Policy network: A policy research paradigm under the network governance model

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Abstract. The policy network is not a kind of research paradigm of public policy or a model of governance between government and market, it should be a mode of policy under the background of network governance. This kind of policy paradigm embodies the cooperation of making public policy, including the cooperation in policy implementation, which, in turn, promote the cooperation in the process of social governance.

Keywords: Policy Network, Network Governance, Policy Paradigm.

1   INTRODUCTION

With the development of the society, social governance issues have become unprecedentedly complex, so that the traditional public sector represented by the government can hardly cope with them by itself, and the trend of diversification of governance subjects has gradually taken shape. In this context, scholars are also concerned about the development of policy network theory and its application in practice. At present, scholars mainly focus on the theory of public network from two dimensions.one views policy network as a new public policy research paradigm, and the other view policy network as a governance model between the government and the market. These two views are described below.

2   POLICY NETWORK AS A PARADIGM OF PUBLIC POLICY

Scholars who view policy from this perspective generally regard policy network as a tool for public policy analysis. They mainly focus on the interactive relationship formed by multiple subjects in the network structure in the process of policy making, and the influence of this interactive relationship on policy process and policy results. For example, scholars Tan Lingyan and Type Chengwu believe that that policy network, as a tool of analysis and governance with strong vitality, provides a framework with both interpretive and constructive nature [1]. On the basis of this, Feng Guixia gives a more specific view. He believes that the policy network is a tool used to explain and analyze the policy process, so as to obtain a deeper understanding of the policy process [2].

Scholars generally divide policy networks into three different types: networks based on resource dependence, policy networks based on common values and policy networks based on shared discourse [3]. First of all, policy networks linked by resource dependence are based on "resource dependence theory", which considers resource dependence among actors as the basis for the formation of policy networks or policy alliances [4]. This means that public policies largely depend on the exchange of resources among actors with different resources and preferences, and the change of policy implementation is the change of policy network structure caused by the change of resource dependence state caused by external shocks. Secondly, the Advocacy Coalition Framework is a theoretical model based on common values. The Advocacy Coalition Framework argues that it is easier to build trust and act collectively on policy issues among actors with similar or shared value systems. Therefore, the determinant of the structure of the policy network is the system of shared value associated with the policy. Finally, Madingharger believed that the Advocacy Coalition Framework ignored the mediating role of Discourse concepts among coalitions, and there might be conflicts within coalitions with the same value system, and thus proposed the "Discourse Coalition Framework" [5].

This theoretical framework explains that in specific social situations, the common understanding of facts, terms and actions contributes to the formation of Discourse Coalition and shapes the final policies. Therefore, it is not difficult to find that the policy network theory, as the paradigm of public policy, tries to reveal the complex process of the participation of multiple subjects behind the policy so as to provide an explanatory framework for the process of policy formation and the final results.

The policy network perspective of the public policy paradigm breaks through the mainstream paradigm of conventional policy analysis. First, it emphasizes the interaction among the actors of multiple categories in the process of public decision-making. Second, it pays attention to the different actions and policy preferences presented by the interaction of interest subjects; Third, the policy network focuses on the facts of political life, emphasizing "what is" rather than" what should be". This analysis often focuses on the political attribute of policy network, shows the contingency color nature of public policy, but tends to ignore the network characteristics of public policy, which mainly involve a dynamic process full of interaction among stakeholders. The stakeholders form interdependent network structure, in which individuals are influenced by other actors. Following the network rules actors in the policy network interact and game with each other, and then build a consistent target network. It is not difficult to see that the network policy research of the public policy paradigm basically follows the traditional status structure view, still focuses on the political attribute of the policy network, and ignores the description of the realistic existence form of the multiple public management subjects.

3   THE POLICY NETWORK AS A GOVERNANCE MODEL

Based on contract the network organizations were constructed with the arrival of the information technology revolution in the 1990s. while at that time the hierarchical coordination way has already not adapted to the ecological environment of public management. And due to the failure of the market, the possibility of deregulation is restricted, network just provided an interest coordination framework in which interdependent actors interact with each other. Governance is feasible only in the context of policy network. As a governance model between the government and the market, the policy network emerges at the historic moment.

In this view, policy networks are informal institutional architecture. In this architecture, the relationship among actors is informal, non-bureaucratic, reciprocal, and relatively stable, so as to achieve common interests. In this process, actors follow common rules to constrain the behavior of policy network members in order to produce common results. This can reduce information costs and transaction costs, increase mutual trust, and reduce uncertainty and risk. Because of these functions policy network is an ideal institutional framework for coordinating public and private actors. Thus. Public and private actors have common interests and depend on each other to form a resource exchange with complementary advantages.

According to the school of policy network governance, the network represents an alternative to the market and the bureaucracy. The network is a kind of horizontal, negotiated self-coordination; Network implies negotiation and coordination among autonomous actors. It relies on a single formal authority to control and coordinate; the network has the characteristics of self-organization, self-management and self-control. In the process of self-coordination among nodes, the network reaches a stable state.

The key point of policy network is that it is a logic of mutuality based on common norms, not a formal authority relationship. If the control in the network is too tight, the network is no longer a network, but becomes a bureaucratic structure. As a result. "Power does not operate unilaterally, and the distribution of power varies, but in general it is an interdependence structure". As a governance model different from market and bureaucracy, policy network mainly focuses on the mobilization of decentralized resources. Researchers believe that the network is a metaphor for the loose nature of governance. Due to the emphasis on the discretion of actors, actors have an interdependent and relatively stable structure, and they interact, coordinate and communicate with each other.

According to the theory of policy network governance, in the process of governance, the government joins the public policy process together with other actors, and the government is only one of the actors. Public management occurs in an organizational network composed of different actors, and no actors has the right to dominate the actions of other actors. That means no actor can control others out of political power or economic superiority. In other words, in the network organization mode, there is no absolute dominant power, and all kinds of organizations stand on the same horizontal line. In the network, the rationality, interests and strategies of all parties are different and often conflict with each other. In this way, the policy process is not for the

implementation of previously defined goals, but rather actors exchange information on issues and preferences and bargain over goals and resources. Therefore, policy network governance advocates the idea of cooperative governance and interactive governance, the realization of which depends on the cultivation and implementation of trust mechanism and coordination mechanism. In policy network governance, trust is a core cohesive element and its role is equivalent to the legitimate authority of the bureaucracy. In the network relationship, whether actors can get rid of the dilemma of collective action and realize cooperation, in addition to the institutional factors, mainly depends on the trust relationship between members. In histology, trust is considered essential to the functioning of organizational networks. Putting trust to work is like a highly cooperative lubricant in economic exchange, which can be used to solve complex real-world problems much more quickly and with less effort than forecasting, authority, or bargaining. Histologically, the degree of trust affects the operation of an organization. Trust can reduce transaction costs and promote the effective operation of an organization.

Therefore, policy network is a governance model between the government and the market. Under the background of the internet, based on trust and interests, multiple governance subjects form cooperative relations in the network of interdependent actors to realize the optimization of resource combination and finally achieve good governance of the society.

4   POLICY NETWORK IS A POLICUY RESEARCH PARADIGM UNDER THE MODE OF NETWORK GOVERNANCE

From the perspective of political science, the governance of modern society has experienced an era from"re-nationalism" to "nationalism" and then to "post-nationalism". With the acceleration of mobility more and more public problems involved, and some are even beyond the geographic boundaries and legal boundaries of sovereign state. Therefore, it is impossible to rely on the government to solve all these problems. As a result of the social movements in the late 20th century, demands for participation and the ability to participate of enterprises, on-governmental organizations and other social subjects were unprecedently developed. Therefore, cooperative governance becomes a new choice of social governance.

With the arrival of the information era and the development of internet technology, the network provides a platform for the connection between various diversified subjects. Therefore, with the cooperation of non-profit organizations, profit-making organizations and other diverse subjects participating in the network, governance has become a new governance mode of public services, Domestic scholars have defined network governance, and a representative point of view is that "network governance is a process in which many public actors such as government departments and non-governmental departments cooperate with each other to share public power and jointly manage public affairs in an interdependent environment in order to realize and promote public interests" [6]. That is to say, in the new historical conditions, governance is the result of the

interaction of a series of public and private actors. No single actor can unilaterally determine the process of public governance. These actors need to form a cooperative relationship to achieve the optimization of resource mix and ultimately achieve good governance of society.

The origins of policy networks can be traced back to the study of the public policy process in the1960s and 1970s. it is found that government officials, bureaucracies, congressmen and interests' groups often form close and exclusive alliance relationships through various behaviors in the decision-making process, thus forming the so-called "iron-triangle" or "sub-government". These individuals or groups based on common interests and attitudes provide resources or support to each other in the policy process and use routine decision-making opportunities to govern policy making to achieve their respective goals. Therefore, public policies are formulated through the continuous interaction between government departments and interest groups in different policy communities.

It can be seen that the basic starting point of policy network is to emphasize the interaction among interdependent social actors in the policy process. However, with the development of information technology and the internet, the interaction among multiple subjects participating in the policy process becomes more frequent. The interaction mode is more diversified, and the relationship among them is derived into a complex network structure. With the change of policy issues, the interaction mode of actors will also change, and on this basis, different network types form. Policy network generally have the following characteristics: (1) pluralistic and heterogeneous subjects. These subjects mainly refer to public sectors, private sector, the third sector and many other actors, such as political officials, administrators, members of parliament, scholars and experts, interest groups, mass media and other individuals or groups with interests related to a certain policy. They participate in policy networks as individuals, but are often representatives of organizations. (2) interdependence of subjects, this interdependence means that no actor in the policy network can independently complete policy activity, but must rely on the actors to effectively solve policy problems and achieve win-win or multi-win policy interests through interaction. (3) complex network relations. The pluralistic and heterogeneous relationship among different subjects is either departmental structure or interpersonal structure. These relationships may be strong or weak, long or short, formal or informal. It should be noted that policy networks place more emphasis on the importance of informal relationships in the policymaking process, and this compensates for the lack of variables in policy analysis,

From the above analysis, it is not difficult to see that the idea of policy network shows that public policies are the result of the interaction between public and private actors, and the formulation and implementation of public policies are completed in the network of interdependence actors. If we pay too much attention to the unilateral role of the government and ignore the multi-layered and heterogeneous nature of policy actors, public policies will surely fail. In public-private partnerships, the scope of public actors has expanded beyond the state as the process of public service management has incorporated new actors. As a result, the government will turn from monopoly to competition in the process of social governance, and the government, non-governmental and private sectors will participate in the whole process of public policy, thus forming

a policy network structure different from market and hierarchy. When decision-making power and the administrative structure appear this kind of interdependent relationship, it also presents a highly fragmented condition of policy resources. Traditional administrative department got assistance and cooperation through the policy network interaction. Policies are carried out smoothly, and the cost for policy monitoring and controlling reduce, realizing the combination of decision-making process and network governance.

5   CONCLUSION

The network governance model in the post-industrial era provides a deep soil and better environment for policy networks. Based on this, the interaction and communication among diversified policy subjects can take place, and then a complex policy network structure takes shape. The complementary and cooperative advantages of resources can be implemented to achieve certain policy goals. So, you cannot simply consider Policy network as a kind of policy paradigm or a macro governance mode. It should be a policy paradigm under the mode of governance which embodies the cooperation of public policy making, including the cooperation of policy execution. And this in turns promote the cooperation in the process of social governance.

6   Reference

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