

# Democratic governance and policy networks



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Democratic governance and public policy are interrelated and affect our society in many ways. The phrase network has evolved over many years especially socially, politically, and scientifically. “ However, the use of the network concept varies considerably between and within the different disciplines” (Börzel, 1997, p. 1). Policy networks have several dimensions to it depending upon the conditions and factors of how it is used. This paper will provide a brief description of the issue that I selected, provide a description of the actors and organizations in the policy network related to my selected issue, discuss how democratic governance influences the operation of policy networks, specifically the one(s) related to my issue, discuss how policy networks influence democratic governance, the analysis that I have drawn from conclusions and insights about the relationship between democratic governance and policy networks.

#### A Brief Description of the Issue that I Selected

Primary health care is an issue of public policy that I selected for my topic of discussion this week. Hence, primary health care is a fundamental critical element of providing individuals with a means of maintaining an overall healthy quality of life. “ For Americans to enjoy optimal health—as individuals and as a population—they must have the benefit of high-quality health care services that are effectively coordinated within a strong public health system” (IM, 2002). Primary health care is designed to be accessible and affordable for everyone no matter where he or she resides. There are significant components in understanding health care policy. Also, healthcare policy impacts its shareholders and stakeholders individually and collectively. The democratic government determines in some way exactly

how policies will be applied all across the country. It also provides a way for an individual to have a voice in forging public policy to accommodate the universal concern of the society. In regards to the construction of healthcare policy, there are diverse competing interests that play essential diverse roles.

#### A Description of the Actors and Organizations in the Policy Network Related to My Selected Issue

There are a plethora of actors and organizations in the policy network that is related to the primary health care issue comprises of health care coverages, physicians, hospitals, private practitioners, policyholders of the healthcare coverages, purchasers of health care services, each operational sets involved in numerous structures, and systems. Policy networks play a momentous role in primary health care because they are the ones who make decisions and shape policy. On the other hand, the authority of government is the strongest actor when it comes to health care issues and policies. The governmental entity simply assists with helping us understand and execute policy or policies in a certain realm. “ Governance networks manifest themselves in concrete policy interactions, which we call policy games, between actors” (Klijn & Edelenbos, 2011, p. 3). Nonetheless, evidence suggests that researchers influence a wide variety of disciplines and organizations when it comes to policy network because they continue to question the cogency of past policy or policies. This calls for a better deeper knowledge of understanding updated evidence that provides all actors involved various perspectives that can lead to a sound decision.

## Discussion on How Democratic Governance Influences the Operation of Policy Networks, Specifically the One(s) Related to My Issue

Democratic governance influences the operation of policy networks in primary health care. Clearly, the democratic governance allows an even playing field for all actors involved to network and work together in agreement to enact health care policies. Policy networks can harm the democratic governance in healthcare. For example, being under the leadership of a bad leader can lead to dishonesty, totalitarianism, low participation from participants or interest groups, hinder deliberation and disputes. When analyzing the governance of policy networks in regards to the decision-making process of healthcare policy, accountability, the participation of citizens or patients, and engagement of participants present various differential configurations among all the actors involved when trying to reach a common achievable goal of action. However, technology tools and laws are influential elements of healthcare policy as well. “ The functional linkages between law and media have long been significant in shaping American democratic governance” (Plater 2006, p. 511). Healthcare policy or policies are necessary for addressing primary health care as an autonomous issue. “ Governance networks should be effective (and efficient) to solve the problems where they are constructed for or where they emerge around” (Klijn & Edelenbos, 2011, p. 13). In order for democratic governance and policy networks to evolve and work in the decision-making process, all parties involved need to be nullified for the implementation of the healthcare policy or policies.

## How Policy Networks Influence Democratic Governance

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The way in which policy network influence democratic governance in health care is caused by many factors. One example is the relationship among the physician and patient(s). According to Krist et al. (2017), “health and wellbeing are fostered by engaged and activated patients, who collaborate with their clinician to better manage care” (p. 106). There are positive and negative sides to policy networks among democratic governance. Although there are good democratic governance and policy networks in primary health care there are dangers too. The dangers come into play during the decision-making process and when all actors are not on the same page, when all the actors have diverse perspectives on exactly how to move forward in implementing a policy or policies, when there is a change in the patient’s behavior, environmental changes, and condition’s with social factors on collaboration. The key players or interest groups that are involved in health policy are as follows: lobbyists, governmental organizations, insurance corporations, patients, proprietors, and benefactors. Moreover, a major policy challenge in the governance of risk is not only the interplay of all kinds of networks and infrastructures but also the interplay between diverse policy regimes with different governance models (Bekkers & Thaens 2005, p. 48). Policy networks are very influential in regards to democratic governance. It is truly a difficult structure to undertake because of the many actors involved, the social dynamics, the environmental dynamics, and the need for engagement and collaboration from all actors.

The Analysis that I Have Drawn From Conclusions and Insights About the Relationship Between Democratic Governance and Policy Networks.

Laws, media, diverse perspectives, public opinions, leadership, organizations just to name a few can affect policy or policies alone. To achieve balance with democratic governance and policy networks all interest groups involved interest groups must agree to disagree in formulating and implementing policies. Policy networks impact democratic governance in numerous ways such as economically, politically, and socially. Kooiman (1993) contended that “ policy networks provide ‘ partnership ’ as part of an order where ‘ complexity, dynamics, and diversity ’ assist ‘ governability ’ by balancing social-political needs and social-political capacities” (p. 6). Conflicting groups occur in designing the healthcare process. In regards to healthcare, patients can alter research and outcomes of decisions nationally and locally.

## Conclusion

Policy networks play a vital role in regards to democratic governance. Participation, engagement, and collaboration are some key elements between democratic governance and policy networks in influencing community policy. The outcome of the policy or policies solely depends upon the issue or situation at hand that is being addressed. Most importantly, democratic governance and civic policy are unified and affect society in countless ways positive or negative. Goals and decisions are achievable among interest groups in terms of creating policy.

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