

Academic Year 2015/2016, Semester 2
UHB 2209
Polycentric Governance: Possibilities and Pitfalls
Course Overview and Schedule

Module Description

This 4 MC module takes an inter-disciplinary look at the multifarious concept of “governance” - how resources, issues and groups are organised and managed by a range of actors from the public, private and people sectors. Through a combination of academic work and case studies, the module explores

- (i) the circumstances under which, and how, governance in the modern world needs to be more “polycentric” – taking place at multiple interlocking levels, including the global, national and local; and involving multiple sectors (governments, businesses, civil society and individual citizens);
- (ii) key determinants of success or failure in different instances of polycentricity;
- (iii) both the benefits and limitations inherent in polycentric governance arrangements, as well as the challenges and obstacles to achieving greater polycentricity.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, students should:

- understand how “governance”, as distinct from “government”, is a complex concept that encompasses multiple sectors (including governments, businesses and civil society);
- recognise that effective governance of resources, issues and groups requires multiple sectors coming together, often in complex ways that require new ideas on the conceptualisation and implementation of governance;
- critically apply a nuanced understanding of governance to contemporary issues and a personally-chosen topic that will form the basis of a class presentation;
- assess the critical success factors behind different governance modalities and arrangements, in geographies at different developmental stages;
- acquire and apply a vocabulary to debate contemporary issues relating to governance of resources, issues and groups;
- feel confident evaluating current governance arrangements, whether by governments, businesses, communities and other groups/organisations – either as potential practitioners of governance with varying degrees of polycentricity, or as discerning citizens.

Course Provider: Aaron Maniam, Adjunct Lecturer

The course will meet on Saturdays, 2.30 to 6.30 pm.

Weekly Schedule

Session	Topic	Description + Reading
1 16 Jan	Introduction and Context Setting Paradigms: States, Markets and Public Goods	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G E M Anscombe (1981), 'On the Source of the Authority of the State', in <i>Ethics, Religion and Politics: Collected Philosophical Papers Vol III</i>, 130-55, available at http://bit.ly/1QXFJHH • Paul Samuelson (1954), A Pure Theory of Public Expenditure (https://courses.cit.cornell.edu/econ335/out/samuelson_public_re.pdf) <p><u>Good repositories of resources for the course as a whole:</u> http://bollier.org/commons-resources/commons-course-syllabus http://www.onthecommons.org/work/commons-framework/governance</p> <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditionally, we associate “governance” with “government” (or the state). Why is this the case, according to Anscombe? • What problems does Anscombe see with reliance on the state for governance? What other problems can you think of with such reliance? • Samuelson believes that markets, not just states, can achieve “efficient” allocations of resources. What does he mean by “efficient”? What are the two main sectors involved in efficient allocation of resources? What two classes of goods are the ones that matter most to Samuelson? • Provide a succinct definition of the term “public good” that can be understood by someone without economics or political science training, and cite 2-3 examples of such goods. What is meant by “free riding” and “under-provision” of public goods? • What assumptions do Anscombe and Samuelson make about the rationality and motivations of agents who are <i>being</i> governed, and those <i>doing the governing</i>? • What are the advantages and disadvantages of the models of governance proposed by Anscombe and Samuelson? <p><u>Session Overview</u></p> <p>This session explores the political archetype of “the state” (the reading by Anscombe), and the economic archetype of the “market” (the reading by Samuelson), as mechanisms through which effective governance can be achieved. We will explore limitations of each archetype, as a foundation to under the critique that the concept of “polycentricity” provides for purely state- and market-centred governance.</p>

Session	Topic	Description + Reading
2 23 Jan	Beyond Paradigms: Governance of Public Goods and Common Pool Resources	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elinor Ostrom (2009), Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems (http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/2009/ostrom_lecture.pdf) <i>The Economist</i> obituary for Elinor Ostrom: http://www.economist.com/node/21557717 <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <p>Part I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a succinct definition of the terms “Common Pool Resources” (CPRs) and “Tragedy of the Commons”, that can be understood by someone without economics or political science training. Cite 2-3 examples of each term. Compare and contrast CPRs and Public Goods (from week 1). How are the governance challenges posed by CPRs and Public Goods similar? How are they different? <p>Part II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways does Elinor Ostrom’s “Institutional Analysis and Development” (IAD) framework build on the ideas of Anscombe and Samuelson? In what ways are Ostrom’s ideas different from Anscombe’s and Samuelson’s? With whom do you agree more and why? Does “polycentric governance” require us to combine, or choose from among, the three thinkers? <p><u>Session Overview</u></p> <p>The reading from Ostrom (2009) extends Anscombe and Samuelson’s arguments by introducing “communities”, not just “governments” and “markets”, as salient governance actors. The first 90 mins of class will be spent in a lecture, working through the discussion questions in Part I, which cover the core concepts in Ostrom’s thinking. These will form the basis of much of the rest of the module, so it is important to ensure a solid foundational understanding.</p> <p>The second half of class will explore the connections, comparisons and contrasts between Anscombe, Samuelson and Ostrom. Students should consider, in particular, the pros and cons of Ostrom’s model of polycentricity.</p>

Session	Topic	Description + Reading
3 30 Jan	New Commons I - Information and Knowledge	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom (eds) (2011). <i>Understanding Knowledge as a Commons</i>. Boston. MIT Press. (chs 1 & 3, ch 2 optional) – available at http://bit.ly/1QXFJHH • Yochai Benkler (2006), <i>The Wealth of Networks</i>. Yale University Press. (chapters 3 & 4) – available online at http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/wealth_of_networks/Table_of_Contents • Jonathan Zittrain (2006), “The Generative Internet”, <i>Harvard Law Review</i> 119 p 1974 (downloadable at papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=847124) • Geoff Mulgan (2015), “How to Govern the Internet as a Global Commons”, NESTA, available at http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/ideas_for_global_internet_governance_by_geoff_mulgan.pdf • Brett M. Frischmann, Michael J. Madison and Katherine J. Strandburg, “Governing Knowledge Commons”, Ch 1 of <i>Governing Knowledge Commons</i> (2014), available at http://bit.ly/1QXFJHH • Read up on the work of the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (www.icann.org) <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Should information and knowledge be classified as Public Goods, or Common Pool Resources? 2. Discuss what the IAD framework tells us about how best to govern the production, use and dissemination of information and knowledge. 3. With reference to examples from the past decade (Wikileaks, the revelation of classified information by American Edward Snowden, the EU’s 2014 ruling allowing a “right to be forgotten” and others), consider how knowledge and information on the Internet should be governed. <p><u>Session Overview</u></p> <p>Information and knowledge possess some characteristics of Public Goods (e.g. non-rivalry and non-excludability), but also some qualities similar to Common Pool Resources (e.g. the properties of emergence and potential for community management). This session explores how this combination of qualities generates unique governance challenges, particularly when information and knowledge can be found online.</p>

Session	Topic	Description + Reading
4 6 Feb Essay 1 due	New Commons II - Relationships, Social Capital and Trust	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Coleman (1987), “Norms as Social Capital”, in Gerard Radnitsky and Peter Bernholz (eds), <i>Economic Imperialism: The Economic Approach Applied Outside the Field of Economics</i>, available at http://bit.ly/1QXFJHH • Robert D. Putnam (1993), "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life", <i>The American Prospect</i> no. 13 (Spring, 1993), available at http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/DETOC/assoc/13putn.html • Janine Nahapiet and Sumatra Ghoshal (1998), “Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage” in <i>The Academy of Management Review</i>, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Apr., 1998), available at https://www.uzh.ch/iou/orga/ssl-dir/wiki/uploads/Main/v26.pdf • Michael Woolcock, “Social Capital and Economic Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework” (1998), available at http://bit.ly/1QXFJHH • Case: The West Marin Commons (http://www.westmarincommons.org/) <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do intangible resources like relationships, social capital and trust display qualities more similar to Public Goods or Common Pool Resources? 2. What are the implications of the IAD framework for how relationships, social capital and trust are governed – and by whom? 3. What do the experiences of West Marin and Singapore illustrate about the challenges and opportunities involved in governing relationships, social capital and trust? <p><u>Session Overview</u></p> <p>Like information and knowledge, relationships and social capital in large groups possess some characteristics of Public Goods (e.g. non-rivalry and non-excludability), but also some qualities similar to Common Pool Resources (e.g. the properties of emergence and potential for community management).</p>
5 13 Feb	New Commons III – Structure, Process and Architecture	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Levine (2011), “Collective Action, Civic Engagement, and the Knowledge Commons”, Ch 9 of Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom (eds). 2011. <i>Understanding Knowledge as a Commons</i>. Boston. MIT Press. – available at http://bit.ly/1QXFJHH • Case: Citizen Juries - http://jefferson-center.org/what-we-do/citizen-juries/ • Case: New Democracy - http://www.newdemocracy.com.au/ • Case: Participatory Budgeting - http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/

Session	Topic	Description + Reading
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Our Singapore Conversation (goo.gl/w3OVmz) <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where would “common” platforms like participatory policy-making fit in Ostrom’s typology of goods/resources? 2. What does the IAD framework tell us about how such common platforms can be governed more effectively? 3. Whose responsibility is it to provide and sustain such platforms? 4. What difference has Big Data, the Internet and other forms of technology made to participatory policy platforms like those in the case studies? <p><u>Session Overview</u></p> <p>This week’s class will begin with group discussions on four cases - each student will only have to read one case, and will discuss in groups how the case manifests (or doesn’t) concepts from previous weeks, like free-riding, commons and community management of governance challenges.</p>
<p>6 20 Feb</p> <p>Proposal Due</p>	<p>Communication and Learning</p>	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerd Gigerenzer. (2001). The Adaptive Toolbox (http://www.alice.id.tue.nl/references/gigerenzer-2001.pdf) • Ernst Fehr and Simon Gächter. (2000). Cooperation and Punishment in Public Goods Experiments. American Economic Review 90 No. 4: 980-994 (downloadable at www.iew.uzh.ch/wp/iewwp010.pdf) <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ostrom refers to the importance of “cheap talk” in the governance of Common Pool Resources. What does she mean by this term? 2. To what extent can such “cheap talk” enhance the governance of Public Goods and the New Commons we have explored in previous weeks? Is cheap talk necessary, or sufficient, for effective governance of resources? 3. A key aspect of dynamic systems is that their constituent agents learn from prior experience and refine themselves. How does such learning take place? Is this an aid to effective governance of such systems, or does it introduce new challenges? <p><u>Session Overview</u></p> <p>This week’s material explores how a range of commons, both physical and intangible, can be better governed when there are opportunities for deep communication and adaptive learning – in contrast to the assumption of atomised, strictly utility-maximising agents in Samuelson’s work. Students will be split into four groups to discuss how communication and learning took place in the examples from earlier weeks: Information & Knowledge; West Marin; Participatory Politics.</p>

Session	Topic	Description + Reading
Recess Week – No Class		
7 5 Mar	Governance and Complexity	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with this video by Tim Harford – http://www.ted.com/talks/tim_harford.html • W. Brian Arthur (2013). Complexity Economics: A Different Framework for Economic Thought (http://tuvalu.santafe.edu/~wbarthur/Papers/Comp.Econ.SFI.pdf) • David J Snowden and Mary E Boone (2007). “A Leader’s Framework for Decision-making”. http://opmexperts.com/A%20Leader%27s%20Framework%20for%20Decision%20Making%20-%20HBR.pdf • (optional – and tough!) David Bohm (1989 – new edition), Quantum Theory. (Chapters 1, 2, 7) <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do the writers of this week’s readings mean by the term “complex”? Identify 2-3 examples of issues that exhibit the quality of complexity. • What is a “complex adaptive system”? To what extent does Ostrom’s IAD framework reflect similar intellectual underpinnings as complex adaptive systems approaches? • What areas of governance would benefit from a more complexity-based approach? What are the downsides of such an approach? <p><u>Session Overview</u></p> <p>This week’s material is difficult, hence the inclusion of a video and not just traditional reading. Students with strong quantitative skills (and exposure to Physics) may find the material slightly more accessible. The core point of the material is that traditional approaches in physical and social sciences assume that most phenomena are linear, and most problems have solutions that can be derived from optimising approaches. Ostrom’s approaches are somewhat messier than this, but still exhibit an underlying intellectual rigour.</p>
8 12 Mar	Implementing Polycentricity	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Lipsky (1980) - Street-Level Bureaucrats (video) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZX1livgPspA • James G. March and Johan P. Olson (1998), “The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders,” <i>International Organization</i>, Vol. 52, No. 4, International Organization at Fifty: Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics. (Autumn, 1998), pp. 943 – 969 (available at http://courses.washington.edu/ppm504/MarchOlson_IO_98.pdf)

Session	Topic	Description + Reading
		<p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a web search for “principal-agent problem”, and come up with your own definition of the term. Give 2-3 examples of this “problem” in different spheres of life (possibilities include but need not be restricted to insurance, car sales, employees/workers). • The video and reading for this week each illustrate a different type of “principal-agent problem”. For each case, identify the principal(s) and the agent(s), and describe the nature of the “problem” between the two. • How can principal-agent situations lead to problems for community management of public goods/common pool resources, as well as introduce frictions for communication and adaptive learning? Are these problems insurmountable? • Does polycentric governance give too much or too little emphasis to the work of what Lipsky terms street-level bureaucrats? • Is it fair to say that polycentric governance would be more widely, and better, implemented if policymakers were guided by March and Olson’s “logic of appropriateness” rather than “logic of consequences”? <p><u>Session Overview</u></p> <p>Ostrom was known to comment, frequently, that there were “No panaceas!” to the challenges of governance. This applies as much to her concepts; this week explores some of the key difficulties that can be encountered when implementing polycentricity.</p>
9 19 Mar Essay 2 Due	Consultations on Group Presentations	<p>There will be no formal class this week.</p> <p>Students will meet the course instructor in groups of 3-4, based on the individual proposals submitted in Week 6. Each meeting will last 30 minutes, during which time the group will be given guidance on their presentations, proposed reading and discussion leadership for the topics they will cover in Weeks 10-12.</p>
10 26 Mar	Student Presentations I (up to three groups)	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be suggested by presenting groups (one article / chapter / video per group), after discussion with course instructor to ensure non-repetition and quality control <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be suggested by presenting groups, after discussion with course instructor

Session	Topic	Description + Reading
11 2 Apr	Student Presentations II (up to three groups)	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be suggested by presenting groups (one article / chapter / video per group), after discussion with course instructor to ensure non-repetition and quality control <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be suggested by presenting groups, after discussion with course instructor
12 9 Apr	Student Presentations III (up to three groups)	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be suggested by presenting groups (one article / chapter per group) <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be suggested by presenting groups
13 16 Apr	Wrap-up: Obstacles to Polycentricity	<p><u>Core Reading:</u></p> <p>Barton H Thompson, <u>Tragically Difficult: The Obstacles to Governing the Commons</u>, 30 Environmental Law 241-278 (2000).</p> <p>Downloadable here: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=236031</p> <p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <p>1. What prevents current governance platforms from adopting the insights of polycentricity and the IAD framework? Are there possible solutions to these obstacles?</p> <p><u>Session Overview</u></p> <p>This week's material builds on Week 8, which began to explore limitations to the idea of polycentricity. The suggested reading outlines several problems with both the concept and implementation of polycentric governance.</p>
14 23 April	Reading Week	
Policy Memo Due		

Assessment

Assessment for the course will take the following forms:

Two Analytical Response Essays (35%)

- Essay 1 (15%) – max 3 pages double-spaced in Times New Roman 12 font; reflecting a critical analysis of, and an independent argument/thesis on, the readings from one of Weeks 1-3
- Essay 2 (20%) – max 4 pages double-spaced in Times New Roman 12 font; reflecting a close reading of, and personal response to, readings from at least two of Weeks 4 onward, drawing links between and pointing out both comparisons and contrasts in the material covered. Essays may adopt the lense of one reading and apply it to another; apply insights from reading to a new case study; develop their own lenses/models; or adopt other approaches that students find appropriate.
- Students are not required to refer to texts outside the main reading list; they are welcome to do so if that enhances their independent arguments/theses, but should bear in mind the page limit and not spread their material too thinly.
- Essay 1 – due in Session 4 of class
- Essay 2 – due in Session 9 of class

Presentation (40%)

- **Individual Component** (10%, due in Session 6 of class) – Annotated Proposal (2 pages double-spaced in Times New Roman 12 font), outlining a topic relating to the course material that the student would like to delve into more deeply. Possibilities include exploring a theory/model in more depth/detail, examining links between theories/models, suggest enhancements to existing theories/models, developing a case study to illustrate the relevance and/or limitation of theoretical ideas, and/or other ideas.
- Students will be given a list of possible topics, but may also propose topics independently.
- **Group Component** (30% - 20% group grade + 10% individual contribution)
- Each presentation should cover a consolidated topic that merges areas across the group members' individual proposals.
- Presentation slots to be assigned in Weeks 10-12 – each group will
 - conduct a Presentation (30 mins) covering the main aspects of their chosen topic
 - lead a class Discussion (30 mins)
 - submit a two-page Learning Summary of the core insights raised in class AND key learnings the group derived from the entire presentation experience.

Assignment into groups will be coordinated by the course instructor based on the individual proposals submitted. Each group will receive customised guidance from the instructor on possible readings to suggest for the discussion they will lead; and discussion questions to frame the session.

Policy Memo (25%)

- A final written piece (max 5 pages double-spaced in Times New Roman 12 font), synthesising ideas from the weeks of class and the student presentations.
- The Memo should demonstrate the student's personal response to, and evaluation of, the material covered in the class. It should outline whether / to what extent, and if so how, a

more polycentric approach can be adopted by a particular organisation (or group of organisations); what benefits and limitations such an approach can bring; what implementation difficulties might be faced in the process; and how they might be surmounted.

- Each Memo should be addressed to a relevant decision-maker (or group of decision-makers).
- Due Saturday of Reading Week

All students will receive grading rubrics for the Analytical Response Essays, Annotated Proposal, Group Presentation and Policy Memo. Guidance will be provided on writing Policy Memos for those to whom this format is unfamiliar.