

**Analyzing Multi-Actor, Multi-Round Decision-Making Processes in Government:
Preliminary Findings from Five Canadian Cases**

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Abstract:

This paper begins the analysis of complex multi-actor, multi-round decision-making processes in Canadian public policy formation. After setting out the notion of a decision-making style and its constitutive elements, the paper identifies research into complex multi-actor, multi-round decisions as a serious lacuna in the literature on decision-making, despite the fact that this type of decision-making is extremely common in public policy-making circumstances. The paper attempts to advance research in this area through the analysis of five cases of complex decision-making in Canada over the period 1995-2005, dealing with: amendments to the Indian Act, the creation of Species-at-risk legislation, alterations to the Bank Act, the extension of Privacy legislation to the private sector and efforts to develop a Free Trade of the Americas agreement (FTAA). A database of actor interactions in these four areas is constructed from on-line newspaper and media index services which establishes that (a) multiple rounds are a common feature of Canadian policy-making; (b) actor behaviour and activity is correlated with these rounds; and (c) significant, but predictable, variations exist in government and non-governmental actor behavior in different sectors and rounds.

1. Introduction:¹

By the early 1980s, it had become apparent to many observers that within the study of public policy decision-making the continuing struggle for hegemony between the advocates of rationalism and those of incrementalism was interfering with empirical work and the theoretical development on the subject. As Smith and May argued: “A debate about the relative merits of rationalistic as opposed to incrementalist models of decision-making has featured for some years now and although the terms of this debate are relatively well known it has had comparatively little impact upon empirical research in the areas of either policy or administrative studies” (Smith and May 1980). Rather than continue with this debate, the authors argued that:

... we require more than one account to describe the several facets of organizational life. The problem is not to reconcile the differences between contrasting rational and incremental models, nor to construct some third alternative which combines the strongest features of each. The problem is to relate the two in the sense of spelling out the relationship between the social realities with which each is concerned (p. 156).

Over the past 20 years, much progress has been made in the direction suggested by Smith and May and most analysts now agree and acknowledge that multiple decision making styles exist in government and that it is important to spell out under which conditions different styles will tend to be adopted and the consequences of their adoption on subsequent policy outcomes (Lustick 1980; Thomson, Stokman and Tornvlied 2003; Heillila and Isett 2004; Weirich 2004; Mintz 2005).

1.1. The Concept of a Decision-Making Style

In his early work on the subject of public policy decision-making, John Forester (1984) noted how the different contexts and resources available to decision-makers lead to very different decision-making processes and outcomes. This insight helped investigators transcend earlier debates between what were falsely assumed to be the dichotomous ideal types of ‘rational’ and ‘incremental’ models of decision-making, and to develop and test a distinct set of hypotheses concerning the actual decision-making styles found in different resource and organizational contexts. (Smith and May 1980; Howlett and Ramesh 2003).

Forester linked together specific decision-making styles and outcomes with a limited set of contextual variables. He argued that at least five distinct decision-making styles were associated with six key sets of conditions (Forester 1984; 1989). According to him, "what is rational for administrators to do depends on the situations in which they work" (Forester 1984 p. 23). That is, that the decision-making style and the type of decision made by decision-makers will vary according to issue and institutional contexts. As he put it in a 1984 article:

Depending upon the conditions at hand, a strategy may be practical or ridiculous. With time, expertise, data, and a well-defined problem, technical calculations may be in order; without time, data, definition, and expertise, attempting those calculations could well be a waste of time. In a complex organizational environment, intelligence networks will be as, or more, important than documents when information is needed. In an environment of inter-organizational conflict, bargaining and compromise may be called for. Administrative strategies are sensible only in a political and organizational context (p. 25).

Forester ultimately suggested that decision-making styles varied according to six key contextual variable: first, the number of *agents* (decision-makers); second, the organizational *setting*; third, degree to which the organizational setting is *isolated* from other organizations; fourth, the degree to which the *problem* is well defined; fifth the availability of complete, accessible and comprehensible *information* on the problem and potential solutions and, finally, the amount of *time* available to make a decision (Forester 1984). Thus the number of agents (decision-makers) can expand and multiply almost to infinity; the setting can include many different organizations and can be more or less open to external influences; the problem can be ambiguous or susceptible to multiple competing interpretations; information can be incomplete, misleading or purposefully withheld or manipulated; and time can be limited or artificially constrained and manipulated. These parameters are set out in Table 1 below. To the extent these five conditions are met, Forester argues, different styles of decision-making will prevail.

Table 1. Parameters of Decision Making According to Forester

Variables	Dimensions
1. <i>Agent</i>	<i>Single - Multiple</i>
2. <i>Setting Number</i>	<i>Single - Multiple</i>
3. <i>Setting Type</i>	<i>Closed - Open</i>
4. <i>Problem</i>	<i>Well-Defined - Vague</i>
5. <i>Information</i>	<i>Perfect -Incomplete/Contested</i>
6. <i>Time</i>	<i>Infinite -Limited</i>

Adapted from Forester (1984) p. 26.

1.2. Multi-Actor, Multi-Round Decision-Making as One of Four Basic Decision-Making Styles

Unfortunately, Forester's model generates too many possible permutations to be of much use in empirical studies. However, more recently, Howlett and Ramesh (1995) proposed a simplifying taxonomy of decision-making styles based on Forester's work which is more useful in this regard. Combining "agent" and "setting" into a single variable related to the *complexity of policy context*, and the notions of the "problem", "information" and "time" resources into a single variable relating to the *severity of the resource constraints* placed upon decision-makers, their model provides a clearer taxonomy of basic decision-making styles. Table 2 below outlines the four basic decision making styles that emerge on the basis of this analysis.

Table 2. Basic Decision-Making Styles after Howlett and Ramesh (1995)

	Complexity of the Policy Context	
Severity of Constraints on Decision-Makers	Low [Limited Actor, Single Level, Single Round]	High [Multi-Actor, Multi-level, Multi-Round]
Low [Clear Problem Definition, Available Information, Available Time]	TYPE I 'Rational' Decision-making	TYPE III 'Decision Accretion' Decision-making
High [Poor Problem Definition, Limited Information, Limited Time]	TYPE II 'Incremental' Decision-making	TYPE IV 'Garbage Can' Decision-making

Adapted from Howlett and Ramesh (1995) pp. 148.

In this model, traditional *rational decision-making* is expected to occur in a Type I environment where the policy context is simple and constraints are low. Lindblom-style *incremental decision-makings* is more likely to occur in a Type II environment where the policy context is still fairly simple, but constraints on decision-makers are high. Both of these two styles, of course, are well known and their parameters and consequences have been more or less fully explored (Lindblom 1959; Hayes 1992; Berry 1990; Weiss and Woodhouse 1992; Bendor 1995; Simon 1991; Carley 1980; Cahill and Overman 1990).

Decision-making in more complex Type III and IV environments is much less well studied. When these complex processes have been examined, it has often been in the case of foreign policy decision-making, especially decisions to go to war, which are often severely time-constrained and hence fall into Type IV (Mintz 1997; Mintz and Geva 1997). Alison's work on the Cuban missile crisis and the subsequent research it engendered (Allison 1969 and 1971; Allison and Halperin 1972; Bendor and Hammond 1992), although often criticized as underspecified (Bendor and Hammond 1992), is an example of work which has dealt with decision-making in this environment. Cohen, March and Olson's work on *garbage can decision-making* is probably the best known in this area (March and Olsen 1979; Cohen, March and Olden 1979). Although it, too, has recently come under criticism for its limited applicability (Mucciaroni 1992; Bendor, Moe and Shotts 2001), its originators have, correctly, defended it on precisely these grounds (Olsen 2001).

However, the fourth type of decision-making, that of *decision accretion decision-making* in a relatively unconstrained environment (Type III) remains very much underinvestigated (Agranoff and McGuire 2003), despite its very common appearance in governments, especially federal ones (Weiss 1980; Steunenberg and Schmidtchen 2000).

2. Analyzing Multi-Actor, Multi-Round "Decision-Accretion" Decision-Making

This discussion suggests that since the publication of Forester's path-breaking work, at least three of these basic public policy decision-making styles have been investigated, including the original incremental and rational models, and others such as the highly contingent 'garbage can model'. Through a process of empirical and conceptual conjecture and refutation, theory has now been developed to the point where it is possible to conclude with some certainty what decision-making style is likely to prevail in which specific circumstances and, hence, what

general character of outcomes is likely to ensue in specific decision-making contexts (Bendor, Moe and Shotts, 2001; Jones, True and Baumgartner 1997; Lustick 1980; Mucciaroni 1992). This understanding remains incomplete, however, as long as the effects of a common type of decision-making situation – that of multi-actor, multi-round ‘decision-accretion’ decision-making – remain unclear.

It is only very recently that research efforts have begun to grapple with this most complex of the styles first mooted by Forester (Tiesman 2000; From 2002; Richardson 1999). In these situations, as Carole Weiss first noted, multiple actors interact in different ‘arenas’ and decision-making takes place in multiple ‘rounds’ or ‘phases’ in which individual decisions taken in each round ‘accrete’ to generate a final output (Weiss 1980).

Some work in this area exists, but most has tended to be somewhat partial, or concerned with other questions than those related to explicating the relationships existing between policy environments and decision-making styles (Billings and Hermann 1998; Agranoff and McGuire 2003). In Canada, for example, Michaud (2002) has worked on multi-round “White Paper” policy processes but within the context of a study of power relationships in Canadian defence policy formation. Salter (1981), and Pross, Christie and Yogis (1990) have worked on various Royal Commissions, which are also often a significant part of low constraint multi-actor, multi-round decision-making processes, but from the perspective of their organizational characteristics and investigative activities, rather than from that of decision-making per se.

Rather, it has been contemporary European, and especially Dutch, analysts who have contributed the most to the understanding of these processes, specifically examining the nature of the impasses and break-out processes which characterize this style, mainly in order to better understand, describe and prescribe the kinds of network management activities governments can use to navigate their way through such processes (de Bruijn and ten Heuvelhof 2000 and 2002; van Bueren, Klijn and Koppenjan 2003; From 2002; van Merode 2004). In so doing they have generated a body of concepts, hypotheses and cases which can be compared against Canadian evidence to help shed light on the workings of this understudied decision-making style.

These various European observers have found it to be quite common for well-resourced complex multi-actor, multi-round decision-making processes to result in deadlock and never ultimately reach a final decision (Williams, 2004). In path-breaking studies of complex multi-actor, multi-round decisions in Holland and Belgium, van Bueren, Klijn and Koppenjan (2001 and 2003) and Verhoest, Peters, Bouckaert and Verschuere (2004) have suggested a number of hypotheses relating to the ability of multi-actor, multi-level, multi-round decision-making to arrive at a successful result rather than to degenerate into an impasse (see section 2.6 below). These relate to the social, cognitive and institutional causes of impasses and the (in)ability of network management efforts on the part of governments to overcome them. Hall and O’Toole (2004) in the U.S., similarly, have highlighted the importance of the actual stage of the policy process involved in each round - e.g. formulation of options, their assessment, or arrival at a final choice of instrument) as a key factor affecting the number and type of actor present in each round.

Since in a complex bureaucratic federal system such as Canada, multi-actor, multi-level, multi-round decision-making is quite common (Grande 1996; Peters and Pierre 2001; Scharpf 1994; Howlett 1999), understanding the factors which can contribute to the success of such processes is of great importance to policy-makers and policy analysts both in Canada (Lindquist 1992 and 1996) and elsewhere (Williams 2004). This paper proposes to illuminate elements of this style of decision-making in the Canadian context and test the accuracy of existing work on the subject against evidence gleaned from several prominent cases of multi-actor, multi-round decision-making at the federal level in Canada.ⁱⁱ

2.1. Methodology

The research program followed for this paper is based upon that set out by van Bueren, Klijn and Koppenjan (2003), and From (2002) in their studies of European multi-round decision-

making. It traces the development of specific policy outcomes and decision-processes at the federal level in Canada and attempts to establish the accuracy of the multiple arena decision accretion model as a description of typical decision-making processes in Canadian governments. It also attempts to identify common patterns of actor behaviour in each round in order to inform future studies which might better illuminate the variables and factors which facilitate or inhibit successful 'decision-accretion' decision-making in complex multi-actor policy arenas.

The methodology and research program for this study closely follows those utilized in the European studies cited above. The methodology involves: (1) identifying a number of cases to be investigated as examples of existing Canadian multi-actor, multi-round policy decision-making processes; (2) constructing chronologies and descriptions of those processes over the past decade; (3) constructing databases of actors and actor activities in each selected case; and (4) analyzing the results. The research program proceeded in two stages.

In Phase I chronologies of selected public policy decision-making cases were constructed and inventories of the actors and activities involved in each decision-making 'round' were established. In Phase II the main activity involved testing several of the observations generated from European cases against evidence from the Canadian cases examined; and evaluating the similarities and discrepancies between the hypothesized and observed decision-making behaviour.

2.2. Case Selection Criteria

The choice of cases to be examined in this evaluation is, of course, critical (George 1979; Eckstein 1975). A number of criteria determined the selection of cases. First, all featured multi-actor, multi-round decision-making processes. Second, the selection of policy domains reflected processes for which at least one round was well underway rather than those still under consideration or just beginning. Thirdly, given the need to compare Canadian cases with the results of similar studies in other countries, case selection included examples of cases examined in other countries using similar methodologies. Fourthly, since the results of this proposed project will ultimately be integrated with the results of the author's previous SSHRC-funded research programs on agenda-setting (Howlett 1997 and 1998), and policy formulation (Howlett 2002), some overlap with already studied domains was also important. A fifth criterion for case selection related to the ease of availability of current and historical data on activities in the area concerned. This in effect limited the analysis to the period for which electronic records of actor activity are available: 1995-2005.

Taking these criteria into account, the policy domains which were chosen for examination in this project were Environment, Aboriginal, Trade, Banking and Privacy. Decision-making processes in these areas related to adoption of (1) Species at Risk legislation (SARA); (2) reforms to the Indian Act (DIA); (3) the development of the Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA) agreement; (4) reforms to the Bank Act and (5) the extension of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Privacy legislation to the private sector. These cases provide a basis for comparison of older, highly institutionalized sectors (Aboriginal and Trade) and newer or less well institutionalized sectors (Environment, FOI/Privacy) as well as the basis for comparisons with studies completed in other countries (Environment, Trade); and allow the integration of the findings from this study with those from the author's 1995-2000 studies of Canadian agenda-setting and policy formulation (Environment, Aboriginal and Trade).

2.3. Policy Chronologies

Chronologies of decision-making processes in each domain were gleaned from records of legislative activity in these five issue areas (on the significance of Parliamentary processes in multi-round decision-making see Steunenbergh and Schmidtchen 2000).

As Klijn, Koppenjan and others suggest, the start and end point of each round is somewhat arbitrary but can be linked to what they term ‘crucial decisions’. That is:

A round opens with an initiative or policy intention of one of the parties that serves as a ‘trigger to the others...each round ends with a *crucial decision*, a decision that offers a solution for the question that is central in the particular policy round...A crucial decision heralds a *new round* where it guides the subsequent policy game (p. 60) (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004).

In the policy case, a crucial decision is usually one in which the formalization of an issue in an established legal or authoritative decision-making body proceeds or does not proceed (Serdult and Hirschi 2004). As Teisman (2000) has pointed out, this usually means deciding to proceed or not with the introduction or passage of legislation or regulatory changes in a formal decision-making body such as a Parliament or legislature. Key points in rounds in Canada, therefore, can be hypothesized to coincide with the introduction or withdrawal of legislative proposals which, ultimately, are the focus of actor activity in these spheres. Inspection of policy chronologies constructed for each case identify several key rounds in each issue area (see Table 3 below and Appendix 2 for a description and characterization of these changes).

Table 3: Keys dates of Legislative Activity for Five Canadian Cases

Issue Round	Bank 1	Bank 2	Bank 3		FOI 1	FOI 2	FOI 3
Legislation/proposal	Pre-1992 changes	C38/C8	2006		1993	c-6	c-201
Date	Pre-1992	1993-2001	Post-2001		Pre-1993	1994-2001	2002-2005
Issue Round	FTAA 1	FTAA 2	DIA 1	DIA 2	SARA 1	SARA 2	SARA 3
Legislation/proposal	Pre 1999	Post 1999	c-31	c-31, c-7, c-6	c-65	c-33	c-5
Date	Pre-1999	Post-1999	Pre 2002	Post-2002	Pre-1997	1998-2000	2001-2002

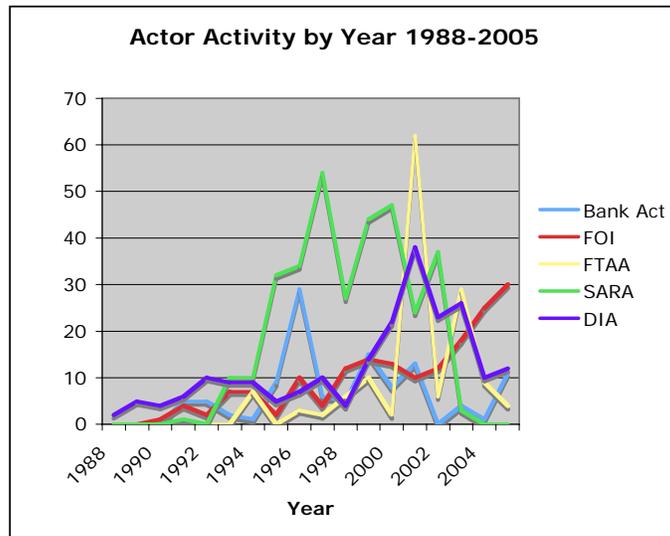
2.4. Policy Actors

Inventories of policy actors and actor activities in each round were established through the coding of newspaper reports and records of Parliamentary, judicial and administrative activity in the domain over the period 1985-2005 (see Appendix A for a detailed description of databases used, keywords searched, precise time periods used and number of records examined and coded). Table 4 records the aggregate level of actor activity in each unique ‘event’ or instance of actor policy-oriented behaviour coded in the database. Each of these cases is either left or right censored, or both, in the sense that the evaluation was driven by the availability of on-line data, so each record provides a ‘snapshot’ of an ongoing policy process. However in all cases at least a 10 year record was available so that some evidence of round-type activity, if it exists, should be observable in each case. As Table 4 and Figure 1 show, *prima facie*, each case involves significant fluctuations in the level of actor activity over the time period examined, consistent with the basic ‘rounds’ hypothesis and the number of rounds identified in Table 3. As expected, SARA shows three peaks, FTAA one, Bank Act three, DIA one and FOI three.

Table 4: Records of Policy Activity for Five Canadian Cases – By Year

	Bank Act	FOI	FTAA	SARA	DIA	Total
1988					2	2
1989					5	5
1990		1			4	5
1991	5	4		1	6	16
1992	5	2		0	10	17
1993	2	7		8	9	26
1994	1	7	7	10	9	34
1995	9	2		32	5	48
1996	29	10	3	34	7	83
1997	6	4	2	54	10	76
1998	5	12	6	27	4	54
1999	15	14	10	44	14	97
2000	8	13	2	47	22	92
2001	13	10	62	24	38	147
2002		12	6	37	23	78
2003	4	18	29	3	26	80
2004	1	25	9		10	45
2005	11	30	4		12	57
	114	171	140	321	216	962

Figure 1: Chart of Policy Activity for Five Canadian Cases – By Year



2.5. Research Hypotheses

The European studies cited above provided a set of initial hypotheses which can be refined and tested in the Canadian case. These include Bueren, Klijn and Koppenjan’s finding that cohesive policy networks operating across multiple arenas overcome fragmentation and promote more “rational” outcomes, a finding which is consistent with other European studies,

such as Teisman's (2000). However, From, in particular, developed and tested four principle hypotheses with respect to government behaviour in the decision accretion model:

- (1) That networks provide the main arenas for consultation and exchange of information and for negotiating settlements; such that
- (2) Government actors are the main agenda-setters responsible for initiatives and activities which drive decision-processes towards their conclusion;
- (3) That an initiating government actor takes on different roles at different stages of the decision-making process and behaves differently at each stage; and
- (4) That the internal organizational characteristics of the initiating agency play a significant role in affecting the capacity of the agency to successfully undertake these roles and hence shape the final outcome in accordance with their preferences (From 2002).

Although From does not develop similar observations concerning the behaviour of non-governmental actors, others such as Koppenjan and Klijn (2004) have worked in this area. One of their findings is that while government behaviour might be relatively constant throughout successive rounds, non-governmental actor behaviour can be more volatile. This volatility, they argue, is linked to the nature of the *resources* different non-governmental actors have at their disposal, their *interest* in an issue, and the *stage* at which deliberations on that issue are proceeding (van Bueren, Klijn and Koppenjan 2003).

Combining elements of From's observations on government actors and those of Koppenjan and Klijn on non-governmental ones, several hypotheses can be set out regarding expected patterns of actor behaviour in multi-actor, multi-round 'decision-accretion' decision-making contexts. These address in turn each of the stages, interest and resource variables identified in earlier studies of government behaviour:

H1 (Stages): That (a) the number of governmental actors and their activity level will remain relatively constant throughout successive rounds while (b) non-governmental actors flow in and out of different rounds depending on their perception of their interests, their resource capacities, their estimations of likely policy outcomes and their interpretations of the existing state-of-play of ongoing policy processes;

H2 (Interests): That the participation of major non-governmental actors in successive rounds is inversely related to their congruence with government aims. Issue areas with significant discordance between government and non-governmental actors aims and interests will witness higher levels of non-governmental participation;

H3 (Resources): That the activities of non-governmental actors will change as rounds progress from a focus on influencing the context or environment of decision-making (e.g. public opinion or media) in early rounds to one concerned with influencing decision-makers in later rounds as discussions become more detailed, focused, technical and legalistic.

3. Data Presentation and Hypothesis Evaluation

3.1. Evaluating H1 (Stages): *That (a) the number of governmental actors and their activity level will remain relatively constant throughout successive rounds while (b) non-governmental actors flow in and out of different rounds depending on their perception of their interests, their resource capacities, their estimations of likely policy outcomes and their interpretations of the existing state-of-play of ongoing policy processes*

Evaluating H1 requires first establishing that decision rounds exist in the Canadian federal context. The initial description provided in Table 4 and Figure 1 shows that there are definite patterns of increased and decreased activity in each issue area over time. However it does not in itself reveal the extent to which each ‘cycle’ is affected by either or both of increased/decreased governmental or non-governmental actor activity. In order to answer this concern it is necessary to disaggregate each case according to the pattern of annual activity set out in Table 4 and look at patterns of activity on the part of each category of actor in each year. Table 5 below provides this data. Table 6 provides measures of dispersion and range of actor activity.

Table 5 – Governmental and Non-Governmental actor Activity by Issue and Year

	SARA		Bank Act		FOI		FTAA		DIA		
	Govt	NGO	Govt	NGO	Govt	NGO	Govt	NGO	Govt	NGO	
1988										2	2
1989									2	3	5
1990					1				1	3	5
1991		1	2	3	2				3	3	14
1992		0	5	0	2				4	6	17
1993	3	5	0	2	3	4			5	4	26
1994	2	8	1	0	2	5	6	1	2	7	34
1995	6	26	0	9	1	1	0	0	0	5	48
1996	11	23	6	23	7	3	1	2	3	4	83
1997	18	36	4	2	2	2	2	0	4	6	76
1998	8	19	2	3	7	5	0	6	2	2	54
1999	13	31	3	12	11	3	6	4	7	7	97
2000	18	29	2	6	10	3	2	0	10	12	92
2001	15	9	4	9	7	3	20	42	13	25	147
2002	16	21	0	0	9	3	3	3	11	12	78
2003	2	1	1	3	14	4	18	11	14	12	80
2004			1	0	14	12	4	5	5	5	46
2005			1	10	17	14	3	1	5	7	58
	112	209	32	82	109	62	65	75	91	125	962

Total N		321		114		171		140		216	962
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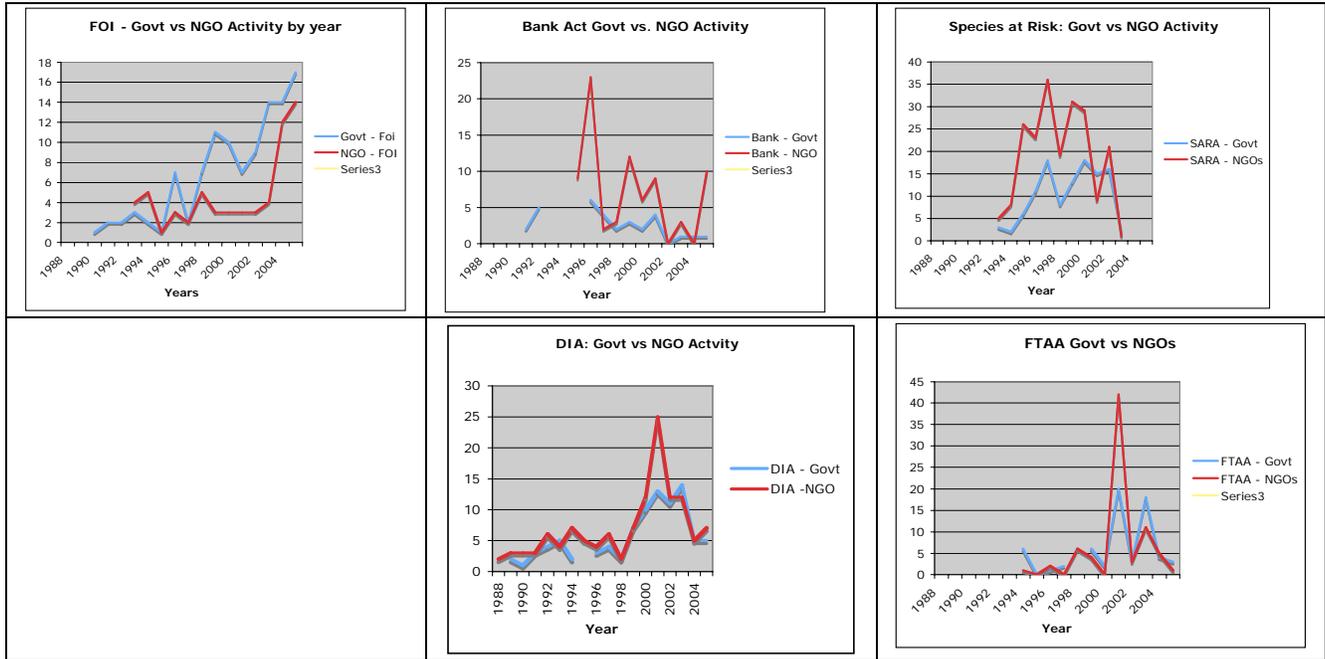
Table 6. Range and Variation of Government and NGO Actors Over Entire Period 1988-2005

	N (Years)	Minimum # of actors	Maximum # of actors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Govt as a % NGO
SARAGOV	11	2.00	18.00	10.1818	6.28996	51.56
SARANGO	12	1.00	36.00	17.4167	12.19880	
FOIGOV	16	1.00	17.00	6.8125	5.25635	137.13
FOINGO	13	1.00	14.00	4.7692	3.83305	
FTAAGOV	10	1.00	20.00	6.5000	6.80278	52.33
FTAANGO	9	1.00	42.00	8.3333	13.00000	
DIAGOV	16	1.00	14.00	5.6875	4.12664	74.26
DIANGO	18	2.00	25.00	6.9444	5.55690	
BANKGOV	13	.00	6.00	2.4615	1.80810	28.33
BANKNGO	13	.00	23.00	6.3077	6.38207	
Total Govt					17.63	75.34
Total NGO					23.40	

As Table 6 shows, the range in Government activity in all but one case (FOI) is less than that in the non-governmental sector. In some cases (SARA, FTAA, Banks) this volatility is quite pronounced, with NGO variations exceeding governments by a factor or two or more, while in one case (DAI) it is only slightly greater. The apparently anomalous FOI case can be explained by the intra-governmental nature of this issue, meaning that in this case many of what would typically be ‘outside’ interests affected by government actions are, in fact, governmental ones. This pattern suggests that rather than a complete dichotomy as From and others have suggested, the variation in actor activity in different issue areas varies with the type of issue being dealt with and the interest actors have in it. It is also suggestive that long established sectors such as banking exhibit the greatest amount of government stability, while newer areas with a directly governmental focus such as FOI legislation, engenders the greatest amount of volatility among governmental actors vis a vis their NGO counterparts.

Figure 2, however, by breaking down government and NGO activity on an annual basis, reveals a more complex pattern of interactions in each issue area than is revealed by simply examining the range of overall levels of actor behaviour over the entire period examined. It shows that in the Bank case, for example, the amount of government activity was relatively low vis a vis NGO activity and declined fairly consistently after 1998. By comparison NGO activity was clearly cyclical with high peaks in 1997, 2000 and 2005. In most other cases – SARA, DIA and FTAA - government and NGO activity more closely paralleled each other; with NGO activity usually greater than government activity except for the post 2003 period in FTAA –related activity. In the FOI case, of course, governmental activity also moved cyclically, but normally remaining greater than NGO activity except for the earliest (pre-1996) phase of activity.

Figure 2 – Governmental and Non-Governmental Actor Activity by Issue Area and Year



These patterns do reveal the general ebb and flow of governmental and NGO activity anticipated in Hypothesis 1 with governmental actors remaining generally less active than non-governmental ones in all issue areas except FOI. However they link these pattern specifically to *years* of activity not *rounds* of policy-making per se. Applying annual data to the record of rounds in each issue area generates the record contained in Table 7 below

Table 7. Records of Actor Policy Activity for Five Canadian Cases – By Round

	Bank 1	Bank 2	Bank 3	FOI 1	FOI 2	FOI 3	FTAA 1	FTAA 2	DIA 1	DIA 2	SARA 1	SARA 2	SARA 3
	1992 changes	C38/C8	2006	Pre-1993	c-6	c-201	Pre 1999	Post 1999	c-31	c-7, c-6	c-65	c-33	c-5
1988									2				
1989									5				
1990				1					4				
1991	5			4					6		1		
1992	5			2					10		0		
1993		2		7					9		10		
1994		1			7		7		9		10		
1995		9			2		0		5		32		
1996		29			10		3		7		34		
1997		6			4		2		10		45	9	
1998		5			12		6		4			27	
1999		15			14		1	9	14			44	
2000		8			13			2	22			47	
2001		12	1		10			62	38			2	22
2002			0			12		6		23			37
2003			4			18		29		26			
2004			1			25		9		10			
2005			11			30		4		12			
TOT	10	87	17	14	72	85	19	121	145	71	132	129	59

Table 8 provides a breakdown of governmental and non-governmental actor activity in each round. The Table shows that government activity was very constant in the case of SARA, and DIA, as was more volatile in the cases of FOI and FTAA when it jumped after an initially quite period. In most cases, however, even these increases were less than those encountered in NGO behaviour. Only in the FOI case was government activity and volatility greater than in their NGO counterparts.

Exactly when the greatest changes in Government/NGO participation and activity occurred is revealing. In the SARA, Bank and DIA cases, NGO activity declined as a decision finally approached, which much higher levels of activity in earlier rounds. The same appears to be happening in the FTAA case. Only in the FOI case did NGO activity increase as a decision neared.

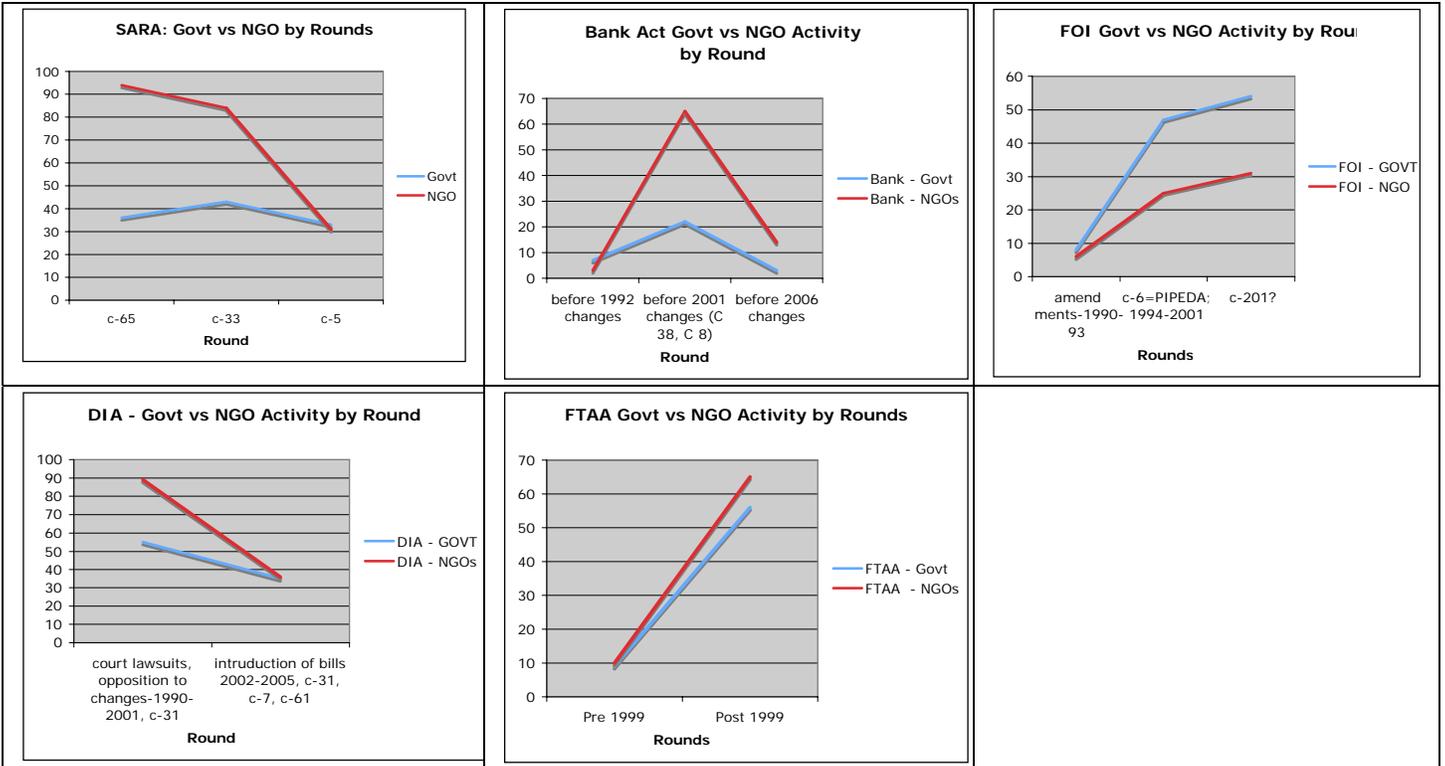
Table 8 - Record of Governmental and NGO Actor Activity by Round

		Govt	NGO	Total	Govt % NGO	NGO % Total	Govt % Total	NGO % change per round	Govt % change per round
SARA	c-65	36.0	94.0	130.0	38.3	72.3	27.7		
	c-33	43.0	84.0	127.0	51.2	66.1	33.9	-6.2	6.2
	c-5	33.0	31.0	64.0	106.5	48.4	51.6	-17.7	17.7
Bank	before 1992 changes	7.0	3.0	10.0	233.3	30.0	70.0		
	before 2001 changes (C38, C 8)	22.0	65.0	87.0	33.8	74.7	25.3	44.7	-44.7
	before 2006 changes	3.0	14.0	17.0	21.4	82.4	17.6	7.6	-7.6
FOI	amendments-1990-93	8.0	6.0	14.0	133.3	42.9	57.1		
	c-6=PIPEDA; 1994-2001	47.0	25.0	72.0	188.0	34.7	65.3	-8.1	8.1
	c-201	54.0	31.0	85.0	174.2	36.5	63.5	1.7	-1.7
DIA	1990-2001, c-31	55.0	89.0	144.0	61.8	61.8	38.2		
	2002-2005, c-7, c-6	35.0	36.0	71.0	97.2	50.7	49.3	-11.1	11.1
FTAA	Pre 1999 Summit	9.0	10.0	19.0	90.0	52.6	47.4		
	Post 1999	56.0	65.0	121.0	86.2	53.7	46.3	1.1	-1.1
Total		408.0	553.0	961.0	73.8	57.5	42.5		

Figure 4 displays this same information graphically. As Figure 4 shows, the attribution of activity to legislative rounds greatly simplifies the patterns of actor activity and reveals a great deal about the nature of the policy process followed in each case. As it shows, the examination of the time period 1988-2005 captured one round completely (Banking); the tail-end of an earlier rounds (DIA and SARA) and the start of one round (FTAA). In the FOI case, the time period captured two phases of a round.

Visual inspection of these figures show that peaks and troughs in actor activity are closely related with the introduction of legislation or other major legislative activity, but that not all legislation involves as much actor activity. In all cases except the FOI case, NGO activity was greater than government activity. The Bank case appears to be the archetypal one, showing little activity pre-1993 and a peak of activity in 1996, with a decline in activity carried over into a subsequent round after 2001. This same pattern is revealed in the DIA, SARA and FTAA cases, in the former two cases at the tail end of a multi-round decision accretion process and in the latter at its outset. The FOI case is clearly shown to be anomalous, exhibiting a similar general pattern but with government activity leading NGO in what appears to be an ongoing multi-round process.

Figure 4: Government/NGO Activity Volatility – by Round



This complex series of cases, thus, provides an interesting set of snapshots into round behaviour and provides some support of Hypothesis 1, showing that NGO behaviour is generally more active and volatile than governmental behaviour and that this activity varies significantly by stage of the decision-making process; with much more activity in middle rounds. NGO/Govt differences generally (1) accelerate in early rounds (2) peak in middle-round, and (3) decline at the end of multiple round process once a decision has been taken. This reinforces the idea that the analysis of decision-making processes of this kind requires a lengthy time period if multiple round decision-accretion activity is to be analyzed. However the data also provides at least one case (FOI) which violates this expected pattern of governmental and non-governmental actor behaviour.

This begs the question of why such a staged pattern exists and whether or not it is linked to a fundamental incongruence between NGO and government interests in proposed legislation as set out in Hypothesis 2 below.

3.2. Evaluating H2 (Interests): *That the participation of major non-governmental actors in successive rounds is inversely related to their congruence with government aims. Issue areas with significant discordance between government and non-governmental actors aims and interests will witness higher levels of non-governmental participation*

Evaluating this hypothesis requires a comparison of the level of NGO support/opposition to a proposal vis a vis that of governments. The general situation is set out in Tables 9 and 10 below, first in absolute terms and then expressed as a percentage of each actor's activity.

Table 9 – Actor Type and Issue Support by Round (Raw Figures)

Issue	SARA			Bank			FOI			DIA		FTAA	
	1	2	3	1	2	3*	1	2	3	1	2	1	2
Govt Pro	11	16	5	3	10	0	4	23	23	28	28	9	41
Govt Con	18	22	24	4	0	0	2	20	23	6	1	0	14
Total Govt	29	38	29	7	10	0	6	43	46	34	29	9	55
NGO Pro	9	5	15	2	14	0	3	16	19	7	13	5	13
NGO Con	78	73	10	1	8	0	1	7	10	64	19	5	51
Total NGO	87	78	25	3	22	0	4	23	29	71	32	10	64
Total N (Actors)	116	116	54	10	32	0	10	66	75	105	61	19	119

* Note: Bank Act Revisions Round 3 samples very small and statements neutral or too vague to code

Table 10 – Actor Type and Issue Support by Round (percent)

Issue	SARA			Bank			FOI			DIA		FTAA	
	1	2	3	1	2	3*	1	2	3	1	2	1	2
Govt Pro	38	42	17	43	100	0	67	53	50	82	97	100	75
Govt Con	62	58	83	57	0	0	33	47	50	18	3	0	25
Total Govt	100	100	100	100	100	0	100						
NGO Pro	10	6	60	67	64	0	75	70	66	10	41	50	20
NGO Con	90	94	40	33	36	0	25	30	34	90	59	50	80
Total NGO	100	100	100	100	100	0	100						

The figures in Tables 9 and 10 show that:

- (1) SARA had the highest level of participation in Rounds 1 and 2 when both Government and non-governmental actors opposed the bill being presented. However in round 3 the NGOs supported the bill and the number of actors dropped dramatically,
- (2) Banks had their highest level of participation in Round 2 when both governments and Ngo's supported the proposed bill.
- (3) FOI participation was highest in Rounds 2 and 3 when NGOs generally opposed proposed legislation
- (4) DIA participation was highest in Round 1 when NGOs were completely opposed to the bill being put forward and governments overwhelmingly in favour, and
- (5) FTAA activity was highest in Round 2 when governments were highly in favour of the bill and NGOs were overwhelmingly opposed.

This meant that only two cases fit the expected relationship between governmental and non-governmental incongruence: DIA and FTAA. FOI also fit the pattern, but reversed as usual, with

higher levels of activity when NGOs were in favour of the legislation and governments opposed). In the other two cases, banking and SARA, NGO opposition also resulted in high activity rates, but in conjunction with governments.

This provides only partial confirmation of hypothesis 2. That is, in all cases the most significant determinant of high levels of NGO activity was opposition to proposed legislation. However, this appeared to be a factor regardless of the level of government support or opposition. That is, actor interests may be seen as an important determinant of activity levels, but in an absolute fashion, rather than a relative one. The position held by governmental actors, that is, did not appear to be a major determinant of NGO activity levels.

3.3. Evaluating H3 (Resources): *That the activities of non-governmental actors will change as rounds progress from a focus on influencing the context or environment of decision-making (e.g. public opinion or media) in early rounds to one concerned with influencing decision-makers in later rounds as discussions become more detailed, focused, technical and legalistic.*

The final hypothesis to be tested concerns what kinds of resources actors bring to successive rounds in a decision-accretion decision-making situation. The general types of activities all actors engaged in are set out in absolute terms in Table 11.

Table 11 - Types of Actor Activity by Rounds

Issue Area	Rounds	Total	Public	Media	Comm.	Dec	Parl.	Jud
DIA	1	240	73	39	5	72	4	47
	2	162	39	47	11	43	8	14
FOI	1	20	4	4	2	6	2	2
	2	142	29	29	16	38	11	19
	3	150	33	36	15	38	14	14
Bank	1	37	8	13	3	8	3	2
	2	353	83	109	44	81	17	19
	3	220	64	50	29	49	14	14
FTAA	1	51	17	15	0	18	1	0
	2	333	95	117	0	114	6	1
SARA	1	385	110	129	19	120	7	0
	2	389	106	128	11	121	14	9
	3	172	36	58	17	50	10	1
TOTAL		2654	697	774	172	758	111	142
PERCENT		100	26.2	29.1	6.5	28.5	4.2	5.3

The data in Table 11 shows that most actors engaged in multiple activities and that the most frequently used were appeals to the media, public and directly at decision-makers. Much

less frequent were appeals to Parliamentary committee, Parliament and the Judiciary. These last three areas in total involved little more than 15 percent of all actor activity.

Table 12 aggregates activities directed at the public and media and those more directly focused on decision-makers including those directed at committees, decision-makers themselves, Parliamentarians and members of the judiciary. The figures for these two remaining categories of activities are then displayed as a percentage of total actor activity by round.

Table 12 – Aggregated Types of Actor Activity by Rounds (Percent)

Issue Area	Rounds	Public/Media	Comm/ Dec./ Parl/ Jud
DIA	1	46	54
	2	53	47
FOI	1	40	60
	2	40	60
	3	44	53
Bank	1	57	43
	2	55	45
	3	42	48
FTAA	1	17	83
	2	64	36
SARA	1	63	37
	2	60	40
	3	36	64

With the exception of the FTAA and SARA cases, the overall pattern which emerges show little variation in the targets of activities by round, despite the very different overall levels of activity found in each round. On average activities were directed almost evenly between the ‘public at large’ and political elites, regardless of the stage of the decision process. In the SARA case more attention was paid in earlier round to the public and more towards elites in the last round, as might be expected if hypothesis 3 was correct. The FTAA case also shows some evidence of this occurring. However it is also necessary to examine these findings in terms of each major category of actor involved. This data is set out in Tables 13 and 14 below.

Table 13 – Aggregated Types of Actor Activity by Rounds and Main Category of Actor

			Public/Media	Comm/Dec./Parl./Jud.
SARA				
	C-65	Gov	48	41
		NGO	188	101
	C-33	Gov	65	51
		NGO	169	106
	C-5	Gov	36	56
		NGO	58	30
DIA				
	C-31	Gov	31	17
		NGO	90	80
	C-7, C-6	Gov	38	35
		NGO	43	31
FTAA				
	pre-1999	Gov	17	12

		NGO	18	12
	post-1999	Gov	88	93
		NGO	127	78
FOI				
	1993	Gov	3	7
		NGO	5	5
	2001	Gov	37	56
		NGO	21	28
	c-201	Gov	34	50
		NGO	35	31
BANK	1992	Gov	7	2
		NGO	6	2
	2001	Gov	26	25
		NGO	108	46
	2006	Gov	4	0
		NGO	21	15

Table 14 – Aggregated Types of Actor Activity by Rounds and Main Category of Actor (Percent)

			Public/Media	Comm/Dec./Parl./Jud.
SARA				
	C-65	Gov	53.9%	46.1%
		NGO	65.1%	34.9%
	C-33	Gov	56.0%	44.0%
		NGO	61.5%	38.5%
	C-5	Gov	39.1%	60.9%
		NGO	65.9%	34.1%
DIA				
	C-31	Gov	64.6%	35.4%
		NGO	52.9%	47.1%
	C-7, C-6	Gov	52.1%	47.9%
		NGO	58.1%	41.9%
FTAA				
	pre-1999	Gov	58.6%	41.4%
		NGO	60.0%	40.0%
	post-1999	Gov	48.6%	51.4%
		NGO	62.0%	38.0%
FOI				
	1993	Gov	30.0%	70.0%
		NGO	50.0%	50.0%
	2001	Gov	39.8%	60.2%
		NGO	42.9%	57.1%
	c-201	Gov	40.5%	59.5%
		NGO	53.0%	47.0%
BANK	1992	Gov	77.8%	22.2%
		NGO	75.0%	25.0%
	2001	Gov	51.0%	49.0%

		NGO	70.1%	29.9%
	2006	Gov	100.0%	0.0%
		NGO	58.3%	41.7%

This data shows that there are some significant differences in the use of public and elite influencing resources on the part of the two major types of actors involved in these decision accretion processes. In all cases, there is no evidence of substantial changes in NGO strategy between earlier and later rounds. With the exception of the FOI case the NGO focus was always on the public/media regardless of the issue area or round – ranging from a high of 75 percent in round one of the Bank Act revisions in 1992, to a ‘low’ of just under 60 percent in several cases. The FOI case remains anomalous but still has NGO activity evenly divided between public and elite influencing during all three rounds of the decision process.

Government activity shows more variation, ranging from a low of 30 percent of influence efforts directed towards the public in the first round of the FOI case, to a high of 100 percent in the final round of the Bank case. However with the exception of the Bank case (and less so the FOI case), there does appear to be a trend in government activities away from the public in earlier rounds of decision-making towards decision-makers themselves in later rounds.

Hence this analysis, too, provides only partial confirmation for the suppositions contained in hypothesis 3.

4.0 Conclusion: Findings and Future Research Directions

This project advances analysis of public policy decision-making in Canada through the replication and development in this country of recently published European studies of government decision-making. On a theoretical level, it promised to test the generalizability of European studies outside the European case. And, on a practical level, it aims to produce an improved understanding of Canadian decision-making practices which can lead to their improved design and effectiveness. Moreover it has the potential to contribute to the better conceptualization of decision-making processes in modern governments, especially those faced with complex inter-sectoral or inter-organizational operating environments. Accurate description and understanding of such processes is essential if the design of government decision-making institutions and processes is to be appropriate to the decision-making context.

The overall goal of this research is to improve the empirical description, and conceptual understanding, of Canadian public policy decision-making. In this particular study, the development of specific policy outcomes and decision-processes at the federal level in Canada were traced in several multiple rounds decision accretion contexts; and the existing, mainly European literature was used to the derive key variables and factors which were hypothesized to facilitate or inhibit successful decision-making outcomes in these environments.

Three specific hypotheses concerning expected actor behaviour in multi-round, multi-actor decision-making processes were examined in this paper, utilizing five cases of federal government decision-making in Canada over the period 1985-2005:

H1 (Stages): That (a) the number of governmental actors and their activity level will remain relatively constant throughout successive rounds while (b) non-governmental actors flow in and out of different rounds depending on their perception of their interests, their resource capacities, their estimations of likely policy outcomes and their interpretations of the existing state-of-play of ongoing policy processes;

H2 (Interests): That the participation of major non-governmental actors in successive rounds is inversely related to their congruence with government aims. Issue areas with significant discordance between government and non-governmental actors aims and interests will witness higher levels of non-governmental participation;

H3 (Resources): That the activities of non-governmental actors will change as rounds progress from a focus on influencing the context or environment of decision-making (e.g. public opinion or media) in early rounds to one concerned with influencing decision-makers in later rounds as discussions become more detailed, focused, technical and legalistic.

While it was found that different rounds could be identified in the five policy areas under consideration and that actor activity varied across rounds, the direction of these changes was not straightforward. The analysis found only limited support for these hypotheses. With respect to hypothesis (1) it was found that both governmental and NGO activity fluctuated greatly over different rounds. With respect to Hypothesis (2), however, it was found that congruence of government and NGO interests was only a secondary factor explaining these variations. NGO activity in particular appeared to be driven by opposition to proposed bills. And with respect to hypothesis (3) virtually no evidence was uncovered of NGO actor behaviour changing in the expected direction anticipated by Koppenjan and Klijn, although there was some evidence that governmental behaviour changed in the expected fashion.

This study, then, underlines both the necessity of examining this fourth type of decision-making and the complexity of this task. It suggests that actor behaviour does vary by stage and perception of self-interest, and that resources are devoted to specific tasks differently by each major actor. The continual anomaly of the FOI case, however, also suggests that different pattern of activities are present in different issue areas and suggests that this has to do with the nature of the 'publicness' of the issue area in question.

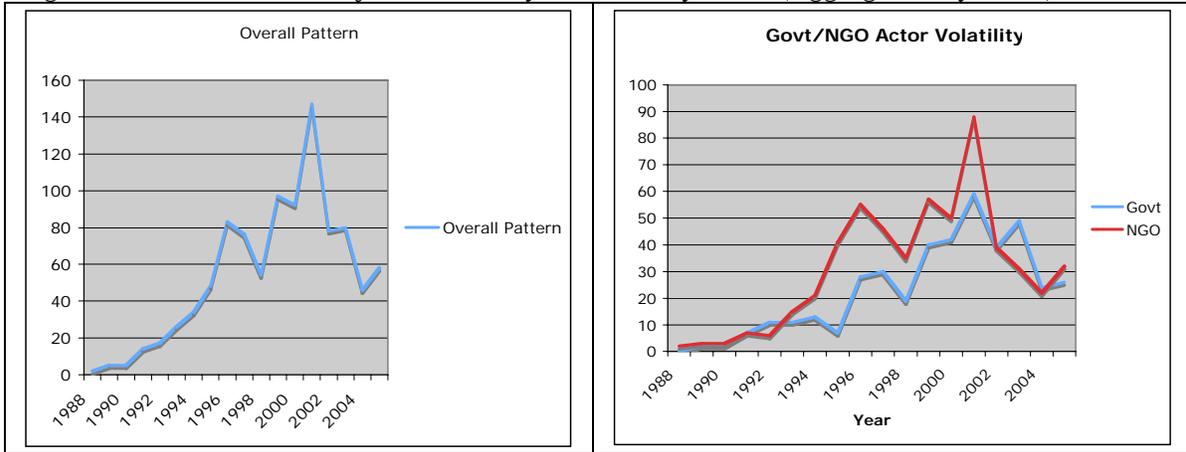
All of these items require further investigation and elaboration, especially the final point about issue-type. Several additional items were raised in the course of this study, however, which are also worthy of additional investigation:

(1) From's suggestion that government actors are the main agenda-setters responsible for initiatives and activities which drive decision-processes towards their conclusion;

(2) From's suggestion that the internal organizational characteristics of the initiating agency play a significant role in affecting the capacity of the agency to successfully undertake these roles and hence shape the final outcome in accordance with their preferences (From 2002).

(3) The question of whether or not specific issue areas are affected by more general patterns of actor behaviour, akin to the policy moods or swings in policy sentiments identified by Best, Stimson and others (Best 1999, Stevenson 2001; Stimson 1991). As Figure 5 shows, there is an aggregate pattern of activity which many sectoral cases closely parallel, suggesting that common elements - such as swings in the policy mood or sentiments of government and the public may exert a substantial exogenous influence on patterns of sectoral activity.

Figure 5 – Overall Pattern of Actor Activity in All Policy Areas (Aggregate + by Actor)



Endnotes

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ⁱⁱ While these processes are more complex when they occur within a multi-level governance framework, these can be seen as either incrementally more sophisticated decision-making contexts or as two (or more) separate rounds processes temporarily separated from each other (Bache and Flinders 2004; Hooghe and Marks 2003). In either case, the analysis of single-level multi-actor, multi-round processes serves as an initial building-block required for the analysis of even more complex decision-making situations.

Appendix: Data Sources and Coding

FTAA Case

Document Source: CBCA and Summit of the Americas website with FTAA documents.

Date Range: January 1, 1994 - October 1, 2005. The last Summit of the Americas meeting in November 2005 was not included as database research ended October 15, 2005

Keywords: FTAA, Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, free trade, Summit of the Americas.

Records Examined: 155. Records coded: 140.

DIA Case

Document Source: "CBCA Complete" database.

Date Range: The range of dates includes June 1988 - August 2005.

Keywords: "Indian act" and "Canada" and "federal" and not "land claims" and not "treaties" and not "rights".

Records Examined: This combination extracted 231 records as of October 15th 2005 and generated 216 usable records of policy relevant actor activity.

FOI Case

Document Source: "CBCA Complete" .

Date Range: February 1990- August 2005.

Keywords: "Canada" and "federal" and "freedom of information".

Records Examined: This combination extracted 188 records on June 17th 2005 (date of first access) and 194 records in August 2005. Thus the total number of records examined is 194. Of these 171 referred to policy relevant actor activity.

Banking Case

Document Source: "CBCA Complete"

Date Range: The time range comprised 1991-2001

Keywords: "bank AND act AND Canada, citation and abstract" only.

Records Examined: As the result 1696 documents (mainly Canadian national and local newspaper articles) were found and examined. Only 114 dealt with policy relevant actor activity.

Species at Risk Case

Document Source: "CBCA Complete".

Date Range: The range of dates 1990-2005.

Keywords: The parameters of the keyword search were "(species) AND (risk) AND (act); in citation and abstract" only. CBCA Complete" database was conducted according to the following keywords: (Canada) AND (endangered species) OR (extinct species) AND PDN(<1/1/2000), in citation and abstract.

Records Examined: Initially 510 documents representing mainly articles from national and local Canadian newspapers were found and examined. Additionally a search in " As the result of this search 1163 results were found and examined. Finally the CPI.Q database search based on "Species AND risk AND act" keywords gave 30 results, which were also added into the resulting dataset. Ultimately 321 instances of policy-relevant actor activity were coded

Appendix 2: Description of Key Legislative Changes by Issue area

Issue	Round Key Points	Description	Substance of Change	Character of Changes
Bank Act	1992	Bank Act Revisions	De-pillarization. Banks allowed to purchase securities firms and brokerages. Foreign Ownership levels changed	Major
	2001	C-38/C-8 Bills	Changes to cross-pillar ownership regulations	Minor/ Housekeeping
	2006	Proposed Bank Act Revisions	Complete de-pillarization of insurance companies. Allow bank mergers	Major, if passed
FOI	1993	Parliamentary Committee review	First Major (10 Year) review of Access to Information and Privacy Act. Recommends major extensions.	Major, but failed to pass
	2001	C-54/C-6	Extension of Access to Information to Private Sector Through Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act	Major
	2005	C-201	Open Government/Government Accountability Act (2006)extensions	Major but failed to pass/if passed
FTAA	1999	Toronto Summit	FTAA Ministerial meeting in Toronto following 1998 Santiago commitment to proceed with talks	Major
DIA	2002	c-7/c-6	Reforms to 1985-86 c-31 altering band status and membership. Prescribes adoption of governance codes for Indian bands and other aspects.	Major but failed to pass
SARA	1997	c-65	Consolidation of Existing Statutes and coverage on federal lands	Major but failed to pass
	2000	c-33	Similar to C-65 but with provincial coverage	Major but failed to pass
	2001	c-5	Similar to c-33	Major

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