/or as instruments to advance the interests of industrialized countries in the global South (Andonova 2006).

Overall, network approaches in International Relations have been as prone to what Renate Mayntz called the ‘functionalist fallacy of governance research’ (Mayntz 2004, p. 71 my own translation; see also O’Toole and Meier 2004) as the governance literature on the modern state. Explaining the emergence of networks by the demand for their superior effectiveness and legitimacy not only runs the risk of circular reasoning; it also tends to turn a blind eye on issues of power and interest, which Rhodes has made a central focus in his conception of networks as power relationships.

Network governance and areas of limited statehood

The (normative) appeal of network governance both within and beyond the state is that it appears to substitute for ‘state and government while avoiding the political costs of conflicts (...) everywhere where state capacity is deficient, on the one hand, and pure market coordination has little prospects of success, on the other’ (Offe 2009, p. 555). Being able to compensate for both market and government failure, it should not come as a surprise that networks have become a major focus in research on weak, failing and failed states. In ‘areas of limited statehood’, where government is weak or absent, governance without government may be often the only way to provide collective goods (Risse 2011).

At the same time, the literature has shown that network governance is likely to produce (more) adequate policy outcomes if political decisions can be hierarchically imposed.
The ‘shadow of hierarchy’ cast by government provides a crucial incentive for both government and non-governmental actors to engage in non-hierarchical coordination (see Mayntz and Scharpf 1995a; Scharpf 1997). If government is indeed a premise for governance without government, this results in a dilemma, if not a paradox, for research on network governance – the lower the effectiveness of government, the greater the need for governance, whose effectiveness (and legitimacy) depends, however, on the presence of government (Börzel 2009). Failed and failing states are not only too weak to cast a credible shadow of hierarchy; often they do not provide sufficient stability to allow for collective self-organization of market and civil society actors. Nor are they particularly attractive to external non-governmental actors, if they cannot provide a minimum of security and order (see Börzel 2010b).

Despite government and society being relatively weak, research on governance in areas of limited statehood shows that network governance does emerge and that transnational companies and non-governmental organizations are key providers of collective goods when government is too weak to deliver (see Risse 2011). Multinational companies have joined forces with non-governmental organizations to fight HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa (Müller-Debus et al. 2010) and advance social and environmental norms (Jenkins et al. 2002; Conzelmann and Wolf 2007). PPP also play an important role in the construction of water and energy supply systems (Witte and Reinicke 2005, pp. 24–34; Beisheim and Liese 2011), the achieving of food security (Beisheim and Liese 2011), the promotion of sustainable development (Andonova and Levy 2003; Börzel et al. 2011) or the protection of human rights (Deitelhoff and Wolf 2010). What most of the public health, food, sustainable development and human rights partnerships have in common is that they are transnational rather than domestic, involving international organizations, multinational companies and international NGOs (Schäferhoff et al. 2009). To what extent these multilevel networks are effective and legitimate providers of collective goods in areas of limited statehood is as contested as in the context of the modern state, the European Union and the international system.

NETWORKS: REIFIED METAPHOR OR GOVERNANCE PANACEA?

In an increasingly complex and dynamic world, in which governments find it difficult to control the resources necessary to make public policies capable of addressing societal problems and the potential for deregulation is limited due to the problems of market failure, networks are not only a common metaphor to capture the ‘architecture of complexity’ (Kenis and Schneider 1991, p. 25; Castells 2000; Knox et al. 2006, pp. 125–28). Where governments and markets increasingly fail, networks also seem to be the only form of governance capable of providing collective goods and services (Kooiman 1993; Jessop 1998; Reinicke 1998; Pierre and Peters 2000; Kooiman 2003; Schout and Jordan 2005).

There are, however, both empirical evidence and theoretical arguments that challenge the effectiveness, accountability and legitimacy of network governance (see O’Toole and Meier 2004; Papadopoulos and Warin 2007; Provan and Kenis 2008; Schäferhoff et al. 2009). Civil society organizations and companies can certainly provide governments with important resources to make public policies work (see Reinicke and Deng 2000) or even produce collective goods on their own (see Cutler et al. 1999; Hall and Bierstecker 2002; Cutler 2003). However, it is unclear whether the mutual resource dependency of governmental and non-governmental actors actually leads to a net increase in the problem-solving capacity of governance. If governments become so weak that they have
to share authority with companies and civil society organizations, then this can easily result in problem shifting or agency capture (see Hellman et al. 2000). Moreover, governments with weak regulatory capacities do not have the ability to reassume responsibility for delegated tasks in cases of private failures since functions were delegated because they were not capable of delivering them in the first place. Likewise, weak governments may not be able to resist the pressure of private actors to adopt policies that do not serve the public interest or, worse, are not able to judge what policies may be in the public interest since they lack the necessary information and expertise. Moreover, the inclusion of non-governmental actors as the primary rule targets in the process of rule making can certainly increase the problem-solving capacity by ensuring compliance. Yet, it might also simply lead to ‘lowest common denominator’ solutions or even result in deadlock. If those who have to bear the costs of compliance are involved in the negotiating process, they may attempt to weaken rules and regulations or prevent them altogether (see O’Hagan 2004; O’Toole and Meier 2004; Woolfson 2006). Finally, even if network governance can provide collective goods effectively, or more effectively, this is not always accepted as legitimate. Some criticize governance with/out government as neoliberal solutions in disguise, that is, as the privatization and de-regulation of formerly public services rather than the adoption of effective public policies (see Fagan 2006; Lane 2007; Bohle 2008). At the very least, networks allow policy-makers to distance themselves from policy controversy avoiding public scrutiny and accountability (O’Toole and Meier 2004). Due to the often informal character, the involvement of non-state actors is also often considered as clientelistic, nontransparent, exclusive, and, thus, undemocratic (Börzel 2009; Sørensen and Torfing 2009).

Whether network governance is really more effective and legitimate than its two rivals is ultimately an empirical question that lies beyond the scope of this paper. We still lack systematic evidence. One problem is that many studies suffer from a selection bias. There is more research on successful network governance arrangements than there is on failures. Overall, it is fair to say that there are neither theoretical reasons nor is there empirical evidence to assume that networks perform better than governments or markets. Fritz Scharpf has convincingly argued that hierarchy is in principle superior to other forms of governance due to its capacity to solve distributional conflicts (Scharpf 1997; see also Schuppert 2010, pp. 14–32). At the same time, he has also shown that the performance of different forms of governance, including hierarchy, depends on certain scope conditions, which are seldom fully met. In a similar vein, Rhodes has rejected the superiority of both hierarchy and markets over networks and emphasized the importance of managing networks for their effectiveness (Rhodes 1997a, pp. 48–9; see also Klijn et al. 1995; Kickert et al. 1997; McGuire 2002; Agranoff and McGuire 2003; Meier and O’Toole 2005; O’Leary and Bingham 2009). Beside, managerial networking and hierarchical steering, independent secretariats, professional full-time staff, efficient communication and information systems as well as transparent decision-making rules and procedures, can significantly increase the problem-solving capacity of networks (Beisheim and Liese 2011).

Networks do not vary only in their structural patterns of relations (Provan and Kenis 2008); they also vary in the types of function they fulfil (for example, standard-setting, service-provision, knowledge generation: see Beisheim and Liese 2011). They are externally managed and subject to meta-governance (Kickert et al. 1997; Jessop 2003; Kooiman 2003; Sørensen and Torfing 2007, Part III; Bevir and Richards 2009). Thus, networks often operate in the shadow of hierarchy cast by government (Scharpf 1994, pp. 38, 40; Rhodes 2007c, p. 1253). Governments set the rules of the game for both
markets and networks and (re)allocate resources. At the same time, networks make
hierarchical organizations more effective (Provan and Milward 1995; Meier and O’Toole
2009). Rather than reifying networks as omnipresent governance forms and treating them
as governance panacea, we need to explore the different ‘governance regimes’ (Benz 2001)
or ‘governance mixes’ (Rhodes 1997a; Börzel 2010b) as well as their capacity to provide
collective goods in an effective and legitimate way. Rhodes’ approach of differentiated polity as narratives provides a way of exploring and explaining the combinations of and interactions between market, hierarchy and network, focusing on the narratives of contingent power relationships (Bevir and Rhodes 2008, 2009).

Rhodes’ ‘decentring governance’ to research the power of networks in public policy
(see Bevir and Richards 2009) also puts ‘people back into networks’ (Rhodes 2002, p. 399,
2007a, c). Unlike his position in his previous work on networks, which was informed by inter-organizational theory and therefore neglected interpersonal relations (but see Wilks and Wright 1987 and Jouve 1995), Rhodes has shifted his focus from analysing institutions to analysing beliefs and practices of individuals (Rhodes 2002; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; Rhodes 2007a, p. 80). Adopting a social constructivist approach of learning and socialization, he conceives of change as the ‘way people in networks think about, and respond to dilemmas’ (Rhodes 2007a, p. 82). Analysing the ‘complex and continuous process of interpretation, conflict, and activity that produces ever-changing patterns of rule’ (Rhodes 2007a, p. 81), narratives about how people have acted or will react to dilemmas given their beliefs and desires become the main units of analysis (Rhodes 2007a, p. 85; see also Rhodes and Bevir 2006, 2010). His most recent thinking of networks is not only inspired by and has helped to advance the ‘ethnographic turn’ in the literature but provides an alternative way of thinking of how networks create and change institutionalized rule structures, that is, governance. It points to the importance of both agency and structure to understand the construction and reconstruction of governance (on the structure and agency debate in the study of policy networks, see Marsh and Smith 2000; Dowding 2001; Evans 2001; Marsh and Smith 2001; Raab 2001; Toke and Marsh 2003;
Knox et al. 2006, pp. 121–33). Finally, Rhodes proves wrong all those who have thought that the research on networks has reached a dead end.

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