Bringing complexity and convergence governance to consumer policy

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1 INTRODUCTION

The term consumer policy has four dimensions. Direct consumer policy pertains to legal, safety, economic and information issues that are consumer-related. Indirect consumer policy has a broader sense, referring to other policy areas that impinge on the consumer interest (e.g., health, environment, transportation). Market-related consumer policy focuses on market competition, transparency and responsibilities as they pertain to the consumer interest (e.g., choice, price, quality). Finally, public-sector consumer policy includes services provided by public agencies or state-monitoring of monopolies and oligopolies offering consumer goods and services (Reisch, 2004).

Consumer policy is shaped by a combination of governance models, including the market, corporate hierarchies, community (collective action), the power of consumer associations and the double role of the state (Reisch, Becker, Schatz, & Voelzkow, 2004; Strünck, 2005) (see Table 1). Contemporary thinking brings another concern into play—embeddedness. Consumer policies are ‘embedded in social institutional arrangements that heavily influence their organisation, their goals and strategies, as well as their efficiency and effectiveness. [Therefore], consumer policy has to apply a corresponding approach [that reconciles this complex embeddedness]’ (Reisch et al., 2004, p. 4). Regardless of the governance model, five main principles of governance have to be respected: coherence, effectiveness, openness, participation and responsibility (Howlett, 2009; Reisch, 2004).

In concert with the complex embeddedness of consumer policies, a related concern is ‘how multi-level, eventually [supranational and] transnational consumer policy governance ideally should be designed and how it could be put into power’ (Reisch et al., 2004, p. 5) (see Table 1). Supra means transcending established national boundaries or spheres of interest (Davies, 2010). To that end, this paper develops the position that governance in the consumer policy arena needs to acknowledge and accommodate complexity, Latin complectere, ‘combination’ (Harper, 2017). Complexity refers to something with many parts combined in an intricate arrangement (i.e., interrelated linkages), making it difficult but essential to understand and analyse the whole (McGregor, 2012). The existence of complexity requires a multi-sector approach to accommodate instances when consumer policy initiatives and interests converge and diverge. Consumer policy governance often happens within a sector-specific architecture (Davies & Szyszczak, 2011), an arrangement that complicates the complexity imperative. But this must somehow be accommodated.

After profiling the basic tenets of complexity theory, the government and governance approaches to consumer policy are compared,
understand and analyse the whole. People who many parts in an intricate arrangement, which makes it difficult to braiding) (Harper, 2017). As noted, complexity refers to something with

Complex is Latin complexus, ‘plaited’ (interlacing strands creating a braid) (Harper, 2017). As noted, complexity refers to something with many parts in an intricate arrangement, which makes it difficult to understand and analyse the whole. People who are able to engage in complexity thinking can analyse a situation (comprising intertwined parts), discover its many constituent elements, and then explore the connections and potential relationships among the elements; that is, they can see and work with patterns (Coghill, 2004; McGregor, 2012).

In a simple analogy, unweaving the braid reveals the pattern. Patterns are regular, somewhat discernible, order or forms in which a series of things occurs (Anderson, 2014). They are ‘systematic relationships between the component parts of some complex system that are expected to persist over a period of time’ (Fisher, 2012, emphasis in original). By recognizing patterns in a network, people are able to discern established and emergent order. They appreciate that change in this network is linked with the stability of these patterns, which have evolved over time, and continue to emerge (Fisher, 2012). Pattern insight allows for adaptability and adjustments.

Actually, the basic tenets of complexity thinking are change, emergence, evolution, and adaptability. Complexity (a) entails non-equilibrium, (b) assumes chaos is order emerging just not predictably and (c) views tension as holdings things together as they emerge rather than pushing them apart. Networks, patterns, synergistic interconnections and holism are hallmarks of complexity. Complexity thinking assumes people can adapt, that complex behaviour emerges from a collection of single acts, and that order emerges without a central control process. It assumes that small changes and leverages can have big effects across a network. Systems are embedded in other systems, and their interdependency matters. Events are presumed to be unpredictable but people trust that things will emerge. Events and relationships are thought to evolve through constant tension and balance (Fryer 2005; Mason, 2016; McGregor, 2012) (see Figure 1).

Policy governance requires that people purposefully connect, seek perspectives, identify missing voices and gather unknown values for policy development (Partners in Policy Governance, 2017). For this to happen in the consumer policy arena, complexity has to be respected in both government and in governance.

### 3 | GOVERNMENT VS. GOVERNANCE APPROACHES

Despite the complexity and multi-sector character of the consumer policy arena, for 200 years, the government approach underpinned policy development in most advanced capitalist countries (Considine & Lewis, 2003). This approach involves government taking the lead, and managing the policy process. It rows the policy boat. The parallel to this metaphor is steering the policy boat. Rowing involves propelling something, making if move. Steering involves directing the course of something by determining the direction it will travel. In regards to policy, rowing involves centralized command, control and resource allocation, the traditional approaches used in the government approach. Steering (governance) entails the establishment of an enabling framework so that a collection of stakeholders (i.e., a policy network) can make, implement, and evaluate decisions for agreed-to goals (Rajabifard & Box, 2009; Rhodes, 1996) (see Figure 2).
3.1 Increasing marketplace complexity

The rowing strategy for balancing consumer and business interests with the public good held sway until the world started to change with the advent and fall out of (a) corporate-led globalization, (b) the neoliberal ideology and (c) capitalistic consumerism (Considine & Lewis, 2003; Hämäläinen, 2013). Hämäläinen (2013) explained that the globalization of markets, products and services, and the growing differentiation of consumer demand patterns, made the scope of many market failures more extensive and complex than before (see also Strünck, 2005). Each consumer issue and different actors’ positions are in themselves significant but they are increasingly interrelated. The magnitude of the potential combined impact and influence makes consumer policy initiatives even more complex, necessitating a new approach for policy, that being governance.

With the globalization of the economy, there is an increased need to effectively govern and regulate the trans-boundary activities of firms and their many and complex relations with consumers (Ronit, 2015). He asserted that deficiencies in global consumer policy governance can result in regulatory failures and infringements on the consumer interest (especially for food and health issues). The magnitude and incredible complexity of issues that people face in the global marketplace means that consumer issues can no longer be solved by one sector (namely government), if they ever could (NYU Research Center for Leadership in Action, 2011). In response to this complex reality, people started to assume that governments should strive to find the most efficient mix of sectoral arrangements needed to solve the particular problem instead of believing that the existence of a market failure automatically called for government intervention (Hämäläinen, 2013).

Cross-sector partnerships and the governance process are more likely to form in these complex, volatile policy conditions (Crosby & Bryson, 2011). In these instances, the role of government changes, wherein it now steers the policy boat through a complex network of relationships rather than rowing it (Rajabifard & Box, 2009; Rhodes, 1996). Indeed, government is no longer even the assumed steersman. Hämäläinen (2013) observed that ‘the rapid transformations of the world economy and industrialized society have created new governance challenges for national governments, [who are] now trying to adjust their roles relative to the private and civil sectors’ (p.10). This

![Figure 1: Basic tenets of complexity thinking](image-url)
transition is encouraging because drawing on the notion of governance serves to ‘enrich the policy repertory of modern societies’ (Streeck & Schmitter, 1985, p.136).

3.2 | Consumer policy governance

In the world of policy governance, the notion of consumer policy governance is a recent innovation, gaining legitimacy and momentum only within the last decade or so (see Bevir & Trentmann, 2007; Davies, 2009; Ha & McGregor, 2013; Marsden, 2008; Strünck, 2005; Yoshizawa, 2013). Not surprisingly, the topic of governance is at the cutting edge of a number of cognate disciplines as well, including law, economics, management, and political science (Meehan, 2003; Rajabifard & Box, 2009; Strünck, 2005). They are focused on how to reconceptualize the emergent complexity of contemporary realities.

Bottom line, these new governance ideals for consumer policy (Reisch et al., 2004) stem from the belief that the market and civil society sectors are viable alternatives to the state, and that the state is seen as a partner with, not alternative to, private sectors (Considine & Lewis, 2003). Government needs input from the other two sectors to fulfil its roles and vice versa (Fierreria da Silva & Montagna, 2004; Huetter, 2002). The state (government) is no longer the only actor exercising power and authority in the governance process (Coghill, 2004). Civil society, consumers and businesses are playing an increasingly important role in supplementing the public sector (Bulloch et al., 2011; Ha & McGregor, 2013; Nalinakumari & MacLean, 2005).

As noted, government was the central player in the traditional consumer policy process. For years, this sector held the power, and exercised command and control over the policy making process (Meehan, 2003; Peters & Pierre, 1998; Pierre, 2000). People in the business and consumer sectors influenced government through lobbying, with pressure politics playing a key role in influencing state decisions about consumer policy (McGregor, 1996; Strünck, 2005). More recently, complex governance networks, involving collaborative multi-sectors, have tended to emphasize collaboration and enablement rather than hierarchies and control (Reisch et al., 2004; Salamon, 2002). Governance involves embracing public government institutions as well as private sector actors, both business and civil society (Jordan, Wurzel, & Zito, 2005; Meehan, 2003; Mileu, 2011).
3.3 | Complex collection of actors

In contemporary times, consumer policy analysis, development, implementation, and evaluation takes place within very complex and constantly changing scenarios. This policy dynamic entails interactions amongst a diverse collection of governments, businesses and civil society organizations (especially consumer organizations) (Ha & McGregor, 2013). Non-government organizations (NGOs) focused on vulnerable populations (e.g., children, disabled, ethnic, ill), and are normally deemed part of the consumer sector. The same goes for lawyers or other professionals who are concerned with the consumer interest dimension of an issue. Put simply, government, business and consumer, respectively correlate with state, market and society (Streeck & Schmitter, 1985). All three sectors should have a say in how society is governed (Latin gubernare, ‘to direct, rule, guide.’ Harper, 2017), because all three sectors help define governance models (see Table 1).

3.4 | Enabling environments

Contemporary models of consumer policy governance must reconcile the complexity and complicatedness of modern day consumer policy (i.e., multiple and diverse actors, sectors, boundaries, interests and issues). In policy networks, the state (government) plays a key role in creating and maintaining the enabling environment within which cross- and multi-sector decisions are made while restraining from directing (rowing) the entire policy process (Coghill, 2004). In a cautionary note, Lorek and Fuchs (2013) counselled governments to not retreat too much as they integrate non-state actors into policy design and implementation (i.e., governance) (see also Fuchs & Lorek, 2005). Despite this warning, governance in the consumer policy arena is now the norm, not the exception, as evidenced by the notion of governance networks.

4 | GOVERNANCE AS NETWORKS

It is now acceptable to perceive networks as central to the concept of governance (Bache, 2003; Rhodes, 1996); that is, governance happens in networks (Reisch et al., 2004). A network is a complex arrangement of interconnecting sectors that interact to exchange, develop, and evolve. The notion of ‘governance is concerned with relationships, process networks and organization of collective action’ (Davies, 2010, p. 133), necessitating respect for network complexities. Governance is presumed to have greater problem-solving capacities than the government approach. This is because it adopts a consensus-oriented and participatory style of policy making, wherein stakeholders share in the process and the outcome (Hey, Jacob, & Volkery, 2006).

Bache (2003) claimed that the term governance refers to ‘an increasingly complex set of state-society relationships in which networks . . . dominate policy-making’ (p. 301). These cross-sectoral networks involve broad, multi-level participation of an array of policy actors. Within these networks, all actors involved control varying degrees of resources of different types—political, financial, constitutional-legal, organisational and informational. These resources are exchanged with other actors involved in the network in the process of making policy’ (p. 302).

Rhodes (1996) referred to governance as a socio-cybernetic system, by which he meant all actors in a particular policy arena need one another because they are interdependent. These policy arenas comprise multiple actors with shared goals while at the same time exhibiting blurred sector boundaries. Rhodes described this form of governance as self-organizing networks made up of actors who must interact in order to achieve their goals and objectives. He explained that governance ‘is about managing networks’ (p. 658) that ‘span the boundaries of the public, private and voluntary sectors’ (p. 659). While not explicitly using the term complex, Rhodes asserted that these governance networks are self-organizing, self-governing and self-responsible. They exhibit interdependencies, interactions and exchanges in the midst of evolving and blurred sectoral boundaries. These are all characteristics of complex networks, intimating that complexity must be acknowledged and accommodated.

Davies (2009) recognized the potential for consumer policy governance structures to create transnational expertise networks with broad participation. The latter would (a) merge technical insight with practical knowledge and new normative visions, and (b) combine a problem-solving technical approach with participatory deliberation. This 21st century transnational and transsectoral governance process is characterized as one that emerges from interactions and negotiations among numerous, different, local, national and supranational actors and institutions that are spread across multiple sites in the state-society complex (Mileu, 2011). Actually, these sectors do more than overlap, they are interrelated, meaning they are complex (Coghill, 2003, 2004).

In more detail, these complex ‘governance processes are interrelated in three ways. They are inter-connected, interdependent and interactive’ (Coghill, 2003, p. 1). Interconnected means there is a link. Interdependent means people depend on each other for some benefit from and through the link. Interrelated means that once people have discerned the link, they are able to see potentials. And, interactive means that people in the link are able to exert influence upon each other (Anderson, 2014; Coghill, 2004). ‘These inter-relationships are such that the governance of any one sector can only be fully understood if its inter-relationships with the other sectors are taken into account. . . . These relationships are found to be dynamic, and the socio-political system to be a dynamic complex evolving system’ (Coghill, 2004, pp. 1–2) (see Figure 3, used with permission, Ruskey & Weston, 2005).

5 | FLUCTUATING POLICY GOVERNANCE BOUNDARIES

It is now accepted that the workings of the three divergent, interrelated, and interdependent consumer policy governance sectors are not static and stable; rather, these workings are complex, dynamic, adaptive, and always evolving (Folke, Hahn, Olsson, & Norberg, 2005) (see...
The notion of sector blurring acknowledges that the three consumer policy sectors do not share equal power during the governance process. In some instances, the state sector can be disproportionately large and authoritarian, businesses can be highly influential, and civil society can be weak and marginalized. Other combinations of uneven power are possible. For instance, there can be disproportional power within the civil society sector, with some groups exerting more influence than others. Or different industries within the business sector may be vying for position and their interests. Often, governments face jurisdictional concerns for consumer issues (NYU Research Center for Leadership in Action, 2011; Strünck, 2005).

This unequal and disproportionate sharing of power has been framed as sector distortion (NYU Research Center for Leadership in Action, 2011). If something is distorted, it is pulled or twisted out of shape. As well, distortion can refer to instances of a misleading account of a situation. Sector distortions discourage innovation, productivity, risk taking and entrepreneurship. Distortion can also negatively affect transparency, accountability, and credibility, some of the key principles of governance (Reisch, 2004). A key fallout of sectoral distortion is inefficient and ineffective consumer policy solutions and innovations, deemed necessary by Reisch et al. (2004). Consumer policy governance must account for both blurring and distortion, and act accordingly (see Figure 4).

6 | THREE CONVERGENCE-ORIENTED GOVERNANCE MODELS RESPECTING COMPLEXITY

Boundary crossing, blurring, and distortion are part and parcel of convergence, another inherent part of complexity. Convergence (the act of moving towards a union) is a major feature of contemporary consumer issues, and the marketplace where they play out. By association, consumer policy is being enacted in a convergent world, encompassing the new convergence economy, convergent business models, convergent governance models, and the rising power of non-government organizations (NGOs) and consumers (Bulloch, Lacy, & Jurgens, 2011). Because actors involved in creating consumer policy need to be conversant in these relationships, those engaged in theorizing about consumer policy need to focus on convergence, governance and complexity.

A thorough review of the literature revealed only three approaches to complexity-oriented governance, which serendipitously emerged: sector convergence, network governance, and cross-sector governance (see Figure 4). Gaughan (2010) acknowledged that accidental, serendipitous discoveries can benefit research. They result from the convergence of preparation, opportunity, perseverance and desire. They are a legitimate aspect of science and scholarship because researchers discover something by intentionally choosing to follow a set of procedures in their study (Crampton, 2016). In this case, while seeking general information about complexity and governance, the researcher found these three governance approaches. Although there may be others, they serve to illustrate how it is possible to accommodate the deep complexity, motivity and emergent nature of the consumer policy governance process, as it is increasingly being characterized (see Coghill, 2003, 2004; Folke et al., 2005; Hämäläinen, 2013).

As a caveat, this paper does not provide examples of specific consumer policies that have been developed using these three particular...
approaches. Such empirical examples are not currently available because consumer policy is not normally viewed through the lens of complexity theory (McGregor, 2012). Rather, the intent is for other scholars to use these approaches to analyze or develop specific consumer policy initiatives, critically evaluating the merit of their applications to understand complex intersector interactions.

6.1 | Sector convergence

Converge is Latin convergere, ‘to incline together, to bend towards’ (Harper, 2017). To converge means to come together from different points of origin in order to form a singular entity (Anderson, 2014). It means combining different forms into a new whole. The three consumer policy sectors are normally perceived to be in perpetual, uninterrupted and ongoing contact (but running parallel to each other, intersecting when necessary, forced or agreed-to). Davies and Szyszczak (2011) described this as sector-specific architecture. In contrast, sector convergence refers to the process of consumer policy actors coming from different directions, and eventually meeting in one place, intentionally or not (NYU Research Center for Leadership in Action, 2011).

6.1.1 | Relationships are paramount

When convergence happens in the governance process, the interrelationships and interactions among the three sectors are more important than the actors themselves (Coghill, 2004). This intriguing assertion means that during the governance process, working relationships take precedence over the immediate needs of each sector. Without solid, working relationships, governance cannot reach its potential.

6.1.2 | Fuzzy logic

Respecting convergence, Coghill (2004) especially challenged the conventional deductive logic used by actors in the governance process, suggesting instead that their dialogue and deliberations should draw on
fuzzy logic. This logic deals with reasoning that is approximate rather than exact and fixed. As well, fuzzy logic accommodates partial truth, instead of one sector’s notion of what is true and valid (i.e., in their interest). The logic employed by the problem solvers effects the solutions they arrive at to deal with consumer interest issues. Given the prevalence of sector blurring and distortions, it is imperative that consumer policy governance heed the role played by logic when problem posing and solving.

6.1.3 | Issue and interest convergence
Along the same vein of thought, Bulloch et al. (2011) recognized the emergence of multistakeholder coalitions among the traditional three sectors. They suggested that any resultant convergent solutions from these complex collaborations ‘will not have neat straight lines around them with clearly defined . . . sector boundaries. . . organizational structures and long-established and often stereotypical roles’ (p. 8). Instead, they viewed convergence of issues and interests as central to these new approaches to governance. The convergence of issues refers to the fact that global problems are not in isolation of one another anymore (i.e., they are linked), making them harder to define and solve. Convergence of interests refers to instances when what is good for one sector is also good for the other sector(s), instead of the conventional win-lose approach in consumer policy.

6.2 | Network governance
A second approach is network governance, which emerged as a phenomenon in the early 1990s. In networks of governance, government continues to rely on the other sectors but in new forms of strategic partnerships and alliances. Instead of assuming that government knows best, or that the market knows best, governance presumes that preconceptions about which sector should solve a problem need to be replaced with which sector (or combination thereof) could best solve the problem (Bulloch et al., 2011; Hämäläinen, 2013). ‘The best mix of private, public and third sector organizational arrangements. . . [would] reflect the relative strengths and weaknesses of the different organizational and institutional alternatives for a specific governance problem in particular socio-economic context’ (Hämäläinen, 2013, p. 24). Network governance has been recognized as a way for multi-sector systems to better coordinate their interactions (Bevir & Trentmann, 2007; Considine & Lewis, 2003).

6.2.1 | Bifurcation imperative
To that end, actors in governance networks are interested in building trust, acting jointly, and cooperating in a system that creates a shared culture. Bound together by common tasks and policy objectives, actors in this governance network ‘take solace from the new blurring of boundaries between firms, non-profits and government agencies’ (Considine & Lewis, 2003, p. 132), believing that today’s social issues can best be solved via multi-sector collaboration. Hämäläinen (2013) agreed, asserting that ‘human kind has reached a bifurcation point where further progress requires the development of new cultures and governance structures that are better adapted to the increased complexity of the world’ (p. 21). Bifurcation occurs when a small, smooth change made in a system causes a sudden qualitative or relational change in the system’s behaviour (Blanchard, Devaney, & Hall, 2006).

6.3 | Cross-sector governance
Third, Bulloch et al. (2011) shared an expansive vision of governance in the future. They envisioned cross-sector governance, an approach comprising organizations that do not neatly fit into the standard descriptors and roles of the private, public and nonprofit sectors (see Ha & McGregor, 2013).

6.3.1 | Flexible governance
Instead, the leaders and advocates within these organizations would respect flexible governance wherein ‘different participants play different roles at different times, according to the recipients’ needs and according to which entity has the necessary mix of skills and resources’ (Bulloch et al., 2011, p. 14). ‘Cross-sector convergence [means] the roles of and boundaries between public, private and nonprofit sectors become less distinct [leading] to a renegotiation of roles and responsibilities’ (Bulloch et al., 2011, p. 9). Nalinakumari and MacLean (2005) affirmed the key roles that civil society and business play in the governance process. Marsden (2008) asserted that the three sectors’ roles have been changing since the mid-1990s, with the consumer sector now called the consumer-citizen sector (Bevir & Trentmann, 2007; Davies, 2010; Reisch, 2004), and the business sector often framed as corporate citizens (Bulloch et al., 2011).

The new conceptualizations of governance discussed in this paper presume the state (government) is in partnership with private and civil society sectors, with the caveat that government is still necessary even when governance processes replace direct state command and control (Lorek & Fuchs, 2013; Salamon, 2002). Considine and Lewis (2003) agreed, noting that the theoretical underpinnings of the new governance ideal stem from government’s belief in ‘the supposed virtues of markets and third sector alternatives to the state’ (p.132).

7 | DISCUSSION
An analysis of the argument supporting this paper revealed several important insights that merit discussion: complexity as an ever-present characteristic; self-organizing perpetual energy; a convergent, relational whole; and, shifting alliances and coalitions.

7.1 | Complexity as ever-present characteristic
A quick analysis of the language used to describe these three approaches (see Figure 4) reflects the heightened encounters among actors, and at borders. This complexity-orientation is reflected in a collection of verbs. Each of blur, distort, converge, and network convey (a) movement and transition; (b) perpetual motion and change; (c) reorganization and alignment; (d) perpetual motion and change; (e) collision and lack of focus and visibility. These are the aforementioned tenets of complexity thinking (see Figure 1). Teisman, van Buuren, and
Gerrits (2009) observed that stability within the governance process is the exception rather than the rule; instead, complexity is an ever-present characteristic of governance systems. Furthermore, governance systems and governance networks are often in states of change. The notions of sector blurring, distortion, and convergence serve to accommodate this contingency. They affirm the profound, intrinsic complexity of the governance process (Coghill, 2003, 2004).

7.2 | Self-organizing perpetual energy

As well, any attempts to influence the governance process ‘are always encountered by the local dynamics of self-organization and the influences of co-developments in other systems [and sectors]’ (Teisman et al., 2009, p. 2). Self-organization refers to the process whereby order or coordination arise out of the local interactions between the agents or actors of an initially disordered system. No one necessarily coordinates these activities; they just emerge from the system, triggered by random actions that are amplified by positive feedback (e.g., an ant hill) (Wheatley, 1999). This self-organization and co-influence mean that the energies in the tri-sector consumer policy governance arena are in perpetual motion. Network governance and cross-sector governance are both a means to account for this motivity, the changing roles of actors, and the changing boundaries.

7.3 | Convergent, relational whole

The realities of the global consumer marketplace require that complexity be accepted, understood, and adopted into the consumer policy governance process. Furthermore, consumer policy actors need to appreciate that any process that is complex consists of many different and connected parts that have to be understood as a dynamic whole rather than in static isolation. By association, when convergence happens in the governance process, the interrelationships and interactions among the three sectors become more important than the actors themselves; that is, their actions cannot be interpreted without reference to the whole relational process (Coghill, 2004). This insight means the relationships have to nurtured, managed, and led rather than just the people or organizations being managed and led.

7.4 | Shifting alliances and coalitions

Indeed, Coghill (2004) asserted that governance involves a very wide range of people from multiple sectors, all with their own agendas, interests, values, positions, needs and resources (see also Partners in Policy Governance, 2017. Their interactions are complex, and the outcomes are unpredictable. In governance networks and cross-sector governance, actors are continually finding people with similar interests, frequently leading to the dissolution and formation of new alliances and coalitions. This dynamic and evolving situation is further complicated because the three sectors are not in a stable state of constant balance (as previously presumed). And, imbalances of power and influence are affected by and cause sector blurring, distortion and convergence. Without question, within this changing consumer policy context, governance can be characterized as an emergent phenomenon, replete with changing actors, roles, functions, forms, structures and boundaries (Bulloch et al., 2011; Ha & McGregor, 2013; Hämäläinen, 2013).

8 | CONCLUSIONS

Grounded in the principles of sector blurring and distortion, this paper profiled three approaches to conceptualizing governance that can accommodate the complexity inherent in consumer policy: sector convergence, network governance, and cross-sector governance (see Figure 4). These convergence governance models for developing consumer policy move people beyond the longstanding ‘government approach,’ wherein the state sector is seen to have power, control, and command (rowing the policy boat).

Market, state, and public sectors are encouraged to become familiar with the nuances of managing and leading the contemporary governance process for consumer policy, which is characterized as complex, dynamic, and emergent. Today’s global reality requires a governance approach for consumer policy that enables interactive, integrative, and complex evolving roles for each of state, market, and society. To that end, it is imperative that people view the governance-related interactions within and among the government, business, and consumer sectors through the lens of complexity (Coghill, 2003, 2004).

Consumer policy is already shaped by a combination of governance models (Reisch et al., 2004; Strünck, 2005), see Table 1. Complexity-oriented models are a timely addition. They respect the transient, co-evolving collection of shifting coalitions, alliances, boundaries, roles, and relationships. They value the merit of self-organization, and the adaptive behaviours required to co-address emergent, interconnected consumer issues. And, they foster flexible governance within enabling environments, whereby the best sectoral combinations emerge for the specific consumer policy context.

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