

# Transcending the Institutional-Interpretivist Binary: Realizing Critical Realist Theory of Governance as Metagovernance<sup>1</sup>

Received 4 October 2016  
Revised 15 October 2016  
Accepted 27 October 2016

## THEERAPAT UNGSUCHAVAL<sup>2</sup>

PhD candidate at School of Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Research,  
University of Kent, England.  
E-mail: [t.ungsuchaval@gmail.com](mailto:t.ungsuchaval@gmail.com).

## ABSTRAK

*Governance* merupakan sebuah konsep populer yang sering diperdebatkan. Secara umum konsep *Governance* mengacu pada perubahan arti pemerintahan dan tata kelola sektor publik yang bergeser dari hirarki vertikal menjadi horisontal sehingga memunculkan model baru dalam mengatur masyarakat dan kelembagaan termasuk tradisi dan proses implementasi kekuasaan. Hal tersebut menyebabkan banyak ahli berbeda dalam memahami *governance* baik secara ontologi maupun epistemologi. Dua cabang penelitian tentang *authoritative governance* yaitu institusional dan interpretatif. Asumsi dalam pendekatan institusionalist adalah *governance* dipahami melalui perilaku organisasi sedangkan pendekatan interpretatif lebih mengutamakan interpretasi terhadap perilaku individu. Namun demikian kedua pendekatan seringkali diulas secara binari tanpa unsur-unsur kritis. Oleh karena itu artikel ini membahas epistemologi untuk “keluar dari perspektif binari institusionalis-interpretivis” dengan mengidentifikasi pandangan-pandangan kritis realis yang dapat memberikan kontribusi perspektif baru. Pendekatan alternatif tersebut adalah *metagovernance*. *Metagovernance* memberikan alternatif untuk memahami *governance* kontemporer yang membahas hubungan kekuasaan. Model *governance* interaktif ini berusaha membawa kembali sentralitas negara dalam analisa *governance* yang kemudian menempatkan pemerintah dan *governance* dalam hirarki tertentu. Lebih dari sekedar membahas dampak perubahan *governance*, *metagovernance* memberikan konteks dan batasan-batasan *governance* itu sendiri. Artikel ini tidak memberikan argumen bahwa ada cara terbaik mempelajari *governance*. Tetapi, keluar dari perspektif binari antara pendekatan institusionalis dan interpretivis dapat memberikan perspektif baru tentang *governance* dan bagaimana kita memikirkannya (kembali).

Kata kunci: Pemerintahan, Metagovernance, Kelembagaan, Interpretasi, realisme kritis.

## ABSTRACT

Governance is essentially a popular contested concept and its definition is variously applied. Commonly agreed, it refers to a change in the meaning of government, the way of doing public business which has shifted from vertical, hierarchical to more horizontal, synonymous with network. Hence, it has arisen as a new mode by which society is governed and denotes the institutions, traditions and processes which define how power is operated. Given that, different governance scholars do have different ontological and epistemological positions. Two authoritative governance research strands have been noted: formal and institutional, and interpretive. The institutionalist approach assumes the capacity to understand governance through the behavior of institutions and organizations while the interpretative approach argues for the interpretations of individuals instead. However, this paper contends that both of them are commonly represented in binary and lack critical elements. This article thus tries to discuss the epistemological route to 'transcend the institutionalist-interpretivist binary' by specifying critical realist insights, which can contribute a relatively new perspective to governance research as the concept by nature is non-intradisciplinary and, in reality, holding a mixture of various modes and levels of governance. The alternative approach is the analytic of metagovernance. Metagovernance shows us an alternate way we can read contemporary governance which is, in particular, interested in power relations and interactive modes of governance, attempting to bring the centrality of the state back in the analysis of governance and then to call for the recognition of government and governance in the shadow of hierarchy. It sensitizes us the context and limits of governance rather than simply talking about the implications of the shift to governance with and through networks. The article does not suggest that there is one best/right way to study governance. Transcending the binary between institutionalist approach, on the one hand, and interpretivist approach, on the other hand, can offer a new perspective of governance and how we (re)think about it. Keyword: Governance, Metagovernance, Institutionalism, Interpretivism, Critical Realism

## INTRODUCTION

The idea of governance, which has become increasingly mentioned and applied starting from the 1980s, "*seeks to explain a whole series of realignments and offers a range of explanatory tools*" ([Newman, 2001, p.22](#)) about changing state and society and the meaning of government, pointing to something that is broader and beyond government.

Governance is essentially a popular contested concept in which its definition is "*as varied as the issues and levels of analysis to which the concept is applied*" ([Krahmann, 2003, p.323](#)). Popularly cited, governance refers to a change in the meaning of government, the way of doing public business which has shifted from vertical, hierarchical to more horizontal, synonymous with network. Hence, it has arisen as a "*new method by which society is governed*" ([Rhodes, 1996, p.652](#)) and denotes the institutions, traditions and processes which define how power is operated. However,

the state in modern governance is, to put it in [Skelcher's term \(2000\)](#), a 'congested state', full of fragmented and plural forms of governance, not just networks.

This article recognizes the diversity of governance theories and aims to specify main approaches to study contemporary governance: institutionalist and interpretivist accounts of governance. Different understandings of governance do not only reflect different readings or interpretations of the situation but also indicate the different ontological and epistemological positions of the analysis. Unfortunately, these two authoritative approaches are represented in binary and problematic in many senses. The article therefore deals with this issue and tries discussing an approach to transcend the institutionalist-interpretivist epistemological binary to the study of governance by suggesting an alternative account using critical realist insights which, consequently, points to the analytic of metagovernance.

## TWO WORLDS OF GOVERNANCE THEORY: INSTITUTIONALISM AND INTERPRETIVISM

The conceptual vagueness and contestedness of the concept of governance, surprisingly, lead the way for interpretative flexibility of how to study governance ([Schneider, 2002](#)) and make governance be always attractive as it is compatible with a wide range of theories and approaches; *"it can be shaped to conform to the intellectual preferences of the individual author and therefore to some extent obfuscates meaning at the same time that it perhaps enhances understanding"* ([Peters, 2011a, p.63](#)). To some extent, the utility of the governance ideas lay on which of several extant approaches of governance is adopted; questions and understanding towards governance reflect the perspective ([Peters, 2000](#)). Particularly, what makes one governance research differs from another is an epistemological standpoint of a particular governance theory. The governance research universe, consequently, consists of different research strands (see [Levi-Faur, 2012](#); [Bevir, 2011b](#)). Nevertheless, as Bevir and Krupicka (2011) observe, two

contrasted types of recent authoritative governance theory can be noted: the formal and institutional theory and the interpretive theory.

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Some scholars mention that to make sense of the broader idea of governance (and networks), institutionalism would be an attractive starting point ([Kjær, 2011](#); [Baker & Stoker, 2015](#)). The early governance literature has drew upon institutional theory and behaviorist analysis ([Marsh & Rhodes, 1992](#); [Rhodes, 1997](#); [Kjær, 2004](#); [Chhotray & Stoker, 2009](#); [Peters, 2011b](#); [Baker & Stoker, 2013](#)) which views governance as driven by links between actors and agency in networks. Even now, much of dominant governance insights comes from the new institutionalism<sup>3</sup> which is interested in explaining how networked relationships between government and societal actors affect the policy process ([Bevir, 2003](#); [Rothstein, 2014](#)) and investigating the formal and informal rules of the game in a polity ([Feeny, 1993](#); [March & Olsen, 1995](#); [Hyden, Court, & Mease, 2004](#)). Unsurprisingly, governance is popularly used to study multiagency partnerships, self-governing networks, the blurring of responsibilities between the public and private sectors ([Stoker, 1998](#)).

Common institutional analyses tend to explain ‘governance’ by positing it in contrast to ‘government’; governance refers to a more pluralistic pattern, process and the act of governing while government refers to institution or the governing body itself (see [Osborne & Gaebler, 1992](#); [Bevir, 2010](#)). The thesis of the shift from government to governance is repeatedly portrayed by many institutionalist writings (see [Rhodes, 1996, 1997](#); [Smith, 1998](#); [Richards & Smith, 2002](#)).

Now, two key approaches should be mentioned: society-oriented approach and state-oriented approach. For example, some who took the first approach tended to look at the dynamics of interactions among the actors in the network ([Kickert, Klijn, &](#)

[Koppenjan, 1999; Rhodes, 1996; 1997; Salamon, 2000, 2002](#)) whereas the others who accept a more state-oriented approach were more focused on state steering and the role of the government as powerful actors in governance arrangement ([Scharpf, 1994; Painter & Pierre, 2005; Peters & Pierre, 2004](#)).

The institutional theory, for the most part, has symbiotic relationship with the society-oriented approach so-called ‘network governance’ or the ‘Anglo-governance’ school where Rhodes is counted as a prominent scholar ([Bevir, 2003, 2012; Marinetto, 2003](#)). Governance, in this respect, notably refers to networks defined as a distinctive coordinating mechanism on the contrary of hierarchies and markets; and the state is no longer the alpha and omega of governance arrangement. The apparent of networks indicates a basic alteration to the institutional configuration of government and society. Consequently, systemic account of governance is needed to be clear on how institutions are comprehended ([Baker & Stoker, 2015](#)). [Kjær \(2011\)](#) summarizes that dominant uses of the concept show common consideration with institutions and institutional change. As such, institutionalist approaches are well-established in governance research.

Typically, institutionalists argue that “*governance begins with structures and processes rather than the individuals within them*” ([Peters, 2011a, p.69](#)). Governance denotes the institutions, traditions and processes which define how power is operated. The institutional concept emphasizes the multilayered structural context of rule-governed understandings ([Lynn, Heinrich, & Hill, 2001](#)).

Governance in the eye of institutional theory is concerned with significance of institution and its nature, ability, and structural configurations to affect framework and capacity of the political system to govern effectively and shape the identities, institutions, and actions of civil society and outcomes ([March & Olsen, 1995; Peters, 2000](#)). If governance is about engaging with various actors, the role of the institution in shaping opportunities for the engagement then matters. [Peters \(2011c\)](#) claims that

institutionalism principally interprets governance choices by positioning facilitators or constraints on individuals within institutions, wither normatively or structurally. He summarizes that “[p]erhaps the principal manner in which institutions influence governance is that institutions represent the interaction of structures and processes for governing” ([Peters, 2011c, p.81](#)).

Epistemologically, majority of the underlying assumption towards institutionalist version of governance reflects a positivist orientation. [Bevir \(2005\)](#) points out that positivist assumptions influence forms of institutionalism in two major ways; firstly, they make institutionalists believing that explanation of individual behavior can be done with allegedly objective social facts about people; and secondly, they lead institutionalists to see individual actions by uncovering laws. Besides, [Bevir \(2005, 2010\)](#) criticizes the ‘top-down’ conception of institution in institutionalism as the lingering positivism which keen to explain everything with reference to observable, measurable phenomena.<sup>4</sup> Institutions are seen in reified form that build rules and norms to govern and explain actions.

Typically, positivist institutionalists are likely to make a comprehensive account of governance through defining governance by reference to one or more of its essential elements, notably networks seen as sets of fixed structure which can be managed through different instruments and techniques, the position sharing with majority ideas of public management. These essential elements are general which characterize all cases of governance ([Bevir & Rhodes, 2007](#)). It also favors structural power over agency which will be discussed later. Institutional accounts tend to make the analysis positivist, though many institutionalists are likely to see themselves not as positivist but eclectic in their epistemology.

However, some institutionalists admit that institutional theory is not, and cannot be a perfect theory of governance as institutions consist of values and ideas which influence institutions (and vice versa) about governing as well ([Peters, 2011c](#)). Develop-

ing theory of governance thus demands developing means of combining individual level behavior with structures and institutions ([Peters, 2011a](#)). This call for more emphasis on agency and interpretive elements to study governance.<sup>5</sup>

## INTERPRETIVIST ACCOUNT OF GOVERNANCE<sup>6</sup>

Situating in governance theory, interpretive approach essentially rejects the lingering positivism of most other approaches to governance especially mainstream institutionalism. However, it shares a line with the institutionalist approach by accepting that the world of governance is characterized by a shift from government to governance. Government is not and should not be the main point of discussion of governance research. What is difference is that the interpretive approach develops an anti-foundational consideration for how networks construct meanings and practices.

Interpretivist approach addresses that social explanations, as a matter of course, entail recovering and situating beliefs in the context of the wider webs of meaning where they are a part of. Typically, it lead to a more ‘decentered theory of governance’ ([Bevir, 2003, 2013; Bevir & Rhodes, 2007](#)) which seeks to install agency and contingency into the idea of governance.

First of all, interpretivists hold that studying governance should not begin with institutions themselves, but the practices that maintain them; “*interpretivism is different because it recognizes that political life takes place through language and that meaning is subjective, varying with the context of communication and the agency of the interpreter*” ([Turnbull, 2011, p.253](#)). [Bevir and Rhodes \(2006a\)](#) claim that the decentered approach to governance essentially changes the way governance is seen as it asks us to look at the social construction of networks through the way in which individuals give meanings. In other words, decentering governance is to investigate how individuals build, maintain, and modify their social lives, institutions, and policies. Institutional norms in this view do not direct individuals’ actions; instead, it is the beliefs

which individuals adopt against traditions and in response to dilemmas that determine the actions. Hence, a decetered account of governance epitomizes “*a shift of typos from institutions to meaning in action*” ([Bevir & Rhodes, 2006a, p.99](#)).

Strongly criticizing the innate logic of institutions of institutionalism, the interpretive approach denies the structural power and the construction of typologies and reified concepts assumed to be able to be applied in a wide range of setting ([Bevir & Krupicka, 2011](#)). Institutions and networks are not a fixed pattern but ‘the contingent product of the circulation of rationalities’ created by situated agents, intentionally and unintentionally ([Bevir, 2010, p.266](#)). Having no essence, institutions are ‘contingent, changeable, and contestable practices’ ([Bevir & Krupicka, 2011, p.452](#)); they are not autonomous in themselves and are at best contingent and constructed by practices ([Turnbull, 2011, p.257](#)). Therefore, institutions are not, and cannot be the unit of analysis of governance.<sup>7</sup> Instead, exploring the webs of beliefs of the actors against the background of traditions adapted by dilemmas is a better way to study governance.

Consequently, governance consists of “*contingent practices that emerge from the competing actions and beliefs of different people responding to various dilemmas against the background of conflicting traditions*” ([Bevir, 2011a, p.5](#)). The approach is based on an anti-foundational theory of the state which allow the appearance of a ‘stateless state’ ([Bevir & Rhodes, 2011, 2015](#)). This approach regularly questions the concept of a set of management tools for governance and rejects an idea and use of ‘model’; instead, ‘narrative’ is advocated ([Bevir, 2003; Bevir & Rhodes, 2008](#)). Any endeavor to steer and manage networks is considered here as pointless; governance has to be a ‘bottom-up’ construction. The social construction of patterns of rule through the ability of individuals to create (or co-create) meanings in action is the key ([Bevir & Rhodes, 2015](#)).

Although the interpretive approach seemingly is a counterweight to positivist analysis, it has not proceeded uncontestedly.



There are many responses and critiques towards the approach. Some of them constructively inquire about whether the interpretative turn abandons the value of the earlier insights from institutionalist traditions and influence of deep, not directly observable, structural influences on policy and action and whether the emphasis on meaning offers an deficient understanding of power relations ([McAnulla, 2007](#); [Marsh, 2008](#); [Smith, 2008](#); [Glynos & Howarth, 2008](#); [Peters, 2011b](#); [Baker & Stoker, 2013](#)). It fails to consider the persistence of hierarchy and structurally derived constraints on action in government ([Baker & Stoker, 2013](#)). As [Bell and Hindmoor \(2009\)](#) remind us, government is, in fact, influential not because its well storytelling ability but its capability to retain state power and authority over resources and territory. [James \(2009\)](#) concludes that the decentered theory is just a 'rhetorical device' for articulating "*greater reflection about the tools of political analysis,*" but "*it offers little when compared to the insights of mainstream approaches*" (p.342).<sup>8</sup>

[Marsh \(2011\)](#) especially questions the way Bevir and Rhodes use interpretivism and their call for "*new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of speaking*" about governance ([Bevir & Rhodes, 2003b, p.60](#)) despite what they said that "*there is no such thing as governance, but only different constructions of the several traditions*" ([Bevir & Rhodes, 2003b, p.59](#)). [Marsh \(2011\)](#) argues that it is never clear that the network governance is a description of how UK government operate and/or narrative about how it functions. Besides, Bevir and Rhodes themselves are seemingly contradicted about how they see governance as they speak of narrative but see the network governance as a more definite description. Their interpretivist accounts are prone to 'epistemological slippage' ([Davies, 2011, p.76](#)) and risking of being reductionist ([Peters, 2011b](#)).<sup>9</sup>

What should be particularly emphasized here is the problem with binary worldview of Bevir and Rhodes (see [Bevir & Rhodes, 2003a](#); [Bevir, 2005](#)) as they see ones who are not an interpretivist as a positivist or modern empiricist, reflecting their narrow ver-

sion of interpretivism ([McAnulla, 2007](#); [Marsh, 2008, 2011](#); [Smith, 2008](#)). This implies an 'either-or' worldview

Following these, this article concurs that there is no simple an 'either-or' worldview between positivist institutionalism and interpretivism; many alternatives can be raised in relation to the study of governance. Both approaches seem to take meta-theoretical issues limitedly; especially, they privilege one side of the dualism regarding structure and agency, rather than addressing them as a duality ([Marsh, 2008](#); see also [Marsh, 2010](#); [Hay, 2002](#)). This article argues for a critical realism as an alternative account towards governance.

#### META-THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS: STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

Versions of governance raise questions about structure and agency in governing. In general, institutional explanations are inclined to base decisively on structural explanations ([Peters, 2011a](#); see also [Hooghe & Marks, 2003](#); [Duit & Galaz, 2008](#)). For example, they suppose that the nature of the networks can determine the patterns of interactions (see [Klijn & Koppenjan, 2004](#)). However, [Peters \(2011a\)](#) reminds us that "*the actual decisions made are made by individuals, whether as single actors or through interactions*" (p.69). Some theories are obviously relied on agential explanations.

The debate over structure-agency relations is continual and "reasonably simple to state, but not that easy to resolve" ([Howarth, 2013, p.116](#)). This article does not intend to solve the problem but propose an alternative way to study both structure and agency. [Wendt and Shapiro \(1997\)](#) note that the ontological differences between those who are more structure-centered and more agency-centered lead a conclusion about where to look for and what counts as the significant causal mechanism in the first place. For the methodological convenience, the duality of structures and agency is "*a reflection of an intellectual division of labour, a methodological 'bracketing' of one set of concerns in order to concentrate on*

another” ([López & Scott, 2000, p.5](#)).

Structure refers to context and the setting within which social, political and economic events emerge and obtain meaning. It is also about the ordered nature of relations and entities. Those who explain social phenomena or outcomes exclusively with reference to structural or contextual factors are considered a ‘structuralist’. In contrast, agency is action which is a political conduct ([Hay, 2002](#)). It refers to the capacity of an actor to act consciously and realize one intentions. Here, an actor assumably has autonomy and choice to perform. Being set up as such, structure and agency is commonly seen as oppositional; nonetheless, it is not always necessarily the case. Those who exclusively believe in the ability of actors to act without contextual or structural factors are considered an ‘intentionalist’ or ‘voluntarist’.

[Hay \(2002\)](#) points out the structuralist tendencies of the new institutionalism which emphasizes “*the mediating and constraining role of the institutional settings within which [...] outcomes were to be realized*” (p.105). Institutionalists put a lot of emphasis into mechanism of institutional constraint. In contrast, interpretivists usually argue that structures do not exist independently of agents. For [Bevir and Rhodes \(2003a, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c\)](#), structures, if any, play little role and do not have independent causal role; institutions are needed to be decentered. However, it does not mean that social contexts are not allowed to have influence and constraining effects; in fact, interpretivists deny reified practices or traditions as structures ([Bevir & Rhodes, 2006b, p.18](#)). Being narrated, institutions do not exist independently of ideas.

Ultimately, institutionalist and interpretivist debates is about what and how to privilege in the study of governance, structure or agency. Both of the accounts, to some extent, recognize both structure and agency but with different priority. Traditionally, voluntarists see social processes as being reducible to the seemingly unconstrained actions and wills of individuals; they privilege agency over structure. Structuralists, in contrast, produce much of their strength by countering the voluntarist; they pre-

sume structural determinism with passive agency, if any. Both approaches are an 'either-or' approach which, using [Sayer's](#) term (2010), can be called a kind of 'intellectualist fallacy'. Although one may be interested in social structure, it does not imply any priority for 'structure' over 'agency'; the assumed incompatibility of them is overstated and the suggestion that one has to decide between these two ideas is misguided ([López & Scott, 2000, p.5](#)). This article says that structures and agencies are operationally interdependent, albeit ontologically separated. Structures cannot operate on their own; they need individuals to operate them ([Sayer, 2010](#)). Institutions have independent casual power. There can be no action without structure (and vice versa) ([Archer, 1995](#)). This idea points to critical realism which will be considered next.

### TRANSCENDINGTHEBINARY: TOWARDSCRITICALREALIST ACCOUNT OFGOVERNANCE

Even though Rod Rhodes, a prominent thinker of the idea of governance, remarkably converted his epistemological standpoint from behavioralism to interpretivism in collaboration with Mark Bevir (see [Rhodes, 2007, 2011; Wanna & Weller, 2011](#)), Rhodes's and Bevir's *oeuvres* and the extant literature on governance in general appear to overlook critical realism ([Marsh, 2008; McAnulla, 2006a, 2006b; Fawcett & Daugbjerg, 2012; cf. Bevir & Rhodes, 2006c](#)).

Critical realists do not follow anti-foundational theory of the state held by interpretivists. Instead, they are more interested in the role of the state in redesigning how modes of governing, e.g. hierarchies, markets, and networks, intricately operate independently and dependently. Not only that, they emphasize the ways the state modifies the strategic terrain to favor certain hybrid combinations of the three differing governing modes over and above others ([Whitehead, 2007; Bell & Hindmoor, 2009; Fawcett & Daugbjerg, 2012](#)).

Although [Bevir and Rhodes \(2006b, 2015\)](#) seem to doubt

that critical realists are structuralists, institutionalists and empiricists, critical realists indeed are ontologically and epistemologically different from those labels despite some of critical realist analyses possibly showing a trace of institutional analysis.<sup>10</sup> Critical realism has a 'realist' ontology but it is not a naïve realism which positivism assumes<sup>11</sup> ([Sayer, 2000](#); [Cruickshank, 2003](#); [Delanty, 2005](#); [Gorski, 2013](#)). Realism suggests that knowledge of realities do exist independently of our representations of it. Critical realists believe that how we see the world is theory-dependent; variables are always conceptual interpretations. It is philosophically post-positivist; its epistemology holds that "*there is a real material world but that our knowledge of it is often socially conditioned and subject to challenge and reinterpretation*" ([della Porta & Keating, 2008, p.24](#); see also [Jessop, 2005](#)). This make critical realism, in a certain degree, close to interpretivism in the epistemological aspect ([Marsh, Hall & Fawcett, 2014](#); [Sayer, 2000, 2010](#)).

Importantly, critical realism tries to integrate three methodologies ([Delanty, 2005](#)). Firstly, it essentially defends the possibility of causal explanation as causal efficacy confirms the social reality (see [Collier, 1994](#); [Sayer, 2000, 2010](#)). This causal law is not universal deterministic, but contingent and emergent. At the same time, it recognizes the interpretive notion of social reality as being communicatively constructed, without generating interpretivist solution.<sup>12</sup> Finally, it involves a critical dimension.

By 'critical', critical realism treats structure and agency as duality and contains normative and political value ([Cruickshank, 2003](#)). To begin with, critical realists avoid the explanatory weight on only structures or individuals resulting in determinism to explain individuals' social relations. Then, structure and agency should be linked through the idea of emergent properties, i.e., seeing social structures as emergent properties created by the actions of individuals in the past, not as an independent existence apart from the activity of individuals<sup>13</sup> (see [Hay, 2002](#)). Such structures have causal power in their own right, albeit unobserv-

able. Meanings do not occur independently of individual subjects; instead, they are shared and inscribed in institutions and processes which affect, but definitely do not determine, individuals ([McAnulla, 2006a, 2006b; Marsh, Hall, & Fawcett, 2014](#)).

Both aforementioned institutionalists and interpretivists, according to [McAnulla \(2007\)](#), share one common feature; they fail to recognize and/or lack an adequate study of social structures on which critical realists are actively focused. In particular, critical realists would argue that institutions are structures, norms, and practices shaping and be shaped by the ideas within the institutions about policy and organizations. Structures provide the context within which agents operate and, as such, facilitate or constrain (but not determine) actions. Agents, nonetheless, do interpret the structure and their interpretation is influenced by their prior values, experiences and practices. In effect, the agents alter the structure. The 'new' structure accordingly shapes the context within which agents operate and the actions and outcomes can also change, or add to, the agents' values, experience or practices. The relationship between institutions and ideas or structure and agency is thus dialectical, interactive and iterative ([Hay, 2002; McAnulla, 2006a, 2006b; Marsh, 2008, 2010; see also Furlong & Marsh, 2010](#)). In this sense, ones "*need neither a 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' conception of institutions, rather we require investigations of institutional change/continuity that examine the interaction of structure and agency*" ([McAnulla, 2007, p.321](#)).

In conclusion, critical realism treats structure and agency as a 'duality', rather than dualism, in which they have their own causal power and their distinctions are both a matter of ontological and analytical (see [Hay, 2002](#)). Critical realists then recognize the important of ideas, narratives and discourse towards outcomes and phenomena while assert that institutions and material relations do play a part as well. The differences between the institutionalist, interpretivist, and critical realist approaches are summarized in the Table below.

TABLE 1. DIFFERENT EMPHASES BETWEEN INSTITUTIONALIST, INTERPRETIVIST, AND CRITICAL REALIST APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF GOVERNANCE

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	INSTITUTIONALIST GOVERNANCE	INTERPRETIVIST GOVERNANCE	CRITICAL REALIST GOVERNANCE
Epistemology	Positivist orientation	Idealist orientation	Critical realist orientation
State theory	(New) institutionalist approach	Anti-foundational approach	Strategic-relational approach; asymmetric power model
Governance theory	Network governance; Anglo-governance school	Decentered governance	Metagovernance
Approach to governance theory	State- and society- oriented approach	Society-oriented approach	Mostly state-oriented approach; state and society as continuum
Unit of analysis	Structures; processes	Individuals; beliefs; traditions; dilemmas	Relations; Modes of governing/governance
Network management	Network can be managed/steered	Network <i>cannot</i> be managed/steered	Network can be steered/colibrated through 'hand on' and 'hand off' approaches
Institution	Reified structure; Top-down	Contingent; Bottom-up construction	Dialectical; interactive; iterative
Meta- theoretical tendency	Structure over agency (dualism)	Agency over structure (dualism)	Structure-agency as duality
Relationship with government	Shift from government to governance	Shift from government to governance	Government coexists with governance in the shadow of hierarchy
Key thinkers	(Early) R.A.W. Rhodes; G.B. Peters; J. Pierre;	M. Bevir; (Late) R.A.W. Rhodes	B. Jessop; D. Marsh; P. Fawcett; J. Kooiman
A. Kjaer			

In addition, critical realist research should facilitate the move

from facts to values by developing a normative critique against the status quo ([Cruickshank, 2003, p.3](#)). A critical realist would be interested in how to produce a theory-dependently empirical explanation carrying normative value of the explanation. For instance, critical realist account of governance aims to discover that, among different modes of governing, there is always a dominant, but not absolute, one. This dominant one affects but not



determine the governance arrangement. Importantly, modes of governing are not fixed but always changed even though there might be path-dependency of them. Critical realism pays particular attention to power relations of elements in a particular phenomenon.

[Sayer \(2010\)](#) contends that “one of the distinctive features of critical realism is that it combines two models that have often been imagined to be not merely different but incompatible” (p.ix). In order to study governance, the critical realist position does not only give its distinct analytical elements but also allows one to use analytical elements from both institutionalist and interpretivist views. Although scholars of both camps similarly claim that their approaches are the best means of undertaking governance research (see [Peters, 2011b](#); [Bevir & Krupicka, 2011](#)), to sensibly study a mixture of various modes and levels of governance in reality where institution and individuals are equally considered should be seriously taken to account. In other words, to study governance by understanding structure-agency as a duality, not a dualism, can contribute a new perspective to governance research, which is the analytic of metagovernance.

## ANALYTIC OF METAGOVERNANCE

Metagovernance and its powerful explanatory strength is essentially underpinned by and sympathetic towards critical realist epistemology. Some point out an association between critical realism and metagovernance ([Jessop, 2004, 2005, 2007](#); [Marsh, 2011](#); [Fawcett & Daugbjerg, 2012](#); [Davies, 2013](#); [Bevir & Rhodes, 2015](#)). Metagovernance provides a helpful approach to researching governance; “it recognize[s] governmental capacity and the constraining role played by institutions and structures whilst allowing for the agency of networked actors” ([Baker & Stoker, 2015, p.38-39](#)). In other words, it provides the potential for simultaneous recognizing the continued power of the state and the reflexivity of networked players.

Besides, employing critical realism, one may argue that governance is stratified; strata or orders of governance can be found in metagovernance literature. And as critical realists seek an emerging order, it can be argued that the idea of metagovernance is treated as an emerging order, a third-order governance ([Kooiman, 2003](#)). The third-order governance emphasizes that

norms and principles for governing as a whole are the object of governance. It goes beyond the first-order of governing which keen on dealing with problem solving and opportunity creation, in other words, the day-to-day activities of governing, and the second-order in which the design, maintenance and care for the institutions in which first order governing take place are the analysis ([Kooiman, 2003](#); cf. [Jessop, 2016a](#)).<sup>14</sup> These are obviously corresponded with the critical realist insight.

### GOVERNANCE OF GOVERNANCE

Metagovernance is a recent development in governance studies which has become an attention to academic community in the last decade; and the literature of metagovernance is varied (see [Baker & Stoker, 2012, 2013](#); [Bell & Hindmoor, 2009](#); [Jessop, 2004, 2011](#); [Klijn & Edelenbos, 2006](#); [Kooiman & Jentoft, 2009](#); [Meuleman, 2008](#); [Sørensen, 2006](#); [Sørensen & Torfing, 2008](#); [Torfing et al., 2012](#)).

Agreeably defined as the ‘governance of governance’, [Jessop \(2004\)](#) refers to metagovernance as:

*“the organization of the conditions for governance and involves the judicious mixing of market, hierarchy, and networks to achieve the best possible outcomes from the viewpoint of those engaged in metagovernance. In this sense it also means the organization of the conditions of governance in terms of their structurally inscribed strategic selectivity, that is, in terms of their asymmetrical privileging of some outcomes over others”* (p.70; see also [Jessop, 2011](#)).

The term ‘meta’ conveys meaning of something over and beyond (see [Kooiman, 2003](#); [Meuleman, 2008](#)). For [Jessop \(1997b\)](#), the concept of metagovernance goes ‘beyond and above’ the governance concept. It is supervenient on that of governance ([Jessop, 2016b, 2011b](#)). Metagovernance is positioned above the three main modes of governing—hierarchies, markets, and networks—thereby, a multi-perspective, ‘helicopter view’ approach ([Meuleman, 2008, p.68](#)).

The first ‘governance’ term in the ‘governance of governance’

conveys a more etymological meaning. It is the 'governance' that has been used since Ancient Greek.<sup>15</sup> The latter 'governance' term can be interpreted in two main ways. The first interpretation is 'self-organizing networks' as appear in governance by networks. The second interpretation is closely related to a broader definition of governance as complex, distinct, but operationally related, modes of governing, steering. In this sense, metagovernance therefore means the governance (steering, governing) of governance (mode(s) of governing, steering).

[Baker and Stoker \(2015\)](#) suggest two underlying assumptions of metagovernance. The first assumption is that, correlated with the disaggregation of the state has brought about the rise of relatively stable pattern of devolved institutions which are semi-autonomous, but are ultimately subjected to government authority. It links to the second assumption which is metagovernance suggests the hierarchical moment, i.e., government is still powerful and capable of steering, coordinating and shaping norms and values in some circumstances. Advocates of metagovernance would understand that, traditionally, government was the sole actor responsible for governance; then, the state has utilized non-governmental agencies and the instruments of 'new governance' (see [Salamon, 2000, 2002](#); [Jordan, Wurzel, & Zito, 2005](#)), expanding a range of governing tool to include non-hierarchical ones. Even so, these new instruments are considered to operate in the 'shadow of hierarchy' and to be endorsed by the plausibility of using authority ([Peters & Pierre, 2006](#)).

Commonly, metagovernance refers to how the state re-conceptualizes its role in response to the changing context of governance. For example, [Bevir \(2013\)](#) understands metagovernance as "*an umbrella concept that describes the role of the state and its characteristic policy instruments in the new world of network governance*" (p.56). However, this is partially true; critical realists would argue for a better perspective.

To be truthful, although the term is new, the very idea of metagovernance is not limited to the '*world of network governance*'.

The concept of steering, which is one of the theoretical background of metagovernance, has existed long before the new governance arise (see [Jessop, 2011](#)). What new governance did is increasing and intensifying the complexity of the situation. Metagovernance, for critical realists, does originally not emerge as a theory of new governance. Jessop, the forefront of the concept and a critical realist, is heavily interested in state power and influenced by Antonio Gramsci and Micheal Foucault (see [Jessop, 2007, 2016b](#)). Unsurprisingly, metagovernance, arguably, implies some traces of the notion of Foucauldian governmentability and Gramscian hegemony.

Jessop's state theory and other ideas represent an effort to combine Gramsci and Foucault. Strategic-relational approach to the state is a good example of this case (see [Jessop, 2005, 2007; Jessop, Ji, & Kytir, 2014; cf. Hay, 2002](#)). It allows us to scrutinize *"the interrelations among different kinds of selectivity in social relations: structural, discursive, technological (in the Foucauldian sense of techniques of governance), and agential"* ([Sum, 2015, p.39; see also Biebricher, 2013](#)). Another trace showing that Jessop is trying to develop and integrate Gramscian and Foucault is how he sees metagovernance in modern state. [Jessop \(2016a\)](#) writes aphorism that is *"the state in its inclusive sense' can be defined as 'government + governance in the shadow of hierarchy'"* (p.176; see also [Jessop, 2004](#)). Gramsci also sees the state in its inclusive sense which contains 'political society + civil society'. Additionally, by analogy, Foucault's notion of statecraft can be regarded as relied on tactics of 'government + governmentality in the shadow of hierarchy' such that governing is 'conceptualized both within and outside government' ([Sum, 2015, p.37-38](#)).

In this sense, metagovernance involves the state's capability and mentality to steer networks by designing the context where they operate to secure the compatibility of outcomes and broader interests of the state. The idea is seemingly close to the 'governmentality' which views government as 'conduct of conduct' ([Dean, 2010](#)). Metagovernance is the 'governance of gover-

nance' or 'regulation of self-regulation' within which networks function ([Sørensen, 2006, p.98](#)).

The focus of a state-centric approach to meta-governance shifts to governance arrangements and their management by the state; it is more about the state and less about networks per se ([Fawcett & Daugbjerg, 2012, p.198](#)).<sup>16</sup> Focusing more on the state is not equal with eliminating other modes of governing. It instead says that governments play a more relative role by overseeing the various modes of governance through a process of metagovernance. Metagovernance does not consider that the state is hollowed out or marginalized, with the triumph of networks. In contrast, metagovernance "*highlights a revitalized role for the state in providing the context for the design of self-organization, ensuring the relative coherency of diverse aims and objectives, and setting the parameters within which governance transactions take place*" ([Flinders & Matthews, 2007, p.196](#)). Hierarchy and control persist and function even in self-organizing networks. Network governance is mixed and works within the shadow of hierarchy. Critical realist account of metagovernance is highly concerned with re-stating the role of the state in governance arrangement and contests a version of governance by networks.

Given above, although the state may have become less hierarchical, it does not necessarily "*exclude a continuing and central political role for national states*" in creating the rules and context within which governance takes place ([Jessop, 2004, p.66](#)). State and hierarchies are well and alive even in the new governance. The state might be less hierarchical in terms of organization, yet hierarchies still play an important role in terms of coordination.<sup>17</sup> Self-regulating networks are, in fact, function in the 'shadow of hierarchy' where "*the state threatens—explicitly or implicitly—to impose binding rules or laws on private actors in order to change their cost–benefit calculations in favor of a voluntary agreement closer to the common good rather than to particularistic self-interests*" ([Börzel & Risse, 2010, p.116](#)).

## GOVERNANCE + GOVERNMENT IN THE SHADOW OF HIERARCHY

There are various versions to comprehend metagovernance (see [Jessop, 2004](#); [Sørensen, 2006](#); [Sørensen & Torfing, 2008](#); [Meuleman, 2008](#); [Davies, 2013](#); [Baker & Stoker, 2015](#)). [Sørensen and Torfing \(2008\)](#) systemically identify four approaches of metagovernance: interdependence, governability, integration, and governmentality. Besides, metagovernance can be examined from the macro-level of the whole governance system ([Jessop, 2003, 2011, 2016a](#); [Kooiman, 2003](#); [Kooiman & Jentoft, 2009](#)) and from the more micro- or meso-level which focused on how networks are steered and, if it can be steered, they are done so by who ([Sørensen, 2006](#); [Sørensen & Torfing, 2008](#)). The former chiefly emphasizes how the national governance system rearranges and interacts which better involve normative aspects. In contrast, the latter tends to see metagovernance as ‘network management tools and techniques’ for steering networks by ‘hands off’ approach which is implemented at a distance such as design and framing contexts and conditions and ‘hands on’ approach which is more interventionist and done by a network manager within the network such as management and participation. Although the latter seems to be a more technical matter, it can allow a more normative interpretation and analysis of power as well.

Additionally, some classify the perspective in terms of a more state-centric metagovernance in against of a more society-centric metagovernance while the others treat it as a balance approach between state-centered and society-centered perspectives.<sup>18</sup> Different people adopted different theoretical approaches which leads to difference definition of metagovernance which subsequently points to different ways of deploying the concept. Among the differences of metagovernance approaches, it is important to note that they share understanding of metagovernance which is concerning about the external management of governance arrangement. However, to decide what is the dominant account of governance, between state-centric or society-centric, has quite futile

as, in reality, governance does not exist without government. Critical realists would cheer for an approach that looks at state-centric and society-centric metagovernance as a continuum, rather than a dualism, which will open up more opportunity for analysis (see [Fawcett & Daugbjerg, 2012](#); [Daugbjerg & Fawcett, 2015](#)).<sup>v</sup>

Appendix  
Scholars's use of the three approaches regarding governance: institutionalist, critical realist, and interpretivist

	<b>Institutionalists</b> <i>Positivism Structuralism</i>	<b>Critical Realists</b> <i>Critical realism Structure-Agency as interactive/iterative</i>	<b>Interpretivists</b> <i>Idéalism Voluntarism</i>
<b>Network-orientation</b>	(Late) R.A.W. Rhodes <i>Network governance</i>  S.P. Osbornes <i>New Public Governance</i>  J. Torfing & E. Sorensen <i>Governance network</i>  D. Richards & M. Smith  S. Goldsmith & W. D. Eggers  A. Kjær  W. Kickerts & E. Klijn & J. Koppenjan  <i>Network management</i>		(Late) R.A.W. Rhodes & M. Bevir <i>Decentered governance</i>
<b>Mixed modes of governing in the shadow of hierarchy</b>		L. Meuleman J. Torfing E. Sorensen <i>Metagovernance</i>	B. Jessop P. Fawcett <i>Metagovernance</i>
<b>State-orientation</b>	J. Pierre G.B. Peters <i>State capacity &amp; steering &amp; coordinating</i>  L.M. Salmon <i>Tools of New governance</i>  L.E. Lynn, Jr. C. Hill <i>Hierarchical governance</i>	J. Newman  M. Marinetto  K. Baker and G. Stoker  D. Marsh <i>Asymmetric power model</i>	B. Jessop <i>Strategic-relational approach</i>  J. Koolman <i>Social-political governance Metagovernance</i>  S. Bell & A. Hindmoor <i>State-centric relational approach</i>  J. Davies (Gramscian) M. Dean (Foucauldian)  S. McAnulla <i>Political Communication &amp; culture governance</i>  H. Bang  C. Hay <i>Interpretive Institutionalism Constructivist institutionalism</i>

Note: The names on the lines show no clear linkage of the position. Alternatively, some of them are showing some traces of mixed standpoints between two sides of the lines.

As a critical realist account, metagovernance first positions ‘government’ and ‘governance’ as a duality, not a dualism ([Marsh, 2011](#)). This essentially means that there is not necessarily to be ‘governance, rather than government’ or ‘governance, without government’. An unidirectional shift from government to governance suggested by aforementioned authoritative governance theories is rather simplistic and lack of analytical value. For critical realists, both government and governance are operationally, dialectically, interactively, and iteratively coexist in different ways across different policy areas and polities over different times. This



implies the persistence role of the state in all processes of governing.

Essentially, [Jessop \(2016b, p.16\)](#) lists numerous ways that governments establish the ground rules for governance. How government and governance coexist could be understood as a series of state transformation trends and counter-trends (see [Jessop, 1997a, 2008](#)). What is emphasized here is the trend referred as ‘a destatization of politics’ in which “*governments have always relied on other agencies to aid them in realizing state objectives or projecting state power beyond the formal state apparatus*” ([Jessop, 1997a, 305](#)). This correlates with the government-to-governance thesis. It signifies an increase of ‘partnerships’ between governmental, para-governmental, and non-governmental actors. In other words, this trend, in contemporary debate, means that the state is being replaced by non-hierarchical forms of governing and policy making and implementation such as networks and public-private partnerships. Consequently, whether with intention or not, the state is driven to think about metagovernance issues, particularly the establishment and management of self-organizing networks and inter-organizational partnerships either at a distance or within networks (see [Sørensen, 2006; Sørensen & Torfing, 2008; Jessop, 2011](#)). Increased role for the state in metagovernance by casting a shadow of hierarchy over governance arrangement and by adjusting the relatively mixed modes of governing is thus a counter-trend for government-to-governance thesis and this represent a way in which the state continues playing a role in a national territory. This reminds us that the trend towards more governance should not equate to a decline of the state role. Instead, the state retains its centrality, to some extent, in governance arrangement to ensure a certain degree of effective outcomes.

Moreover, rather than referred as network management, metagovernance in a critical realist perspective conveys a broader concern. Network management views governance as a response to networks by governments whereas metagovernance does not

allow for an option to networks ([Baker & Stoker, 2015](#)). Metagovernance is focused on the collibration of different modes of governing occurred in the shadow of hierarchy. The term 'collibration' in practice means attempts to adjust the relative weight and targets of market, hierarchy, and network in the total coordination of relations of complex interdependence ([Jessop, 2004](#); see also [Dunsire, 1993a, 1993b, 1996](#); [Meuleman, 2008](#); [Jessop, 2011](#)). Actually, an idea that governance arrangement consists of a mixed mode of governing is not new. What is new that metagovernance offers is a theorized consideration towards the compatibility or incompatibility of the relative mixed mode of governing within a specific governance arrangement.

Apart from the sophisticated duality of government and governance, this approach makes itself distinct from traditional state-centric governance as it does not privilege merely hierarchy as the dominant modes of governing. Metagovernance pays attention to the struggle and power relationship between differing modes of governing and how they negotiate with each other. The underlying assumptions are the diversity, dynamics and complexities of the societies to be governed and to govern themselves. For [Jessop \(2004\)](#), "*studies of governance treat it as a general phenomenon concerned with issues of strategic coordination rather than as a state-specific matter*" (p.52). Metagovernance is contradicted with most of the early studies of governance which were focused more on certain practices or regimes oriented to certain objects of governance. Analytic of metagovernance views governance as a mechanism and strategies or structures and practices of coordination marked by complex, reciprocal interdependence among actors which occurs in all social fields ([Jessop, 2004, 2011](#)). Metagovernance consequently refers to the coordination of such governance. Every interactions and modes in metagovernance perspective have causal power and they are 'equal' as fundamental units of analysis and theory development in terms of 'and-and', not of 'either-or' ([Kooiman, 2003, p.8](#)).

## CONCLUSION

A researcher's ontological and epistemological position is reflected in what is studied, how it is studied and the status of the findings given by the researcher. It is 'a skin, not a sweater' ([Furlong & Marsh, 2010](#)). Given that, different governance scholars do have different ontological and epistemological positions (see appendix).

This article suggests the epistemological route to the realization of metagovernance based on an attempt to transcend the institutionalist-interpretivist binary and its meta-theoretical issues. The argument in this article is developed over two significant parts. First, this article argues that the institutionalist and interpretivist approach to study of governance lack a sufficient attention to power, structure-agency, elements of governance arrangement, and the persistent centrality of the state. Institutionalist approach mostly underpinned by positivism tends to equal governance with networks and particular institutional features is problematic and led to the narrow definition and analytic of governance. The interpretivist approach to governance is limited in analysis as well. Now, it is common to see the limits of governance theory. Governance, actually, must do with much more than networks, institutions, or narratives.

Although it is appeal to employ institutional perspective as a starting point to study governance, there has to criticize and bring social interaction as analysis and ultimately develop it to metagovernance. The article argues that a critical realist approach can provide an alternative analytic to the study of governance which is metagovernance. It allows ones to take a position that is neither institutionalist nor interpretivist and suggests an operational co-existence of different governance modes. In other words, it allows ones to do not necessarily abide into one epistemology position—thereby, being eclecticperspective.

Second, metagovernance is not only an alternative attempting to 'transcend' the 'institutionalist-interpretivist binary' but also shows us an alternate way we can read contemporary gover-

nance which is, in particular, interested in power relations and interactive modes of governance, attempting to bring the centrality of the state back in the analysis of governance and then to call for the recognition of mixed modes of governing in the shadow of hierarchy. Metagovernance emphasizes government and governance as duality, namely interactive, interactive, and dialectical. It sensitizes us the context and limits of governance rather than simply talking about the implications of the shift to governance with and through networks. It is an analytic of governance that does not only imply a persisted role of hierarchy and the state in steering and regulating self-organizing networks, but also questions the argument that the social structure of the state has been being replaced by networks. It brings the re-inscription of hierarchy in governance literature. The article does not suggest that there is one best/right way to study governance. In fact, metagovernance can be both an alternative and a complementary depended on situations. Transcending the binary between institutionalist, on the one hand, and interpretivist, on the other hand, can offer a new perspective of governance and how we (re)think about it.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 This paper is revised from the paper presented at the 2016 ICONPO VI International Conference, Asia Pacific Society for Public Affairs (APSPA), Bangkok, Thailand, August 10-11, 2016.
- 2 The author is a PhD candidate at School of Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Research, University of Kent, England. He also holds MA in Civil Society, NGO, and Nonprofit Studies at the University of Kent, and B.Pol.Sci. at the Thammasat University, Thailand. E-mail: t.ungsuchaval@gmail.com.
- 3 There are 'old' institutionalism and 'new' institutionalism. The old institutionalism fell out of favor and has been replaced by the new one. In the context of contemporary governance and in this work, new institutionalism is commonly referred to. New institutionalism *"is not a single animal but rather is a genus with a number of specific species within it"* (Peters, 2012, p.2). Three major understandings are normally mentioned as a version of the new institutionalism: rational choice, historical, and sociological. Each offers a distinct comprehension about what institutions are and how they influence actions (see Schmidt, 2006; Peters, 2011c, 2012; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013; Baker & Stoker, 2015). Some might add a more 'constructive' or 'discursive' institutionalism as the fourth version which privileges more agency (see Hay, 2006, 2011a, 2011b; Schmidt, 2006, 2011).
- 4 In response to critiques made by interpretivists (which will be discussed later), Peters

(2011b) notes that *"the absence of support for the interpretivist approach does not imply an absence of interest in ideas or ideational explanations in governance. Most contemporary models of institutions [...] rely heavily on ideas and norms"* (p.468).

- 5 Actually, contemporary institutional theory has, in fact, become more diverse and not retain itself with its behaviorist-positivist background. New development of institutionalist approach is focusing more on informal and contingent; some of them do go beyond formal theory to emphasize the role of ideas, norms, practices (see Schmidt, 2006, 2011; Hay, 2006, 2011a, 2011b; Greenwood et al., 2008; Peters, 2012; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013; Scott, 2014). There are many types of institutional analysis which employs post-positivist or interpretivist epistemology; historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and, particularly, constructivist or discursive institutionalism are good examples. They also have reconsidered the actors' position vis-a-vis institutions and come up with the idea that institutions exist as actors live *through* and *by* them (Bevir, Rhodes, & Weller, 2003; Hyden, 2008; Leftwich, 2010; Kjær, 2011).
- 6 The article recognizes that there are diversity and disagreement in interpretive theory (see Bevir & Rhodes, 2002; Parsons, 2010). However, here, the works of Bevir and Rhodes are mainly focused given their work are unique, influential and have directly and actively engaged in governance literature. Therefore, by interpretivist account of governance, this article means the interpretivist (in a strict sense) of Bevir and Rhodes versions.
- 7 To be fair, this approach allows institutional effects, to some extent. But outcomes or behaviors will be mostly depended on the capability of individuals to create, interpret meanings and negotiate or resist such institutional effects. Institutions therefore exist but understood as traditions, modified by dilemmas, not as the same for institutionalists. For Turnbull (2011), Bevir neither negate the existence of institutions nor the influence and important of them but rather raises questions about their place in the study of governance; what he does is identifying a dominant kind of 'methodological institutionalism' in governance studies and criticizes it. Bevir and Rhodes (2003a) admit themselves that some material constraints do have impact such as economic influences. However, some can argue that the idea of 'situated agency' is clearly influenced by the 'traditions' which almost practically work as an institution, a structural constraint/facilitator (see Marsh, 2011).
- 8 Arguably, the interpretivist account of governance has much prescriptive and normative value, rather than analytical one. The interpretivist account as 'a very practical concern' (Bevir, 2011a) suggests us to listen to the stories and dialogue, advocates a bottom-up approach to governance. In doing so, it ultimately proposes the ways to improve or create better governance which emphasizes people and everyday lives.
- 9 A good governance lens ought to equip us to not only describe and interpret beliefs and practices but also to comprehend how various governance strategies have implications for policy outcomes; reading meanings and beliefs will only tell us *"what take place at lower and more horizontal organizational levels"* (Kjær, 2011, p.109). A better governance lens should allow us to see governance as it, in fact, consists of complex interactions between vertical and horizontal processes.
- 10 For example, given claiming himself as a critical realist, Marsh (2008) and his colleagues (see Marsh, Richards & Smith, 2002, 2003) actively apply the idea of path-dependency as a facilitating and constraining force, not a deterministic one (see also Marsh, 2011). Path-dependency is commonly known as a key concept in 'historical institutionalism' to explain an *'inertial tendency'* for institutions or policies to exhibit patterns (see Pierson & Skocpol, 2002; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; P. Pierson, 2000a, 2000b; C. Pierson, 2004; Peters, 2012). Nevertheless, later Marsh with others developed the notion of 'path-dependency' with critical realist position and clarified that

'path-dependency' does not equate 'path-determinancy'. Additionally, there are three path-dependencies: institutional, discursive, and political-economic. They are related and frequently mutually reinforcing. In this sense, historical institutionalism can fit with critical realism (see Marsh, Hall, & Fawcett, 2014).

- 11 Unlike positivists, critical realists believe that there are things that can be observed and things that cannot be observed (but needed to be posited as well). There are deep structures that cannot be observed and even if we find a way to do so, it might offer a false picture of the phenomena or structures and their effects. In the view of the initiator of the critical realism, Roy Bhaskar (2008), reality is stratified and emergent. In other words, reality should be seen as morphologically emergent. Social worlds cannot be reduced to mere observable objects, facts or ideas that people have about. The social world is an emergent reality which has its own particular powers and properties.
- 12 This reflects considerable methodological implications. Critical realism suggests that there is a real world 'out there', yet outcomes are shaped by the way in which the world is socially constructed. It also brings about a turn to methodological pluralism as it argues for a mixture of methods and the linkage of theory and method, breaking from positivism and a more restrictive ethnography (Cruickshank, 2003). Hence, it would allow us to utilize both qualitative and quantitative data (Furlong & Marsh, 2010).
- 13 It can be assumed that critical realism believes that social structures pre-exist individuals and are a necessary condition of individuals' actions; nevertheless, such social forms do not exist apart from agents' conceptions of what they are doing, thereby—being discursive as well as material (Jessop, 2005).
- 14 Moreover, in metagovernance itself, it is classified into two forms depended on how governance is defined. The two forms are regarded as first-order metagovernance and second-order metagovernance (see Meuleman, 2011).
- 15 The term 'governance' is not new. It could etymologically be traced back to the Greek word '*kybernân*' or '*kubernetes*' used by Plato with regard to the art of steering, governing, piloting; in other words, it is concerned with how to create a system of rule (Kjær, 2004; Cepiku, 2013; Torfing, et al., 2012). The Greek term then engendered the Latin '*gubernare*' which connotes the same meaning. However, 'governance' is one of many words that is derived from the word 'govern'; the others are, for example, 'government', 'governor', and 'governability'.
- 16 Metagovernance should not only be considered in a state-centric approach. Non-governmental actors and institutions beyond the center can perform metagoverning as well. According to Sørensen (2006), "*metagovernance is exercised not only by state actors but also by various networks of public and private actors and a whole range of supranational, regional, and local levels in the formal political system*" (p.102; see also Sørensen & Torfing, 2008; in 't Veld et al., 2011). The separation between state-centric and society-centric governance is an important reason why the literature in metagovernance is quite various (Stark, 2015). In short, state-centric metagovernance is a condition in which state actors execute metagovernance with a relatively dominant role, mostly, by influencing the strategic context within networks; whereas a more society-centric or governance-centric one is a condition in which non-state actors enjoy a relatively dominant role for steering networks (Jessop, 2004; Daugbjerg & Fawcett, 2015). However, state-centric metagovernance is arguably a dominant approach. Advocates of state-centric metagovernance argue that the state relatively play a crucial role and non-state actors have little incentive to metagovern (see Bell & Hindmoor, 2009).
- 17 This point says that hierarchies-as-organization is different from hierarchies-as-coordination. Scharpf (1993) distinguishes between hierarchical organization and hierar-

chical coordination, and reminds us that even hierarchical organizations has been increasingly relied on non-hierarchical forms of coordination as well.

- 18 For Torfing et al. (2012), metagovernance presents how to balance state-centered and society-centered perspectives on the ways society and economy are governed; ones who have authority to steer networks or metagovernors are no longer merely use traditional mode of governing, the hierarchy, yet need to consider “*the capacity for self-regulation of the interactive governance arenas in order to preserve the commitment of the public and private actors*” (p. 132). In a way, this corresponds with the idea of how networks function in the shadow of hierarchy but with an accent on how the metagovernors accomplish effective and legitimate outcomes (Sørensen & Torfing, 2008, 2009).

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