

Comparative Electoral Management: Networks, Performance and Instruments

Toby S. James

Elections are the most complex logistical event to be organised during peace-time. As a result, much can, and often does go wrong. Electoral registers can be inaccurate, voters can be left to wait for hours, votes may not be accurately counted. This can deny citizens their right to vote, undermine confidence in the electoral process and even trigger electoral violence, plunging countries into civil war. Yet comparative research on electoral management remains almost entirely overlooked compared to other aspects of the electoral process.

This paper consists of two draft chapters from the book *Comparative Electoral Management (chapters 1 & 3)*. In the book electoral management is defined as a field of study and a sociological approach is set out. The book introduces a new way to identify the key actors involved in organising elections, assess the management of elections, and considers 'what works' in terms of delivering well run elections.

All comments welcome!

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Toby S. James

Senior Lecturer University of East Anglia

Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Electoral Integrity Project University of Sydney

t.s.james@uea.ac.uk

www.tobysjames.com / www.electoralmanagement.com



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Chapter 1

Introduction:

Why Electoral Management Matters

In the immediate aftermath the 2007 Kenyan Presidential election, the country entered into a political, economic and humanitarian crisis. Post-election violence erupted leading to estimates of over 1,000 people being killed by police, criminal gangs and militia groups and 660,000 displacements, as opponents of President Mwai Kibaki alleged electoral manipulation (CBS News 2008; Kenny 2019). Tensions were deeply rooted in Kenya's political history. The sequence of events surrounding the conduct of count were the immediate sparks for the conflict, however. With an announcement from the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) expected about the result expected by 10am on Sunday 30th December at the latest, three days after the poll, there were repeated delays. Rumours circulated that the results were being rigged by ECK to favour to the President (Throup 2008). In its evaluation of the election, the European Union Election Observation Mission (2008, 1) concluded that:

'Kenya fell short of key international and regional standards for democratic elections. Most significantly, the electoral process suffered from a lack of transparency in the processing and tallying of results, which undermined the confidence in the accuracy of the final result of the presidential election.... This overall conclusion is all the more regrettable, since in advance of the tallying process and despite some significant shortcomings in the legal framework, the elections were generally well administered and freedoms of expression, association and assembly were generally respected.'

Kenya 2007 highlights the high stakes involved in delivering elections and the consequences of getting it wrong. Kenya's experience was evidence that fragile multi-party systems can quickly fall apart under intense political pressure (Cheeseman 2008). It wasn't a gerrymandered electoral system that was to blame, or the role of money in politics – the traditional sources of concern about electoral integrity. Instead, it was the logistical delivery of the electoral process.

Problems with the delivery of elections are not uncommon and found in establish democracies alongside electoral autocracies and transitioning democracies, however. The 2000 US Presidential election famously exposed shortcomings in America's electoral machinery with confusing ballot

papers, faulty equipment, queues at polling stations, problems with absentee ballots and citizens missing from the electoral registers (Hall 2012; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 2001; Wand et al. 2001). Nearly two decades later problems routinely catch the headlines. Meanwhile in the UK, at midnight on Friday 7th May, 2010, with the result of the UK general election unclear, the BBC News in the United Kingdom carried the headlines that the election had been marred by widespread errors with electoral administration. Hundreds of voters in Chester were unable to cast a ballot because of an out of date electoral register; long queues formed in Sheffield and Leeds leaving voters 'locked out' when polls closed at midnight; polling stations in Liverpool reported that they had run out of ballot papers. Some dissatisfied voters staged sit-ins to protest against what they called "disenfranchisement" (Channel 4 News 2010). 'It sounds like a disgrace from beginning to end, the way that this election has been handled', exclaimed the BBC's TV presenter David Dimbleby, who was questioning the Chair of the Electoral Commission, Jenny Watson live on air as the news unfolded (BBC News 2010). One of the world's oldest democracies, whose leaders had often lectured other states about the need for democracy, elections and good governance to spread around the world has trouble in its own backyard. Its electoral machinery was found seriously wanting.

Elsewhere, the completeness and accuracy of electoral registers have been questioned in Ireland (James 2012, 185-90) and New Zealand (Downes 2014). Poor ballot paper design invalidated many votes in Indonesia (Schmidt 2010; Sukma 2009) and Scotland (Denver, Johns, and Carmen 2009). Incorrect ballot papers have been given to voters in New South Wales, Australia (Kim and Egan 2013) and over 1,300 votes were lost in a knife-edge Western Australian Senate recount race (Lion 2013). Problems can be caused by routine error. In the 2013 Malaysia election, election officials were criticised for not shaking the bottles of indelible ink meaning that some citizens could wash off the ink and double vote (Lai 2013). Most bizarrely, in the small village of Wallsburg, Utah, part-time election officials *forgot* to run the election. Twice. First in 2011, and then again in 2013. To the hilarity of the US media, County Clerk Brent Titcomb said local officials in the sleepy hamlet of approximately 300 residents, had forgotten to advertise for candidates: 'They just went on without doing anything... close to the election day, they called to ask what they should do' (Associated Press 2013). A local resident commented that 'they got a in a whole bunch of trouble'. But a more complicated story emerged afterwards. Elections in Wallsburg were never hotly contested. Residents would decide whose turn it was and the 'they'd put up signs all over town telling folks who to write in'. The Utah legislature changed the law in 2013, requiring write-in candidates to register 60 days before the election. That information didn't reach Wallsburg and so election could not take place (Smart 2015).

Elections, it is often said, is the most complex logistical event to be organised during peacetime. These anecdotes and examples routinely catch headlines as they are picked up by journalists and quickly circulated over social media, suggesting that societies often fail to deliver elections successfully. But there has been relatively little academic attention on the management of elections. This begs the question of whether, if we begin to turnover the rocks and look underneath, we will find fundamental problems in elections up and down the land, even in established democracies? Or will we instead find that elections are general well run by dedicated, professional and hard-working electoral officials? Are they officials who don't deserve the tough press and populist criticism that they receive?

The book aims to develop some of tools, methods to us to find out and consider what can be done to improvement the delivery of elections which will be of use worldwide. This introductory chapter begins by arguing that the study of the delivery of elections, electoral management, has been fundamentally overlooked in the academic literature. The concept of electoral management is therefore defined, and arguments made for an inter-disciplinary approach to the topic. The second part of the chapter provides evidence of a considerable amount of variation worldwide in the quality of delivery. Part three explains why electoral management matters. An overview of the book ahead is then set out in the fourth part of this chapter.

1.1 Electoral Management: The New Subfield

Electoral studies is often widely thought to be one of the most established areas of political science (Htun and Powell 2013). There is a major hole in the centre of the study of elections, however. There has been a lengthy scholarship on how electoral institutions such as the voting system, boundaries, electoral finance and, more recently, voting technologies shape political outcomes (see Table 1.1 below). We know in detail how electoral systems can affect whether people vote, the nature of the party system and who wins elections. There have been many lengthy studies on the funding of political parties and candidates. The choice of methods used to register electors and cast votes has seen significant attention with many studies looking at the effects of voting by post, early voting, internet voting, albeit mostly from the perspective of within USA. There is always the need for new research, of course. As society changes, the effects of laws can alter, and research has often centred on countries rich in research infrastructure. It is not coincidence that many studies of electoral laws are by US researchers of US election laws. However, electoral studies has been very effective at the

job of, as the title of Douglas Rae's (1967) seminal book on encapsulates it, identifying *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*.

Category	Broad Scope	Example Key Works
Election administration	The administrative procedures used for casting votes and compiling the electoral register.	Piven and Cloward (1988, 2000) ; Massicotte et al., (2004) Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980)
Suffrage legislation	The criteria for who is legally enfranchised to vote.	Uggen and Manza (2002)
Electoral boundaries	The number, shape and size of electoral constituencies.	Handley and Grofman (2008)
Electoral finance	The rules for how political parties are funded in elections.	van Biezen (2004)
Electoral systems	The formulae for rules how votes are converted into seats.	Duverger (1951), Rae (1967), Farrell (2011), Renwick (2010)
Ballot initiatives and referenda	The circumstances under which referenda can take place on a policy issue and/or citizens can remove an elected representative from office.	Parkinson (2001), Qvortrup (2005), Schlozman and Yohai (2008).
Electoral justice	The resolution of electoral disputes.	Orozco-Henríquez (2010), Hernández-Huerta (2017).

Table 1.1: Foci of study within electoral studies

Elections are not just about designing laws and procedures, however. Once a law or rule has been made, it needs to be implemented. Resources needed to mobilised, staff recruited and motivated, technology designed. Electoral governance, as Mozaffer and Schedler (2002) explained, has three different areas: rule making, rule implementation and rule adjudication.

The *rule making process*, itself once overlooked, has now become increasingly researched. A rich, yet still relatively young literature has been developed to explain when and why electoral system reform occurs (Blais 2008; Renwick 2010). This has shown how the partisan self-interest of politicians is a key barrier to electoral rules changing, but there has been less focus on explaining the reform of other electoral practices (James 2012; Massicotte, Blais, and Yoshinaka 2004; Norris and van Es 2016). Some much more limited inroads have been made into *electoral justice* (Hernández-Huerta 2017). This is concerned with how disputes in elections are resolved. Most of the key literature here remains that which has been published by international organisations (Orozco-Henríquez 2010).

The implementation of elections remains chronically under-researched around the world. Given, that elections have been conducted in many countries for centuries, this is extraordinary oversight. As

recently as 1999, Robert Pastor complained that 'unable to locate a book or even an article on election commissions or their history' (Pastor 1999a, 76). Since then a number of significant reports have been published by international organisations, but these do not connect fully to the literature on democratic theory or assess electoral management through academic methods (Lopez-Pinter 2000; Wall et al. 2006). The 2000 Presidential election has rekindled an enormous interest in this domain in the USA (Alvarez, Atkeson, and Hall 2012; Atkeson et al. 2010; Gronke, Miller, and Galances-Rosenbaum 2007; Kiewiet et al. 2008), but this research is predominately concerned with evaluating the effects of voting technologies (how are people registered? how do they cast their vote?) rather than the design of electoral management boards and the management of *the people* within these organisations (although see some work on poll workers: Claassen et al. 2008; Hall, Quin Monson, and Patterson 2009). Mechanisms have been proposed and introduced in the US, such as the Pew Elections Performance Index, based on Heather Gerken's concept of a Democracy Index (2009a; 2009b), but hereto has not been evaluated. The study of the public administration of elections is therefore a vital part of the study of electoral integrity, which is becoming new growth area of research, teaching and publication in comparative politics and security studies (Birch 2011; Norris 2013, 2014).

And yet such an oversight is remarkable because there is an established set of theories and concepts that have been used to subject the quality of other government services, such as schools, hospitals, and social care to continuous critical review. Public policy and administration as sub-discipline of political science that has a long genealogy. However, it has commonly been taught in separate university modules, by different teachers and researchers, with its own journals, conferences, professional associations and book series. There has been a strong barrier between the two disciplines. Yet electoral management is a focus of study that clearly stands at inter-section of both of these (figure 1.1), lacking a clear home.

The focus of this book is therefore on electoral management. Electoral management is fundamentally about rule application or, as it is used in this volume, *rule implementation*. Laws and procedures have been made by Parliaments and the role of electoral management bodies (EMBs) as agencies is therefore to make this implementation happen. However, the book argues that electoral management is also about *rule making* and the effects of political laws too. This claim deserves some further expansion. Why does implementation affect decision-making?

By studying the organisations on the front line of elections we can also better understand the greater variety of actors involved in making decisions. As theories from public administration show, rule

implantation is not straight forward. Firstly, front-line local officials and managers are involved in *every day decision making* in running elections. They process voter registration applications, offer ballot papers to individuals, book polling stations and organise count centres. They way that they deal with the every-day voter matters. A basic continuum can be envisaged from being friendly and pointing out all services available, to being rude, aggressive and perhaps not even replying to an email or call can make a vital difference to citizen. There is likely to be considerable discretion afforded to middle-level managers in picking an accessible polling station, resourcing the polling stations and motivating their workforce they lead which can be pivotal for the electoral process.

Secondly, administrative bodies such as EMBs are also strategic and political actors. Legislators do not make laws on elections alone. As this book shows, electoral administrators can themselves be highly mobilised actors seeking to lobby and affect the policy process. Although this is not always the case, electoral officials in many countries lack organisation – this is itself significant. At the same time, it is common for more than one organisation to be responsible for organising an election. As the book shows, there are commonly many organisations working together. This leads to opportunities for positive-sum collaborative forms of implementation and governance. But less optimistically, it can lead to inter organisational politics, rivalries and disputes. In these systems, each EMB has strategies, tactics and tools that they can deploy. In short, they are embedded into resource dependent governance structures in which their powers and futures are dependent on the strategies they take.

Electoral management is therefore not as simple and narrow process which should be left for practitioner to consider or consigned dusty book-shelf as it has been. As James et al. (forthcoming) set out, it involves:

- **Organizing** the actual electoral process (ranging from pre-election registration and campaigning, to the actual voting on election day, to post-election vote counting).
- **Monitoring** electoral conduct throughout the electoral process (i.e. monitoring the political party/candidates' campaigns and media in the lead-up to elections, enforcing regulation regarding voter and party eligibility, campaign finance, campaign and media conduct, vote count and tallying procedures, etc.).
- **Certifying** election results by declaring electoral outcomes.

But, in turn, these tasks, requires democratic systems to have the bureaucratic machinery for at least the following:

- Measuring and monitoring performance
- Managing and maintaining external and internal organisational relationships
- Decision-making processes about delivery mechanisms
- Designing policy instruments to improve performance
- Allocating resources amongst the stakeholders involved in the delivery of elections
- Staff recruitment, training, retention and motivation

Electoral management is as old as democracy itself, and essential for a democratic polity. It also involves a whole set of public administration tasks.

1.2 Multi-disciplinarily

If electoral management is so important, why have scholars missed it? An important consequence of the definition of electoral management proposed and its importance is that research needs to move beyond the traditional theories, frameworks and disciplines that have been used to study elections. This can be tricky to achieve because academics are commonly organised into communities which can be difficult to break down. Scholars might take training in comparative politics, law, or public administration – but not usually more than one of them. Professional associations exist with sub-groups such as APSA's organised section on Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior which was formed in 1994 to focus on research on 'elections, electoral behavior, public opinion, voting turnout, and political participation' (APSA 2018). Or the UK Political Studies Associations Elections, Public Opinion and Parties (EPOP) – but these rarely cross-over with other inter-disciplinary groups. Editors of journals that focus on elections and democracy may see articles about the management of elections as something that belongs to public administration journals, and vice versa. The barriers for researching electoral management are therefore high at an institutional level. They are also high at an individual level. It requires moving outside of the comfort area and significant additional work reading into other discipline. The costs of this are high. Workloads in higher education can be demanding. There is a risk of making mistakes if you work in a discipline in which you were not trained. There is a risk that journals will not publish work if it doesn't have 'a home.' It is suggested in Figure 1.1 that at least six sub-disciplines are useful: comparative politics (including electoral studies), political philosophy, public administration, business management and law. We could add computer science, perhaps even social policy and sociology. In the aftermath of the 2000 US Presidential election the journal *Election Law* sought to respond to this. Yet much more inter-disciplinary thinking is needed.

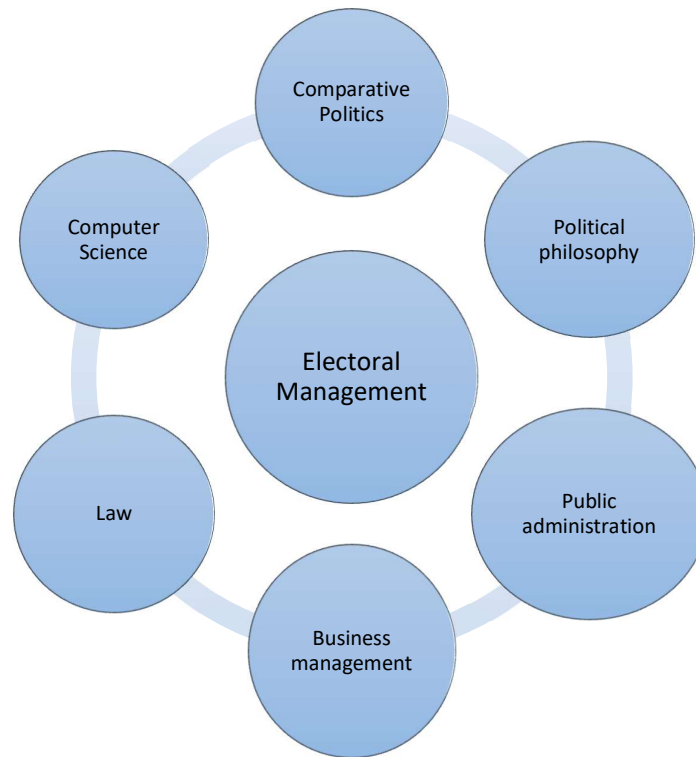
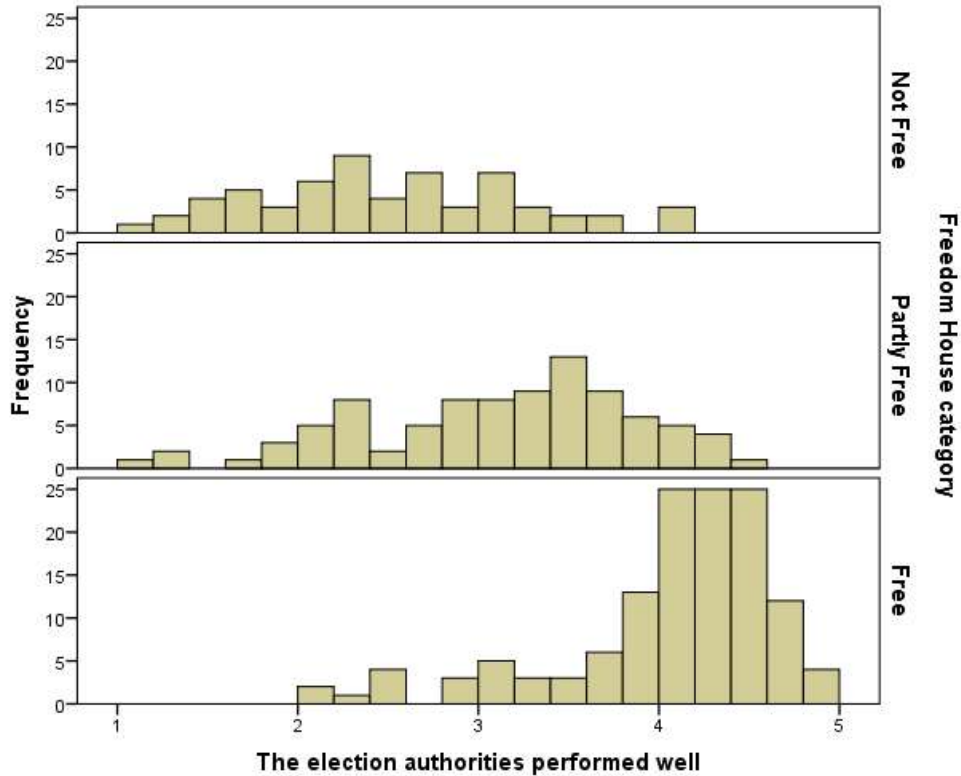


Figure 1.1: An inter-disciplinary approach to electoral management

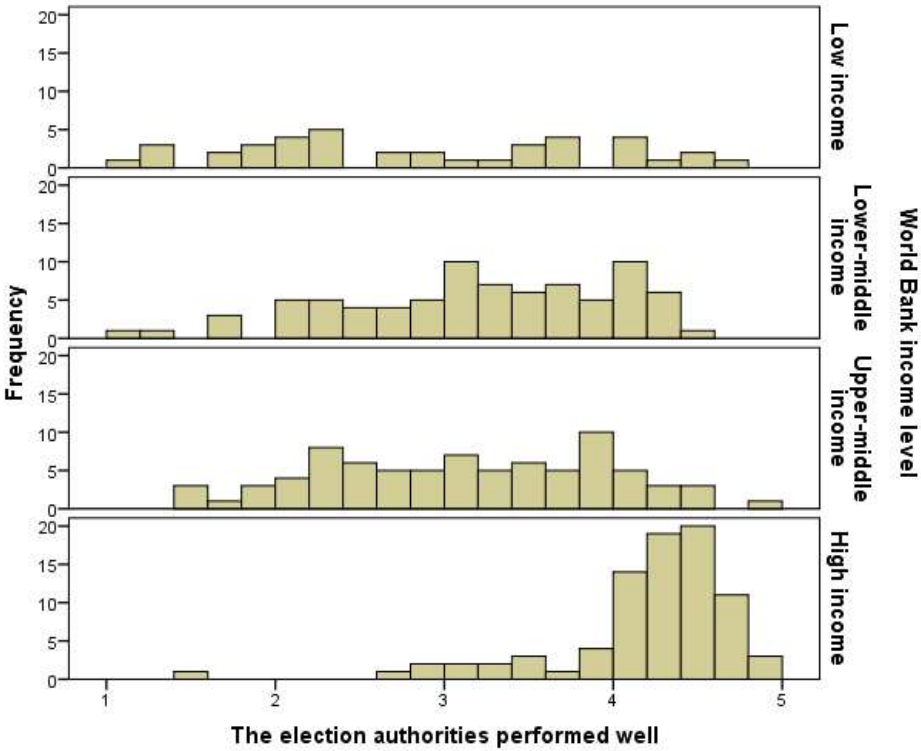
1.3 Evidence of Variation in Electoral Management worldwide

This chapter began by introducing some examples of problems with electoral management occurring around the world. Problems go beyond these anecdotal examples, however. Unweighted data on the quality of elections between 1978 and 2004 based electoral observation reports show suggest that problems with electoral management are present on the day of elections in 15.2% of elections (Kelley 2011, 13-5). A more recent survey of experts, identified huge variations in the quality of electoral management in elections held worldwide in between 2013-7 (Norris, Wynter, and Cameron 2018). Intuitively we might think that problems are more likely in countries are not democratic. Figure 1.2 maps responses to the question ‘the election authorities performed well’ on a 1-5 point scale compared to the Freedom House evaluation of the level of democracy. Countries evaluated are rated as having better systems of electoral management, but there remains a wide dispersal. There also appears to be relatively little difference between Not Free and Partially Free states. We might also expect problems with electoral management to be less frequent in which richer states because they should have the resources to deliver elections well. Figure 1.3 maps electoral performance in answer to that question against World Bank Income groups. Again, although high income groups perform

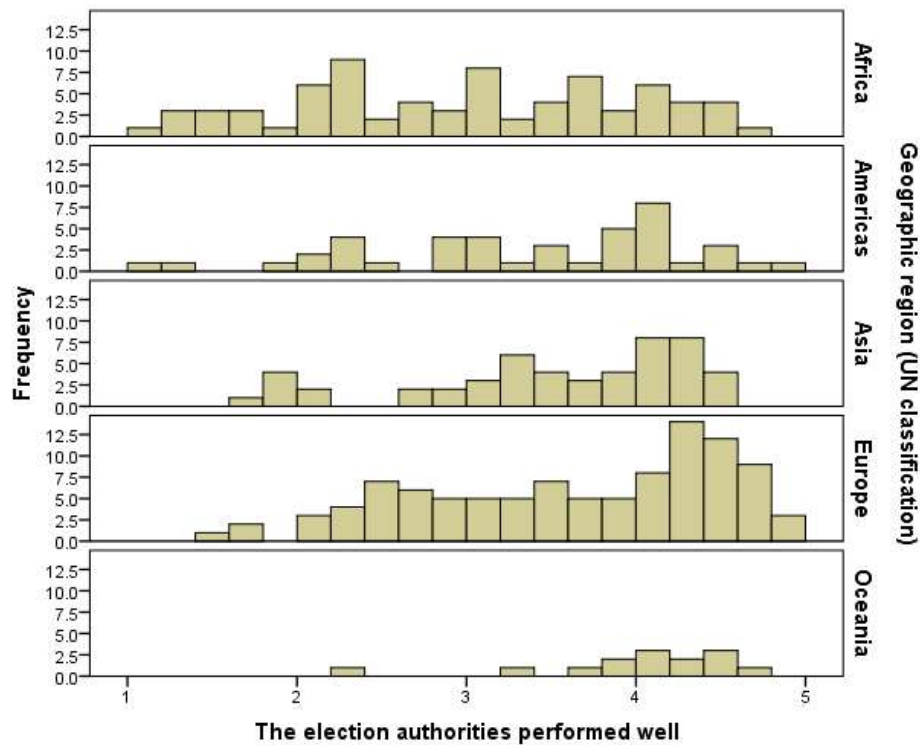
better, there is considerable variation and it is notable that well run elections seem to be delivered in low income countries too. Figure 1.4 maps the regional variation again, considerable variation is found by continent. Europe may seem to fair better than Africa – but generally speaking, there is variation worldwide.



Figures 1.2: The Performance of electoral authorities in national elections held worldwide in between 2013-7 (5=high) and level of democracy. Source: Author with data from the Perception of Electoral Integrity Dataset (Norris, Wynter, and Cameron 2018).



Figures 1.3: The Performance of electoral authorities in national elections held worldwide in between 2013-7 (5=high) and level of income. Source: Author with data from the Perception of Electoral Integrity Dataset (Norris, Wynter, and Cameron 2018).



Figures 1.4: The Performance of electoral authorities in national elections held worldwide in between 2013-7 (5=high) and region. Source: Author with data from the Perception of Electoral Integrity Dataset (Norris, Wynter, and Cameron 2018).

1.4 Why does Electoral management matter?

By now, it might not be difficult to realise why such variation in the quality of electoral management matters. But four principle ones are set out here:

- **Democratic ideals.** As David Beetham set out, democracy is a set system in which there is political equality and popular control of government (Beetham 1994) If an individual's vote is not counted because it is lost in transit from ballot box to polling station, or because of defects in the counting process, then the individual might be denied their democratic right and this equality is undermined. But if errors aggregate to give a systematic advantage to a candidate or party, either through design is mistake, then democratic government is fundamentally undermined.
- **Confidence in democratic institutions.** Defects in electoral management and their widespread reporting can quickly ebb away at public confidence in democratic institutions

and we already have some studies to demonstrate this (Atkeson and Saunders 2007; Claassen et al. 2008; Claassen et al. 2012; Hall, Quin Monson, and Patterson 2009).

- **Security, peace and conflict.** As the case of Kenya illustrates, situations in which the electoral authorities and the results of elections are not trusted and quickly undermine fragile peace processes. Civil war and conflict may follow – the prospects for democratic consolidation may be undermined (Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Pastor 1999b; Snyder 2013). During times where there are concerns about democratic retreat, there might be consequences even in established democracies (Norris and Inglehart 2018)
- **Public accountability.** With the above arguments in mind, there has been an enormous international investment in elections and electoral management around the world, as the professionalisation of elections has been set a priority by key commissions such as Kofi Annan’s Global Commission on Elections (Global Commission on Elections 2012). For example, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights spent approximately EUR€307 million on over 700 projects relating to democracy promotion between 2007-2010 (EIDHR 2011, 8), much of which was spent on electoral assistance. Delivering well run elections is therefore important to ensure that the donor money is spent well.

1.5 The book ahead

Electoral management is therefore a global issue that requires systematic study and the simple hypotheses only take us so far. But the charts above open as many questions as they answer. What is good performance for an EMB? If academics have so rarely studied EMBs, then are they well placed to judge their performance? Who are EMBs anyway? And what can be done to improve EMB to improve performance avoid the problems in Kenya and other countries around the world?

The book ahead is organised of four parts. The first part is about approach. Chapter two sets out a specific methodological approach to the study of electoral management. This is a sociological approach, with its roots in scientific realist approach to knowledge. This is quite a deliberate and radical turn away from the positivist-behaviouralist approach which has dominated electoral studies so far. This will need some justification (and maybe a little patience and open mindedness from the reader). Rather than considering the reader to be scientist who undertakes experiments like a ‘natural scientists’ we need to recognise that the social world is different. EMB, parties and citizens are all reflexive actors who can change their behaviour in response to our knowledge and the process of

generating our knowledge. This has major consequences for the study of electoral management and elections in general – but is rarely explicitly recognised.

The second section looks at who runs elections. There is never one single organisation delivering elections: they are delivered by governance networks. Chapter three therefore introduces the concept of electoral management governance networks and develops a new typology which supersedes existing typologies of EMBs. Chapter four applies the approach to the UK to give a detailed historical account of the emergence there and how this book had contributed towards that, before chapter five contrasts networks based on another smaller case study of India and comparative data from a survey of EMBs. Chapter six demonstrates the usefulness of the governance concept by arguing that a transgovernmental network of actors have emerged since the 1990s with some vertical and horizontal integration. This is undertaken using qualitative interviews with actors, secondary document analysis and data on in-person and digital inactions.

Part three looks at performance. How do we know when electoral management bodies are doing their job well? What does failure look like? Performance is often said to be the ultimate dependent variable and we therefore need some considered conceptual definition in the field of elections. Chapter seven therefore reviews existing measures and concepts of performance as well as reviewing the available data sources. Chapter eight introduces a new framework for evaluating electoral management based in theories of organisational performance. It argues for thicker, more descriptive comparative evaluations based on multiple sources than has been used to date. This is applied to cases of Canada and the UK so that their relative strengths and weaknesses are identified – and policy prescriptions made. Chapter nine then considers why achieving organisational performance is so difficult by drawing from qualitative responses from electoral officials from around the world.

The final section is about policy instruments. The concept of policy instruments is first delineated. Policy instruments are initiatives designed to improve performance or alter the network structure. This might involve changing the organisational structure of EMBs, changing the use and allocation of resources. Rather than taking a rationalist approach, a sociological policy instrumentation approach is taken (Kassim and Le Galès 2010; Le Galès 2016). Subsequent chapters then look at the nature of several different types of instruments and the possible causal relationships that they have:

- The use of grey literature
- Conferences

- Social media
- Electoral registration reform
- Centralisation
- Benchmarking
- Training and Human Resource Management

The conclusion aims to bring together the main lessons and an agenda for future research. Methods are explained in more detail in each respective chapter. However, Table 1.2 below lists the key original data-sources that are used overall.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A worldwide survey (consisting of two sister projects: the Electoral Management Survey and the Elect Survey) of EMB personnel (approx. n=2,200) and EMBs (n=70). • Qualitative interviews electoral officials in the UK, India and at the international level • Existing public opinion datasets • Secondary document analysis of EMB archives • A bespoke dataset of speakers at international conferences • A bespoke dataset of downloads from the websites of international organisations. • Participant observation notes taken from involvement in Parliament and at major international conferences • Social media data from national elections |
|---|

Table 1.2: Data sources used in this volume

1.6 Contribution

The contribution of this book is therefore to:

- Defines *electoral management* as a concept and a new sub-field for political science and electoral studies. A broader definition is used in this book which can help to organise future work.
- Develops a *sociological approach to electoral management* in opposition to the rationalist-scientific approach which has dominated to date.
- Provides a new framework for assessing electoral management: the PROSeS framework
- Develops a new approach to identifying and typologising the delivery mechanisms for elections. Rather than adopting the concepts developed by the international community to date, it develops a typology governance networks.

- Develops a new approach for understanding policy instruments with specific evaluations about the effects of new reforms.

That's the bit for academics. There are also some applied policy lessons which practitioners will be able to take forward into the delivery of elections. These are summarised in Table 1.3 but unpacked in subsequent chapters.

1. Researchers have a duty to play a positive role to play in promoting improved electoral management.
2. Researchers should be aware of spatial-temporal nature of research findings and give greater weight to the knowledge of practitioners.
3. The PROSeS model can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses in electoral management delivery models around the world through systematic comparison.
4. Regular auditing of electoral management can take place at points other than election time, the current main focus of international monitoring work.
5. More inclusive governance networks can be built between civil society, government and NGOs to enable knowledge sharing.
6. Electoral management networks can act as an important check on partisan statecraft by political parties and should be strengthened.
7. The international community should work to build more collaborative networks between academics, civil society and EMBs.
8. Governments, politicians and EMBs should be aware of the importance of investments in electoral management.
9. Proposed reforms should include a full risk assessment of the side effects such as to political participation, cost but also to EMB personnel.
10. Policies such as stress management and training should be considered to improve EMB workforce job satisfaction and performance.

Table 1.3: Ten key policy recommendations

Chapter 3:

Electoral Management Governance Networks

3.1 Introduction

Electoral management boards play a key role in the delivery of elections. However, they come in very different forms in different democracies. The usual distinction that is made is between independent, governmental and mixed systems based on a coding of formal-legal institutions (International IDEA 2014; Lopez-Pinter 2000). This chapter argues that this categorisation system, the premise of much existing research, is of limited use. Firstly, it oversimplifies the number of actors that can be involved in implementing elections. In practice, elections are often implemented by networks of actors rather than one individual organisation. This might include actors in different government and non-governmental organisations and even the voluntary sector or citizens. Secondly, it focuses on formal but ignores informal relations between actors: how often do they meet? Is there a consensus on policy? Do they have close personal relationships? Thirdly, the formal-legal approach ignores how the actions, strategies and behaviours of key individuals (such as EMB leaders) can affect organisational success and electoral integrity. Managerial and political leadership can be a key determinant of success of public sector organisations.

Part I of the chapter therefore begins by reviewing existing approaches to categorising electoral management boards and the problems associated with it. Part II of the chapter suggests that much can be learnt from the policy networks literature. Two broad camps of literature are outlined, but the weaknesses also noted. Part III builds a framework for identifying the type of policy network in a given jurisdiction involved in steering and implementing of elections. Based on the policy network literature, it is suggested that we can identify countries according to three dimensions: the membership and level of integration, the degree of policy consensus, and resource distribution and power balance. Subsequent chapters provide case studies from different countries and contexts to identify the type of network in each case and the strategies and tactics that actors have deployed (un)successfully to achieve their aims. Lessons for those seeking to strengthen electoral integrity are considered in the conclusion. These are that skilful political leadership matters for organisations seeking to promote electoral integrity and the properties of the network type matter.

3.2 Categorising electoral management boards: a critical review

EMBs are crucial organisations in both the steering and rowing of electoral governance. The *Electoral Management Design* handbook defines an EMB as an organisation that:

‘has the sole purpose of, and is legally responsible for, managing some or all of the elements that are essential for the conduct of elections and direct democracy instruments—such as referendums, citizens’ initiatives and recall votes—if those are part of the legal framework’ (Catt et al. 2014, 5).

The classic typology of EMBs was first established in 2000 when a UNDP report classified 148 countries according to whether the government ran elections (a governmental system), the government ran elections under supervision from an external organisation (a mixed system) or whether an independent organisation was responsible for running elections (an independent system) (Lopez-Pinter 2000). This was followed by International IDEA’s *Electoral Management Design* handbook (Wall et al. 2006), in a second edition at the time of writing (Catt et al. 2014) which developed a similar typology. EMBs were classified purely on the formal-legal rules regarding their relationship towards government and other actors. The Electoral Management Handbook asks seven questions of these rules such as whether it full implements elections or is subject to direction from the executive branch, whether it controls its own budget or whether it is required to formally report to the executive branch (p. 9-11). Subsequent studies on electoral integrity typically use this an independent variable to consider the determinants of electoral integrity. EMBs that are statutorily independent from government were frequently held up as the ‘gold standard’ because they are thought to reduce the opportunities for partisan actors to promote their own interests (Hartlyn, McCoy, and Mustillo 2008; Pastor 1999b; Ugues 2014), however many other studies describe counter-intuitive results with independent EMBs having a negative, no or very limited effect on electoral integrity (Birch 2008; Norris 2015).

3.3 The critique

The above typology has been enormously influential and helpful in framing the initial debate. However, it is argued here that there are five key weaknesses, each of which are now detailed in turn.

3.3.1 *Inter-Organisational complexity and relations*

Firstly, it is very common for more than one organisation to be involved in the steering and rowing of elections. According to the *Electoral Management Design* handbook, an organisation is considered an EMB if it undertakes one of these essential tasks:

‘a. determining who is eligible to vote; b. receiving and validating the nominations of electoral participants (for elections, political parties and/or candidates); c. conducting polling; d. counting the votes; and e. tabulating the votes.’ (Catt et al. 2014, 5)

If these tasks are spread over many bodies ‘then all bodies that share these responsibilities can be considered EMBs’ (Catt et al. 2014, 5). The Handbook notes that there might be even more organisations that might be undertaking tasks relating to electoral administration and management, but are not considered an EMB.¹

In addition, this formal-legal categorisation ignores the role that civil society often plays in the practical task of running elections. In many countries voluntary organisations, political parties and international organisations play a key role in voter registration drives or voter education campaigns, which in effect, often do some of the work of EMBs for them. International organisations can deliver elections in their entirety.

The reductionism of the formal-legal approach is problematic because it gives no focus on inter-organisational relations and disputes between all of these actors. Conflict might arise when there are multiple organisations with diverse funding streams, personnel, interests and values. This bureaucratic pluralism requires that these relationships are ‘unpacked’ since they can have a significant effect on the steering of relations. For these reasons, inter-governmental relations have been a significant sub-discipline in the US and elsewhere (Wilks and Wright 1987, 288-9).

3.3.2 *Informal relations*

A second problem is that the focus on formal-legal institutions means that there is no coverage of informal institutions: the norms, cultures and the meanings that actors institutions. New institutionalism was formed in reaction to an ‘old’ intuitionist approach which defined institutions narrowly as ‘the rules, procedures and formal organisations government’ (Rhodes 1997: 68). A broader definition and empirical focus emerged so that an institution was taken to mean something as broad as a ‘stable, recurring pattern of behaviour’ (Goodin 1996: 22).

¹ These include organisations that undertake ‘other tasks that assist in the conduct of elections and direct democracy instruments such as other registration, boundary delimitation, voter education and information, media monitoring and electoral dispute resolution’ (p.6).

What informal relations might be important when trying to determine de facto EMB independence? Firstly, *consensus on policy aims and methods*. If actors across organisations agree, for example, on whether reform is necessary, what the priorities of reform should be and/or whether the current system works well, then their statutory independence may have no bearing on their actions. Secondly, *meeting regularity*. Do actors meet regularly to discuss electoral law, keeping it under review? Or do electoral practices go without review for some time? Who are included in such meetings? Thirdly, the *interpersonal connections between organisations*. Do individuals switch positions between organisations bringing with them shared values and beliefs? Fourthly, to what extent is there a *shared broader political culture* on the role of government in society and the ‘proper place’ of actors within the network? Each of these have important consequences for de facto independence.

3.3.3 *Agency and contingency*

A third limitation with the formal-legal approach is that the actions, strategies and behaviours of key individuals is assumed to have no bearing on organisational success or electoral integrity. Leadership, however, is a key determinant of success of public sector organisations, just as it is in other dimensions of politics. The de facto power that actors have is as much a function of their skilful use of tactics and the development of strategies. Yet, there is no role for this in a formal-legal measurement of EMB structure. A naive EMB might misread the political context and introduce reforms that are unpopular or likely to have the executive stripped of its powers. The performance of the EMB in delivering elections might be poor. This can undermine its position in trying to shape electoral policy in the future. A leader of an EMB might opt to a risk-adverse strategy to reform for fear of jeopardising their career reasons – or they might be more maverick reform minded. Individuals matter.

Actual power and influence is therefore more complex. Formal-legal institutions are important because they bestow actors with resources. However, the skilful deployment of resources, astute tactics and well managed implementation are all likely to shape actual power and influence. In short, *outcomes are contingent* on the actors involved in electoral management.

3.3.4 *Static and not dynamic*

A fourth issue is that relations between organisations are assumed to be invariant over time. Studies that treat EMB independence as an independent variable in a quantitative panel analysis, for example,

would use a categorical variable with only three possible values. If there are no formal-legal reforms then this variable will remain unchanged. The de facto power of actors can vary considerable over this time, however. For example, socio-cultural practices involved in the decision making and implementation process will change. Changing market structures from monopolies, in which private businesses are powerful, to more competitive markets, or vice versa, are missed. Changes in the availability or use of technological challenges involved in delivering elections will be ignored. Successes and failures in actors' deployment of tactics and resources will lead to ebbs and flows in their power and influence. All of this is data that is lost in a formal-legal approach.

3.3.5 *Globalisation*

For a long time, the analysis of public policy focussed on decision making and implementation processes within national states. By the 1990s this assumption broke down with sociologists pointing out that globalisation had completely reconfigured the nature of the state (Held et al. 2000; Ohmae 1990; Strange 1996). Scholars began to talk about the emergence of global public policy, systems of global governance or at least, internationalisation. The world had become increasingly interconnected because of the construction of new informational, technological, financial flows. The Internet and global satellite TV channels made it possible for citizens and policy makers to know what was going on around the world in real time. These have combined to develop an intense time-space compression (Harvey 1999). Economic liberalisation of the international system meant that capital became much more mobile and could move from state to state in search of profit with profound consequences for welfare states. New supranational institutions such as the UN or regional institutions such as the European Union undermined state sovereignty in decision making. People have become more mobile because of cheaper international travel and open immigration policies. Considerable disagreement arose about the extent of these changes. For some, there was a qualitative leap in the evolution of human society, which ended the role of national states as we know them and the hermetic seal that was assumed to exist on national public policy (Castells 1996). Others pointed out how some of these transformations were reversible. Economic policies could be reversed, immigration policies could be changed, supranational institutions abolished and the evolution of technology marked more of a gradual increase than qualitative leap (Held and McGrew 2000; Hirst and Thompson 1999).

The uneven nature of globalisation has led others to point to themes of regional integration or regionalism rather than globalisation. Blocks of states, it is often claimed, have become increasingly seen greater political, economic and social integration. There has been a growth in regional

organisations such as the European Union, African Union, Arab League, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and Union of South American States. In addition, regional agreements and trading blocks such as the North American Free Trade Agreement have been established. Regional integration has been an important theme of twentieth and twenty first century politics (Hettne 2005).

For the purposes of this discussion, however, the globalisation of public policy debate draws attention to how the traditional categorisation of EMBs pays no attention to global linkages. National states are assumed to be in control of own internal affairs. The reality, however, might be that there are commonly lesson drawing and policy drawing across states. There is a clear need to consider the internationalisation of electoral policy. How are ideas transmitted for good practice in electoral management within the United Nations or other organisations? Claims of electoral irregularities, such as those made by Donald Trump before the 2016 US Presidential Election are beamed around the world. As were accusation made by the CIA, FBI, and National Security Agency (2017) that the Russian government were involved in trying affect the outcome of the election. A policy change quickly followed in other states with the Dutch elections quickly ditching electronic voting machines to maintain public trust (Lowe 2017). The network approach, as will be shown, provides some conceptual space for the presence of these interactions to be identified or ruled out.

3.3.6 *Hollowing out*

The spread of powers upwards to international organisations is not the only way in which the power and functions of national states are thought to have declined. Formerly strong West European states have commonly been describing as being *hollowed out* in other directions. The advent of New Public Management as academic and ideological blueprint for public sector reform meant that programmes of privatisation were introduced from the 1980s and scopes and forms of public intervention rolled back (Dunleavy and Hood 1994; Hood 1995; Hood 1991; Rhodes 1994; Rhodes 1997). Osbourne and Gabler's (1992) *Reinventing Government*, which preached the advantages of a small role for government, was increasingly being turned to in the UK and USA where the Thatcher and Reagan administrations took hold. But new public management policies were also rolled out in many other parts of the world (Hope 2001). NPM prescribed that government services were best delivered by the private sector and should therefore be 'market tested' or put out to competitive tender. A debate followed about whether NPM improved service delivery (see chapter 13), but our main concern here is that the number of actors involved in policy implementation quickly expanded.

In the sphere of elections, we can quickly see the relevance. Although elections are not delivered entirely by a private company on behalf of the state, very often, large segments of the infrastructure and technology might be privately owned and supplied. This could include election stationary such as ballot papers or voting machines. But it might also involve the contracting out of other activities such as voter engagement programmes. The ‘winners’ of these contracts are not always private companies. They might also be the third sector.

This can open up a new range of questions when we think about issues of *who governs*? A long history of public policy theory suggests that businesses are themselves latent political actors (Lindblom 1977). There is a risk of oligopolies of electoral machinery emerging which can make the state over-responsive to demands of the private sector, especially in the short term. EMBs could then become prone to capture. In states where there is insufficient regulation on the use of personal data, the private sector could use that data for other purposes.

3.3.7 Collaborative governance

By not considering the role of other organisations in delivering electoral management, the EMB typology therefore did not measure whether an alternative approach to public policy implementation is being used to deliver elections: collaborative governance. This involves a deliberate attempt by public agencies to ‘directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets’ (Ansell and Gash 2008, 544). Collaborative governance is presented by Ansell and Gash as a normative ideal that public agencies should seek to achieve. It is contrasted with adversarial and managerialism. Under adversarial systems of governance decisions are made without consensus, but collaborative governance is not ‘winner-takes all’ form of interest mediation. The aim of collaborating is to take previously adversarial positions and engage in positivesum bargaining so that cooperative alliances emerge. Managerialist systems of governance tend to involve decisions being made unilaterally through closed processes or simply involving limited consultation with groups – but collaborative systems of governance require that stakeholders are directly involved in the decision-making process (Ansell and Gash 2008, 544).

In short, the existing typology of EMBs into three categories therefore reduces much of what is important about who runs elections. The policy network literature is introduced next as an alternative

3.4 The policy networks literature

Interest in policy networks has grown exponentially in the past twenty-five years as it has been increasingly recognised that a greater number of actors were involved in policy making, often as the direct result of new public management reforms that were introduced across the world (Hood 1991). This had led many to suggest that we live in an era of ‘new governance’ where the state is often ‘hollowed out’ of its core decision making capacities (Rhodes 1997). Since the 1990s, ‘policy networks’ and ‘governance’ have probably been guilty of being two of the buzzword concepts. Rod Rhodes (1997) famously cited six possible interpretations of the word governance. Interpretations and usage has no doubt increases substantially since. The purpose of this section is not therefore to provide an exhaustive review – this has been done in detail elsewhere (Berry et al. 2004; Borzel 1998; Klijn 2008; Klijn and Koppenjan 2012; Ramia et al. 2017). But to draw out the key contours of the literature that we can connect to the realist sociological approach set out in **Chapter 2**, so that we can provide an alternative way for thinking about who is involved in implementing elections. Although the literature is well trodden in public administration – has been generally been overlooked both those studying elections.

Tanja Borzel’s (1998) distinction between two concepts of policy networks remains useful. The first tradition is the Anglo ‘interest intermediation’ school which in which policy networks are a way of describing the relationship between the state and interest groups. In short, the question is: who decides policy? The second is the ‘governance school’ which sees policy networks as a specific method of delivering public services. Rather than services being delivered directly by the state, or markets, they can be delivered via networks. In short, the question is: who implements policy. The two approaches, both of which are useful for our study are set out, before they are drawn upon to develop a framework for analysing the delivering of elections.

3.4.1 *The Anglo School*

The Anglo interest intermediation policy network literature (hereafter ‘the Anglo School’) began from work on American pluralism in the 1970s and 1980s with scholars such as Heclo and Wildavsky (1978; 1974), and Ripley and Franklin seeking to describe the relationships between the ‘clusters of individuals that effectively make most of the routine decisions in a given substantive area of policy’ (Ripley and Franklin 1984, 8-9). This included those in sub-national government, elected representatives in national government, bureaucratic officials in government departments, pressure groups from civil society and private sector actors. As Dowding notes (1995, 137-8) terms such as

‘whirlpools’ ‘sub-governments’, ‘triangles’, ‘sloppy hexagons’, ‘webs’, and ‘iron triangles’ were used to describe different configurations of these relationships.

A starting point for the Anglo literature is that policy making is an exchange relationship in which ‘participants manoeuvre for advantage deploying their constitutional-legal, organisational, financial, political and informational resources to maximise their influence over outcomes’ (Rhodes 1990, 19). This exchange relationship occurs within a network which are:

‘sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared if endlessly negotiated beliefs and interests in public policymaking and implementation’ (Rhodes 2006).

Policy network theorists have identified different typologies to characterise the nature of the network under study. The original formulation, of course, was the between pluralism and corporatism. Based on the UK, Rod Rhodes’ (1986) earlier work identified five types of networks, which are detailed in

Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: Different types of policy networks identified by the Anglo School
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy communities which were characterised by stable relationships, highly restrictive membership, vertical interdependence based on shared service delivery responsibilities and insulation from the other networks, the general public and Parliament.• Professional networks are characterised by dominance of one single group dominating the policy process who are able to insulate themselves from other actors – the profession. The UK National Health Service was provided as a key example.• Intergovernmental networks. These are based around the representatives of sub-national governmental organisations. These exclude unions but are otherwise broad in their membership with many different types of services involved. They tend to have relatively little vertical integration because the network does not deliver a service itself, but they can bring together actors from a wide range of other actors.• Producer networks. Here economic interests dominate. There is a heavy reliance on industrial organisations for their expertise and supply of goods.• Issue networks were defined by a large number of participants, low levels of stability and continuity within the network structure. This was assumed to be the result of a high level of interdependence.• Epistemic communities were famously identified by Haas as: ‘A network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area’ (Haas 1992, 3). These

networks are characterised by a shared set of normative and principled beliefs which inform their action; shared causal beliefs derived from their practices about the pressing problems at a given time; shared methodological understandings for weighing evidence and validating knowledge; and a common attempt to influence policy (Haas 1992, 3).

3.4.2 Dimensions of policy networks

Although work has identified descriptive categories of policy networks, Rhodes and Marsh (1992) eventually identified four common dimensions and sought to map policy networks along a continuum according to these dimensions. This allowed them to simplify network types down to two types: policy communities and issue networks (Table 3.2). A policy network, was defined by six characteristics, they argued: it's membership, level of integration, the resources of actors and the balance of power within the network. *Policy communities* described those networks that were more closed. There would be a smaller number of actors and there would be a high degree of consensus on policy. This could be achieved by excluding many possible actors from the network. A *policy network* would be the more open network. There would be more actors, less consensus, but there would be a great deal of inequality in terms of the resources and power of these actors. Actual empirical cases would most likely exhibit features of both, they thought, and could therefore be placed on a continuum between the two.²

Dimension	Policy Community	Issue network
Membership		
(a) Number of participants	Very limited number, some groups consciously excluded	Large
(b) Type of interest	Economic and/or professional interests dominate	Encompasses range of affected interests
Integration		
(a) Frequency of interaction	Frequent, high-quality, interaction of all groups on all matters related to policy issue	Contacts fluctuate in frequency and intensity
(b) Continuity	Membership, values and outcomes persistent over time	Access fluctuates significantly
(c) Consensus	All participants share basic values and accept the legitimacy of the outcome	A measure of agreement exists but conflict is never present

² Other dimensions have been developed. For example, Waarden (1992) identifies seven dimensions², which leads her to be able to identify four different types (statism, pantouflage; captured statism, clientelism; pressure pluralism). However, many of these are included in the Rhodes and Marsh framework.

Resources		
(a) Distribution of resources (within network)	All participants have resources, basic relationship is an exchange relationship	Some participants may have resources, but they are limited and basic relationship is consultative
(b) Distribution of resources (within participating organisations)	Hierarchical, leaders can deliver members	Varied and variable distribution and capacity to regulate members.
Power (Balance or otherwise)	There is a balance of power between members. Although one group may dominate, it must be positive sum game if community is to persist	Unequal powers, reflects unequal resources and unequal access. It is a zero-sum game

Table 3.2: Rhodes and Marsh's (1992, 187) typology of policy networks.

3.4.3 Criticisms

The policy network literature is by no means without its criticisms. A key source of criticism is the research and analysis would be better focussed on the traditional actors such as Prime Ministers, Parliaments and Presidents. James (2012, 2014) argues that a focus on a meso-level explanations of policy change, such as policy networks, can leave important macro sources of change, notably the influence of powerful hegemonic actors, external to the model. This is especially important in the field of elections given that the executives will commonly be seeking to bend the rules of the game to maximise their prospects for successful statecraft, bypassing networks when it suits them. Meanwhile, Kassim argues that where institutions and actors are given considerable powers and resources, networks become less important. Network theory is of limited value, for example, for exploring relations in the EU because the EU constitution gives institutions and actors like the Commission considerable power (Kassim 1994). In response, it should be noted that executive actors can still be included within policy network analysis. Situating them into networks remains important, however, because studies of executives emphasise that limitations on time means that they will often leave policy to others – focussing time and effort on valence issues that will determine electoral outcomes such as the economy, immigration or health care. The nature of the network structure is therefore important whether executives will try manipulate electoral management for the purposes of achieving statecraft, that is, winning elections (James 2011, 2012).

The applicability of the network model outside of democracies could also be questioned because executive actors are endowed with so many resources that their hegemony within networks becomes

a foregone conclusion. Clientelistic political culture present in many societies and it is so far unclear whether these relationships can be well captured by policy network theory. Davies et al. (2016), however, apply traditional policy network concepts to Russia. Empirical analysis shows that governance networks have emerged in areas such as migration, drug prevention and child protection because the state has initiated and established a variety of consultative bodies, grant schemes, multi-agency programmes, and public–private partnerships (Aasland, Berg-Nordlie, and Bogdanova 2016). As might be expected, these networks are asymmetric with tight state control over membership, agendas and ability to affect policy. But in this sense, networks are not dissimilar to those found in Britain or elsewhere (Marsh, Smith, and Richards 2003). Network theory has also been used in Ghana (Koranteng and Larbi 2008).

A final criticism is from Keith Dowding (2001; 1995) who argued that the approach only provides a typology of different type of decision-making arrangements without any causal explanation of how those different arrangements come about in the first instance. It would be better, Dowding suggests, to focus on the strategic actions of the actors as these drive the properties of networks.³ The development of a dialectic approach by Marsh and Smith (2000) is designed to tackle the problem flagged by Dowding. They suggest that networks have a causal effect on policy outcomes and future network structures through a three-stage interactive process between structure and agency, which is dialectical in nature. First, critical of approaches that purely focus on the rational strategic actions of actors, or the structures (the network), they claim that both are important. Routinised micro anthropological behaviour of networks can structure member's behaviour, opening up constraints and opportunities. But members of networks are also capable of 'strategic learning' that causes them to change the network structure. Second, there is a dialectical process between the network and the context. Exogenous economic, ideological, political and knowledge-led change can cause networks to change, but networks can cause this external environment to change. Thirdly, networks can affect policy outcomes, but policy outcomes can lead to changes in the structure of the network. Typologising and identifying network types therefore matters for considering how policy choices are made, which options are excluded and electoral management outcomes.

7.4.2 The Governance School

³ Elsewhere, James (2012, 2014) argues that a focus on a meso-level explanations of policy change, such as policy networks, can leave important macro sources of change, notably the influence of powerful hegemonic actors, external to the model. This is especially important in the field of elections given that the executives will commonly be seeking to bend the rules of the game to maximise their prospects for successful statecraft, bypassing networks when it suits them. Meanwhile, Kassim argues that where institutions and actors are given considerable powers and resources, networks become less important. Network theory is of limited value, for example, for exploring relations in the EU because the EU constitution gives institutions and actors like the Commission considerable power (Kassim 1994).

A second approach is to see policy networks as a specific form of governance. Rather than focussing purely on *who decides*, policy networks are conceived as particular form of governance in the modern era which provides an alternative to hierarchies or the market. It therefore is a response to developments in the public sector which have emerged over many years such as the introduction of new public management. This reflects that as Borzel (1998, 260) puts it: '[g]overnments have become increasingly dependent upon the co-operation and joint resource mobilization of policy actors outside their hierarchical control.' Policy networks offer functional advantages over other forms of governance. They are thought to be less likely to have the

In a more recent review Klijn and Koppenjan (2012, 588-9) separate out the histories of this school further. An 'inter-organisational service delivery and policy implementation' tradition emerged from organisational science. Citing the work of Rogers and Whetten (1982) and Hjern and Porter (1981), this approach was principally concerned with how organisations resource share. Each is dependent on other organisations for survival. A separate tradition emerged from within public administration on managing networks – the idea being that networks can be utilised by the state to solve wicked policy problems. Klijn and Koppenjan explain that this approach is closely linked with the development of a more complex (post-)modern network society (Castells 2000).

Research that has roots in this broad school have considered how networked forms of governance can bring both advantages and disadvantages as a system for allocating resources and managing services. One focus, already mentioned, is collaborative governance. For Ansell and Gash (2008, 544), this is:

'A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.'

They undertook a meta review of 137 cases of collaborative governance to claim to identify the critical variables upon which successful collaboration is contingent. This included the prior history of conflict or cooperation, the incentives that were in place for stakeholders to participate, any power and resources imbalances, plus the leadership and institutional arrangements (Ansell and Gash 2008). Elsewhere, Jessop (2000) warns that while governance was developed as a response to market and state failure, there are causal mechanisms such that can lead to governance failure. The use of partnerships in public policy does not prevent co-ordination problems – it can introduce new ones.

The governance approach has several advantages for the purposes of this book. To begin with it is more focussed on *rule implementation* than the Anglo school. The Anglo school's focus on interest-group intermediation seems to be more relevant for the explaining *rule making* – a different level of governance set out in the introductory chapter of this book. And yet the governance approach also seems to also contain a recognition that there is decision-making involved in implementation. A governance network is 'public policy making and implementation through a web of relationships between government, business and civil society actors' (Klijn 2008, 511). Yet the approach also has some comparative disadvantages – in that it is less concerned with developing typologies of network systems than the Anglo school.

3.5 Electoral Management Governance Networks

This chapter has so far identified weaknesses in the basic approaches that were initially developed to typologise electoral governance and EMB. The literature on policy networks was then introduced. The argument of this book is that this provides a richer approach to understanding how elections are managed and implemented. But we are left with the challenge – which policy network approach should be used?

The Anglo School is helpful identifying the greater number of actors involved in influencing decision making. As the introductory chapter argued, implementation is inseparable from decision making because decisions are always being made about how to deliver services. Yet a focus on the resources, power and tactics of actors would only give us a partially complete answer to the question of who runs elections. The governance school seems more satisfactory in this respect. It allows us to identify delivery systems for managing elections. However, it doesn't have as such a set of dimensions for identifying network types. A mixture of both is therefore proposed to establish a networked governance approach to studying electoral management.

This approach, in contrast to that set out at the start of this chapter, opens a research agenda that provides a 'thicker,' functional approach towards the study of electoral governance than those using a quantitative cross-national formal-legal approach. This alternative has five methodological premises:

1. **Define electoral management in functional not institutional terms.** Rather than restricting analysis to the designated EMB, analysis should include all organisations which play some role

in organising elections and consider the whole unit. This analysis would therefore include civil society and state bodies. Just as a biologist would not study an animal that forms part of whole animal in isolation,⁴ we should study each contributory part and the whole of the *overall electoral management system*. It is the whole system that concerns us, and not the individual organisation.

2. **Delivery and decision-making.** The literature on networks and implementation teaches us that implementation and decision-making are inseparably joined as Chapter 1 argues. We are therefore interested in what Klijn termed governance networks - 'public policy making and implementation through a web of relationships between government, business and civil society actors' (Klijn 2008, 511).
3. **Methodological pluralism.** Cross-national data about the nature of governance networks would certainly be valuable (and is provided later in chapter 5). But in line with the arguments of chapter 2, a richer, qualitative analysis of a smaller number of country level cases will help to identify the fuller range of actors involved in electoral governance. Process tracing can be used to identify the causal effects of different actors implementing elections in different ways (Collier 2011; Goertz and Mahoney 2012).
4. **Electoral management systems as open polities.** The boundaries of the national state are clearly important as electoral contests take place in defined geographical areas which will shape the range of actors who are interested. However, in an inter-dependent world, there will be international actors interested in promoting the quality of electoral management and undermining it. Suppliers might be multi-national companies. There will also be active policy learning from other jurisdictions as news from overseas elections enter policy cycles. Electoral management works are therefore clearly capable of transcending the national state.
5. **Network identification.** Using the prior premises, research can identify the types of governance networks in a given polity by seeking to identify the properties of the network. Drawing from the above literature, three core dimensions are suggested:
 - a. **Delivery partnerships.** What are the *range of number and type of actors involved in delivery*. Are they small or large in number? Are they locally, nationally or is there some international involvement? What role is there for civil society or even political parties in implementing parts of the electoral process. Are private contractors a

⁴ In biology, as I found out after visiting Sydney beaches and the Australian Museum (2017), zooid is a single animal that is part of a colonial animal. Each zooid or polyp plays a contributory role towards the overall colony animal and without each, the overall animal would not function. For example, the Pacific Man o' War is made up of individual organisms including a float (pneumatophore), the tentacles (dactylozooids) for the detection and capture of food and convey their prey to the digestive (gastrozooids). Reproduction is carried out by the gonozooids, another type of polyp. I was most worried about the kids getting stung by them.

prominent and important part of service design or delivery – or are public sector units used? What is *the degree of integration*. How frequent to actors meet? Are there regular meetings with systematic agendas? Do the ‘usual suspects’ meet in different venues? Or is there no common contact between actors?

- b. **Contestation.** *Is there fierce disagreement on how elections should implemented?* What are the cleavages in those disagreements? Between independent EMBs and the government? Between political parties? Or between civil society and government? Where does class, gender, disability and disadvantage feature in those debates? *Or conversely, is there a common consensus – or simply seldom any discussion?*
- c. **Power.** What *resources and strategies* are available to actors seeking to shape the delivery of elections? Are there core inter-dependencies or specific strategic weaknesses? Can electoral administrators shape practices or can government dictate how the process functions? On the basis of this, where is the *balance of power*? Does it lie with the government who are able to choose manage elections in a way that they wish, including for partisan statecraft? Or are there strong checks and balances against this?

3.5.1 Proposed Governance Network Types

A typology of electoral management network systems is proposed in **Table 3.3** to be refined with empirical case studies. This an ideal-type typology based on broad abstractions (Collier, Laporte, and Seawright 2008). Cases may not therefore precisely fit into the categories and may have aspects of the each of them. However, the categories are designed to identify contrasting types of network systems.

Three governance network types are proposed that are likely to be found in electoral democracies.

- **Mature Governmental network.** Electoral management is delivered by a small number or single state actor. There is little civil society interest or involvement in how elections are managed with the rules being largely accepted. There is therefore a ‘silent’ consensus. The most that non-state actors are involved is the provision of contracts by a small number of private sector suppliers. Electoral bodies still demonstrate independence and impartiality – but insulation from civil society might cause policy drift and opportunities for government influence over the process. In a variant to the mature governmental model – *mature Independent network* - the EMB may have some constitutional independence from

government. If 'fearless' independence is shown, then this substantially prevents successful partisan statecraft by incumbent governments.

- *Asymmetric network*. There are a variety of actors seeking to influence and deliver elections. Governmental bodies are therefore pressed on policy issues and there are pressures for change. Equally, governmental bodies might be partially reliant on civil society actors to collaborate in the delivery of elections. For example, enabling outreach activities to marginalised communities might require collaboration with gatekeeper organisations. Political parties' contacts might be important brokers in keeping their activists 'in line'. But the distribution of tactics and resources are heaped in favour of governmental actors – often the government, making statecraft possible.
- *Pluralistic collaborative network*. At the other extreme, in this network there are a greater range of state agencies involved in the delivery of elections, each of which have considerable strategies and tactics available to them. These agencies are in regular and open consultation with political parties, civil society and other interested groups, who are mobilised to influence policy and also equally contribute towards delivering the electoral process. There is often no consensus on policy – and explicit criticism of the status quo or government policy from civil society and parties who seek reform. The scope for partisan statecraft by the executive is more limited because networks act as a check on the government power.

The main focus of the book is primarily on the causal dynamics in established democracies. Two other network types are also suggested, however, to broaden the coverage to different types of regimes:

- *Closed statist systems*. At one extreme, in closed autocratic regimes, which still nonetheless still hold elections, we might expect that there are only a very limited range of actors involved in delivering elections. A desire to have a close control over the electoral process, which might only be contests for local or parliamentary seats and not the position of head of state, might lead the regime to have a limited number of actors involved in delivering policy. There would inevitably be little open contestation of the rules and a dispersion of power as a result. A single state-run EMB is involved in the delivery of elections – in a system akin to soviet-style nationalised state industries. Control mechanisms are therefore top-down. There is a silent consensus because criticism is unlikely out of fear of repression.
- *Contested statist systems*. Entirely closed autocratic regimes, are of course, few in number. Instead there are a greater number of regimes that are electoral autocracies since the 1970s (Mechkova, Lührmann, and Lindberg 2017). Elections are contested and leaders are capable

of losing them – but they have the odds stacked in their favour (Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010). A greater variety of delivery partners might be present in these regimes as political parties and civil society groups are more proactive in voter registration and mobilisation activity in favour of opposition groups, but also the regime. These networks might also see a much greater degree of contestation because the delivery of elections is an important site of political struggle as rulers use tactics from the menu of manipulation to rig voter registers and manipulate polling stations. With some degree of political competition and freedom, opposition parties and call foul – to a much greater extent than is the case in more consolidated democracies.

	Closed statist	Contested statist	Mature Inter-governmental	Asymmetric	Pluralistic collaborative
Delivery partnerships	Low	Medium	Low-medium	Medium	High
Contestation	Low	High	Low	Medium	High
Power diffusion	Low	Low	Varies according to EMB independence	Medium	Medium-high

Table 3.3: Proposed typology of governance networks

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter began by reviewing existing framework for identifying the key actors who implement elections. This was developed by the international community of practitioners at the turn of the twenty-first century. It has proved useful up to a point, but it oversimplifies, paints an inaccurate account of who really delivers elections and the temporal dynamics of power relations. It is not surprising that research findings have often produced counter-intuitive results. The chapter has argued that by drawing from the literatures on policy networks and governance, a richer set of concepts can be borrowed to develop a different typology. Five ideal types of governance delivery systems are then proposed – the theorisation of which involves sets of propositions about their dynamics.

Importantly, the typology has been developed from theory so far. The application of the approach to different case studies will enable the identification of exemplars and conceptual refinement types. It will also allow the consequences of the systems to be identified. For example, do pluralistic-

collaborative networks really exist in practice? Or are they only ideal types which states may not ever achieve? When and why might a country undertake a transition in network type? What are the consequences of having more actors? Does it cause a policy-mess and confusion in roles? Or does collaboration generate mutual learning? In other words, we have three core research questions to proceed with:

1. How useful is this governance network model for understanding policy making and implementation in electoral administration and management?
2. *What are the causal effects* of governance properties on electoral management outcomes.

These are tackled in the following chapters.

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