

Governance and Governance Networks in Europe: An Assessment of 10 years of research on the theme

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Abstract

The term governance has been used in a variety of ways, but is most often presented as an attempt to improve coordination between relatively dependent actors for the purpose of solving societal problems. It involves the horizontal steering of relations across networks, and can certainly be viewed as a “growth industry”. This article describes the most important traditions in European governance network literature in the last 10 years, and highlights the different foci within the field, particularly between European and American researchers. Finally, the article outlines important research areas that are likely to dominate the field in the future.

Keywords: governance, networks, overview, network management, decision-making

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1. Introduction: The rise of governance

The field of governance is becoming increasingly popular, and the sheer volume of literature published in this area speaks to the growing interest in this field. Governments worldwide appear to be experimenting with new forms of horizontal governance, such as public-private partnerships (Osborne, 2000; Hoge & Greve, 2005), interactive decision-making, stakeholder involvement (McLaverty, 2002; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006) and other forms of citizen involvement (Lownes et al., 2001). Many reasons have been offered to explain this phenomenon, with the most common one being that the role of governments is changing. Governments in recent years have become more dependent on societal actors to achieve their goals because of the increasing complexity of the challenges they face. Many of these challenges involve conflicting values, and addressing them demands governments that are multifaceted and increasingly horizontal (Kickert et al., 1997; Sorenson & Torfing, 2007). Thus, various actors have to be included in the policy-making and implementation process. Private actors, social alignments, and citizens each have important resources, as well as the power to obstruct policy interventions. It is only through collaborative action that societal policy problems can be resolved.

Many authors believe that the trend toward various forms of horizontal governance will ultimately transform nations into network societies in which interdependence and horizontal relations are paramount. This move will be aided by information technology as well as increasing specialization (Castells, 2000). The implicit assumption of this argument is that there is a growing need for public and private inter-organizational structures to address the increased complexity of interactions in both these domains, as well as in their interface. According to some authors, other societal trends, such as individualization, have reinforced these developments. Individualization is a major societal development (Baumann, 2000; Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, 2000) that has brought about an array of new values and a reduction in the importance of traditional societal relations (see Putnam's conclusions on the disappearance of social capital; Putnam 1995).ⁱ The change toward a network society, along with the growing variation in the values of individuals makes societies less governable, because a set of undisputed values for assessing policy proposals and outcomes does not exist anymore.

Although difficult to prove, this view appears to be supported by the growing number of international strategic alliances between firms (Faulkner, 1995), and the attention being paid to chain management, firm networks (Graeber, 1993), co-governance and public private partnerships (Osborne, 2000; Pollitt, 2003). These trends illustrate the ongoing struggle of governments and firms to find new ways to cope with the constantly changing environment.

Governance and governance networks: The structure of this article

This articleⁱⁱ will examine the growing literature on governance, and the related literature on governance networks. It seeks to evaluate the contributions of European theoretical and empirical scholars in the last 15 years. This effort begins in Section 2 with an examination of the concept of governance. We address several basic misunderstandings surrounding the concept, with the goal of demonstrating the similarities between the literature on governance and networks. Section 3 discusses various research traditions in the area of governance networks, and emphasises how these have differently influenced European and American researchers. Section 4 presents an overview of the main areas

of interest in the European literature on governance in the last 15 years. The paper concludes with a brief reflection on the topics that are likely to be important in the near future.

2. Governance and governance networks: An illumination

Many authors on governance have acknowledged its new buzzword status. Frederickson (2005) asks what has become of public administration in recent years - every area of the field seems to have been subsumed under the umbrella of governanceⁱⁱⁱ. An old adage reminds us that if a concept is everything, it is nothing (see also Frederickson, 2005: 285). Therefore, this section begins by exploring the meaning of the concept of governance. It will be apparent from our discussion that views of governance that increasingly encompass other areas are built on mistaken notions, and that in fact, there is little that distinguishes governance from governance networks.^{iv}

What is governance?

In his widely-cited article, Rhodes (1996) provided six different interpretations of the word governance. His overview of governance covered corporate governance, new public management, good governance as a socio-cybernetic system, governance as a self-organizing network and other aspects. Others have added to Rhodes' definitions meanings like multi-level governance and market governance (see Frederickson, 2005; Bekkers et al., 2007). Looking more closely at all the interpretations, I see four major definitions dominate the literature (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996; Pierre & Peters, 2000; Frederickson, 2005; Osborne, 2006; Sorensen & Torfing, 2007) :

1. Governance as *good governance or as corporate governance*

In this view, governance refers to the principles of a properly functioning public administration. Such an administration is characterized by the fair treatment of citizens and an unambiguous organization that adheres to the basic principles of the rule of law. The emphasis here is on the operation of government, rather than the manner in which it is organized.

2. Governance as *new public management*, as improving performance and accountability or as *market governance*, (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Kettl, 2000; Fenger & Bekkers, 2007)

Under this definition, the role of governments should be to steer rather than to row (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). The focus of government should be to set goals, and not on the implementation process. Policy implementation is best left to other organizations or separate public agencies which can be held accountable through the use of clear performance indicators and other market mechanisms. This definition of governance is similar to that of new public management, which stresses that governments should guide at a distance, using performance indicators and market mechanisms to arrange services and secure policy outputs. Here, governance is almost akin to "political functioning"

3. Governance as *multilevel governance or inter-governmental relations*

In some studies, governance is described as multi-layer government or inter-governmental governance. Although these two strands of literature are different from each other and not all the literature in these fields explicitly uses the network concept, their common theme is the difficulty of achieving results in a multi-actor

setting. This literature stresses that networks are needed to address all aspects of the problems encountered because these problems tend to cross the boundaries of public organizations and their hierarchical levels (such as issues related to the economic regeneration of deprived areas or environmental and pollution issues), (Bache and Flinders, 2002; Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Hooge & Marks, 2002). This literature focuses on specific types of networks in which public actors from various levels have prominent positions.

4. Governance as *network governance* (self-steering or non-self steering)
In some parts of the governance literature, governance and the network concept are strongly related (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996; Kickert et al., 1997; Sorenson & Torfing, 2007). Governance takes place within networks of public and non-public actors, and the interaction between these groups makes processes complex and difficult to manage. Consequently, different steering and management strategies are required compared to more classical approaches. The focus here is on the complex interaction process and negotiation in a network of governmental organizations and other organizations, both private and not-for-profit.

Although these are very different conceptions of governance, they share some common elements. All of them strongly emphasise the process of governing rather than the structure of government, and emphasise the limits of governmental power. This supports the notion that we are witnessing a shift in government - from organizational and uni-centric power to emphasising the process through which outcomes are achieved. As Pierre and Peters state, "The strength of the state has become contextual and entrepreneurial rather than, as was previously the case, something derived from the constitutional and legal strength of the state institutions" (Pierre & Peters, 2000: 194). This is, however, not enough to get a clear understanding of the concept of governance, which is primarily attributable to four mistakes in the whole discussion on governance.

Four misunderstandings about governance

If we look at the whole discussion on governance of the past 10-15 years, we can identify some misunderstandings that account for some of the confusion about the concept.

1. *Governance is everywhere.*
This is probably the most noteworthy misunderstanding due to its exaggerative nature and prevalence. One can identify many tasks and services that are still performed in a bureaucratic setting and in a fairly hierarchical way, making them adhere well to classical theories of public administration. Tax collection, social security and social welfare services, health services, law and criminal justice, military service, and other public services are all often organized in classical bureaucracies with all the typical characteristics of those bureaucracies.^v Because we recognize alteration more than stability, we tend to overvalue the new form of organization known as governance. In that sense, the first meaning of governance, good governance or corporate governance, has not much to do with governance at all. These entities are simply classical principles of good public organization that are important for the functioning of the public service.

2. *Governance is new public management.*
 There is a significant, but often unidentified, difference between new public management and governance. New public management theories explicitly aim to improve the existing bureaucracy of public organizations. Steering at a distance, using performance indicators and market mechanisms, and separating policy and implementation are all practices implemented to improve a bureaucracy's functioning by reducing it and/or binding its functioning to clear market incentives. In many ways, New Public Management could even be considered an opposing paradigm to governance since it emphasizes central steering. In much New Public Management literature, one can find the assumption that politics should be setting clear goals, steering with clear and cleverly designed incentives and then leaving implementation to other organizations (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Hood, 1991). Governance, in contrast, tends to emphasize the horizontal relationships between governmental organizations and other organizations.
3. *Governance is a-political or technocratic.*
 In some governance literature (particularly from the US), we find a strong emphasis on performance with an implicit technical or even a-political disposition (see Frederickson, 2005). Governance then is the way government gets its job done.^{vi} Though this is certainly important, it must not divert our attention from the inherently political nature of governance processes. These processes are about reconciling different values as well as the different actors representing those values. Governance processes also involve struggles about the values represented in decision making and policy outcomes. This is precisely what makes them so complex and difficult to solve with our classical managerial instruments and skills. One could even say that, in governance processes, politics is 'dissolved' or 'displaced' from the classical political institutions in a network of actors (Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; Klijn & Skelcher, 2007).^{vii}
4. *Governance is composed of self-governing networks.*
 Although not necessarily a mistaken idea, the understanding that networks are self-governing while governance focuses on self-steering processes is certainly confusing (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996; Sorenson & Torfing, 2007). To many authors, this statement indicates that networks govern themselves without intervention from public actors, or even more often, without the interference of political actors, or without any deliberate governance. We can readily find networks that are functioning with nominal interference from political actors. This can be observed, for instance, in some professionally oriented networks, such as medical services, where chains of organizations exist to process clients. However, even in these networks, explicit managerial functions operate to provide consistent guidance to the network, including professional codes for processing clients, agreements, and protocols regarding relations between organizations. We frequently find direct or indirect attempts by governmental actors to influence these self-steering networks besides less deliberate governance mechanisms (like societal rules and institutional codes or more general market mechanisms) Thus, the notion

of self-steering should perhaps be replaced by the idea of self-organizing, which refers to the idea that actors in the networks themselves create properties of networks such as strategic patterns, outcomes and emerging rules (see Teisman et al., 2008; Klijn, 2008).

Conclusion: Governance means governance networks

The conclusion that can be derived from the previous section is clear: it is unnecessary to make a distinction between governance or governance networks since the literature and the theoretical foundations are basically equivalent. The literature that does not have a connection the literature on networks and complex decision-making, like that on good governance or corporate governance, is based on theories and concepts that are closely related to traditional government literature. The literature on improving performance by market governance and performance indicators includes arguments that are strongly related to the ideas of New Public Management. These discussions on improving the internal functioning of government organizations do not contribute much to studying governance, which focuses on relationships with other actors and the process of handling complex decisions and implementation processes. In many ways, they are in opposition to the central ideas and theories of governance.^{viii}

We can, therefore, say that governance is the process that takes place within governance networks. We then use the term “governance network” to describe public policy making and implementation through a web of relationships between government, business and civil society actors. One can then consider phenomena like public-private partnerships or interactive policy making as specific forms of governance networks. Governance networks are based on interdependencies, which are not necessarily equitable, between public, private, and civil society actors.

3. Three traditions of governance networks

If we study the literature on networks that is closest to the most specific content on governance and governance networks, we can identify three different research traditions that provide information on the origin of the main ideas involved in the study of governance. We first discuss these traditions and then explore which of the traditions has had the most impact on European research on governance networks.

Three types of networks compared

Although classifying the large number of articles on networks from the past 40 years, written within different research traditions, is arbitrary, it is nevertheless possible to distinguish between three different types of research focusing on various network types. Each is rooted in a different theoretical tradition. The three research traditions (Table 1) are:

- *Research on policy networks*
This type of research is strongly based on a tradition in political science that focuses on the actors that participate in decision-making in policy networks and those that have power and access to decision-making. This stream of work can be traced back to the famous discussions on power in the 1960s. It was

adopted in British research on policy communities (Rhodes, 1988; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Marsh, 1998) and networks in the 1980s and 1990s.

- Research on *inter-organizational service delivery and policy implementation*
This domain adopts an inter-organizational perspective and views networks as vehicles for service delivery and implementation. It has a long tradition in organizational science, beginning with the early work on inter-organizational coordination (Neghandi, 1974; Rogers & Whetten, 1982). The focus of this research tradition is the coordination and creation of concrete products and outcomes. Thus, it is not surprising that much attention has been paid to the construction of networks that organize joint service delivery or policy implementation.
- Research on *governing networks*
This stream of research corresponds to the public administration tradition and stresses the complexity of the decision-making involved in achieving policy outcomes. It began in the 1970s with research on interorganizational decision making and implementation (Hanf & Scharpf, 1978). It focuses on existing networks involving policy initiatives and implementation, and on reconstructing and improving the networks and decision making processes taking place within them. It is also concerned with the deliberation process between actors, including the possible outcomes and value conflicts that arise when actors try to achieve workable solutions for policy problems. More than in the other two research traditions, researchers here have assumed that governance processes in networks are a consequence of and are tied to the modern network society.

Table 1. Types of governance networks in empirical research and their characteristics

	Policy networks	Service delivery and implementation	Governing networks
Main origin	Political science	Organizational science/inter-organization theory	Public administration
Focus	Decision making and effects, closure and power relations on issue and agenda setting	Inter-organizational coordination, effective policy/service delivery, integrated policy/services	Solving societal problems, managing horizontal governance relations, connecting governance networks to traditional institutions, deliberation processes
Main research questions	Which actors are involved in decision-making What is the nature of the power relations? What are the effects on decision-making	How can complex integrated services be coordinated? What mechanisms are effective and efficient (contracting, partnerships, etc)?	How can governance networks be managed? How should governance networks be organized and connected to traditional institutions? How can the variety of content be improved? How can various value judgments be combined?
History	Starts with the pluralist political science research of the 1960s and continues to research on subsystems, policy communities, and	Starts with the first inter-organizational theorists that focus on inter-organizational coordination and continues to research	Starts in the mid-1970s with work on inter-governmental relations (Hanf & Scharpf, 1978) and continues with

	policy networks	on service delivery , contracting, and implementation	analyses of new governance forms, including their effects and management requirements
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Adapted from Klijn, 2008

Each of these three traditions involves different network types. The policy networks tradition focuses on the relation between the state and interest groups, the service delivery and implementation tradition focuses on methods to improve service delivery, and the governing networks tradition centres on means of enhancing legitimacy in public governance. Despite these differences, the traditions use the word “network” extensively and engage in extensive discussions on the problems faced when actors from various networks attempt to collaborate.

Although the three traditions are closely linked, they each provide distinct information pertaining to different aspects of governance networks. The policy network tradition informs readers of the power differences in horizontal networks, the possibility that certain actors are denied access, and points out that problems and agendas tend to include certain definitions or subjects and exclude others. The service delivery and implementation tradition provides readers with insights into problems of coordination that are inherent in networks, the skills required for effective participation, and the important role of daily interactions between actors. The governing tradition reveals the complexity of public decision making and highlights the need for intensive managerial efforts to achieve sensible and acceptable outcomes for stakeholders. Each of these traditions developed separately, but served to provide valuable insights into the study of governance networks. It is not surprising, therefore, that a discerning reader may notice increasing levels of overlap and mutual exchange between these traditions.

Research methods in Europe versus the US

One of the well known methods for researching networks is mapping interactions between actors. A method that is used in all three research traditions. Mapping the interaction patterns through social network analysis techniques is a very classical way to get an image of the central and peripheral actors in the networks and, which actors are connected to each other.^{ix} Besides this social network analysis we also find other quantitative research methods in the governance research (like classical survey research). On the other hand we find many case studies on governance and governance networks where the emphasis is more on qualitative research methods

A comparison of the American and European literature on governance networks reveals distinct differences in methodology as Marcussen and Olsen (2007) demonstrate in their analysis, there are two different research traditions, namely, policy group studies and social network analysis. These traditions have few links, and authors subscribing to one do not generally refer to the work of those subscribing to the other. Research in the US employs greater use of quantitative methods, either in its classical form, or in the form of social network analysis^x. In contrast, European researchers focus on the qualitative analysis of networks using case studies and discourse analysis. These differences pervade all three research traditions. American writers in all three traditions shun qualitative methods, and there are , but almost no examples of quantitative analysis in the huge number body of European literature on governance networks. That European

research is predominantly characterized by case study research and , but is also using more qualitative research methods.

Three traditions and the European research on governance networks

In comparing the content of the research on governance networks in the US and Europe, it becomes apparent that examples of the first tradition (research on policy networks) can be found on both sides of the Atlantic. Early research on subsystems (Freeman, Parish & Steevens, 1987) and later research on networks (Laumann & Knoke, 1984; Milward & Wamsley, 1984) are included in the US literature on this topic, while research on policy styles (Richardson & Jordan, 1979; Heisler 1974) dominates the European literature. The British school on policy networks and policy communities (Marsh & Rhodes, 1992) is a good example of research in the policy network tradition. The second tradition pertaining to inter-organizational relations and implementations is less prominent in Europe and more prominent in the US. One will not find a rich research tradition on public administration in this second tradition in the European literature, except for a number of well-known studies on bottom-up implementation (Hjern & Porter, 1981), Most of the research that is conducted in Europe fits in the third school of governing networks; this is true of the early (Hanf & Scharpf, 1978) and later (Scharpf, 1997) work of Scharpf, as well as the more recent work on network management (Kickert et al., 1997), deliberative policy analysis (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003) and governance networks (Marin & Mayentz, 1991; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Sorenson & Torfing, 2007). The abundance of literature on the third tradition points to the fact that European research on governance networks in the last 15 years have focused on the governing networks perspective. However, a notable digression from this trend is observed in the policy networks research conducted by British researchers, that is more in keeping with the first tradition. Future trends are likely to see greater levels of integration between the three researchers.

4. Topics in the European research on governance networks

The literature on governance and governance networks has experienced dramatic growth in the last 15 years, making it increasingly difficult to draw clear outlines of the literature and its findings without making inappropriate generalizations. We will, however, try to make cogent observations about government rhetoric on governance, the growth of governance networks as a research topic, and some of the empirical phenomena that are included under the category of governance and governance networks. When relevant, we will contrast the European literature with the US literature.

Governance networks: Rhetoric of central governments and reality on a local level

Looking at the vast literature on networks and governance networks, one can conclude that there is proliferation of such research in this field in Europe. Many governments themselves are now stressing new forms of governance in collaboration with individuals in the society. The UK is often cited in the literature for the Blair government's "third way," of "joint up government." The concept of a "joint up government" demonstrates many of the characteristics described in the governance network literature. It stresses the

importance of greater cooperation between governments and stakeholders, better use of available resources, and greater coordination for the provision of more integrated services (Newman, 2001; Pollitt, 2003).

This dominant role of the UK in this area does not imply a greater British involvement in this area. Rather, as in many fields of research, the dominance of the English language facilitates an overestimation of the importance of the UK. Bekkers et al. (2007) observe several common features in the policy documents of four different countries (UK, Netherlands, Denmark and Germany). In each of these, there appears to be a strong shift toward consumer democracy as a complement to the existing democratic order. Further, the authors note a desire for more integrated services that require the joint action of several organizations and a significant reduction in “red tape.” The strongest rhetoric in the policy documents is that which demands a shift in governance in the direction of providing citizens with greater levels of power and influence over service delivery and decision making.

The commonalities in these documents demonstrate that the trends in governance did not originate exclusively in the UK or with the Blair government (see Pierre & Peters, 2000; Frederickson, 2005; also Blatter, 2006). Indeed, one could argue that the growth of governance networks in the UK differs from that seen in other countries in that it has a more strongly instrumental/managerial and vertical flavour. This may be due to the relatively weakness of local governments in England (Pollitt, 2003; Skelcher et al., 2006) as compared to similar bodies in the Nordic countries or in the Netherlands. Although we find similar concepts of governance across different countries, there appear to be distinct variations in the institutional contexts in which these governance networks operate. In their analysis of the Oslo Regeneration Program for the inner-city districts, Hanssen and Claussen warn that the Norwegian welfare state “still provides a lot of leeway for the operation of traditional hierarchical government. As a consequence, the shift towards governance networks is less obvious in Norway than in other countries” (Hanssen and Claussen, 1997: 48). Similar observations have been made in the literature in relation to the governance networks present in Switzerland, Italy, the Netherlands and other countries (see Skelcher et al., 2006; Holtkamp, 2005; Marcussen & Tiorfing, 2007).

Although policy documents and political statements regarding the desirability of more horizontal governance have been put forth by many European societies, national contexts vary considerably and we must be cautious not to overgeneralise the intent or the effect of these documents. Horizontal steering does not mean the same thing throughout Europe. In general, one gets the impression that both the rhetoric and empirical evidence for the rise of governance networks originates more from northern Europe, specifically the Scandinavian countries, the UK, and the Netherlands, than from southern Europe, although one can also find evidence of trends towards such governance in France (le Gales, 2001), Italy (Cepiku & Meneguzzo, 2005), Switzerland (Walti & Kubler, 2003), and Germany (Holtkamp, 2005). What we do see throughout Europe, is a highly dynamic policy environment in which policy initiatives emerge from a wide variety of departments or regional bodies. This results in policy initiatives that have a strong multi-level character, especially on the local level. The policy content, financial support and other necessary resources stem from public actors on various levels, and this is exactly

why these initiatives have the characteristics of governance networks (Hooge & Marks, 2002; Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Skelcher et al., 2005; Marcussen & Torfing, 2007).

The growth of governance networks as phenomena

It appears that the increased interest in new forms of governance and governance networks does not limit itself only to theory and rhetoric. Implementation has occurred in various regions. Jensen and Kahler (2007) note that the Ministry of Finance in Denmark uses network management strategies to increase its ability to achieve outcomes as well as to assist in the affairs of other ministries. The power and esteem established by the Ministry can certainly be attributed in part to its successful networking. However, Jensen and Kahler, also observe that as a “meta governor” in this area, the Ministry of Finance “illustrates the dilemma between instrumentalism and inter-actionism in network management” (Jensen & Kahler, 2007: 189).

We can observe several empirical phenomena that are categorized as governance networks in the literature. In general, we see three phenomena that are sometimes difficult to separate from each other:

- *Complex decision making processes*
The substantial literature on complex decision making processes emphasizes the network-like and complex character of decision making. Topics in this area vary widely and include policy decisions in multiple sectors (see Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Marsh, 1998), studies on local decision making in the tradition of Dahl (see Le Gales, 2001; Sorenson & Torfing, 2003), and decisions involving complex infrastructural projects or specific problems in several countries (see Koppenjan & Klijn, 2000a; Heinelt & Kubler, 2005; De Rynck & Voets, 2006; Walti et al., 2004 for a discussion on Swiss drug policy). The impression one receives from this literature is that modern decision making is complex because of the involvement of various actors and levels of governance, and that this complexity is compounded by requisite nurturing and active process management (Soren & Torfing, 2007; Van Gils & Klijn, 2007). The managerial aspect of active process management is less prominent in the British policy network and policy community research. In this literature, networks are seen as more or less stable sets of actors involved in decision making situations. Given that most decision making processes take extensive periods of time, the networks eventually solidify and demonstrate institutional characteristics.
- *Inter-organizational networks for service delivery*
This literature analyzes cases or larger data sets on service delivery and focuses on how to improve services by integrating different organizational efforts. The emphasis in this area tends to be on specific sectors such as health care and social services, but we also find examples of inter-municipal and inter-governmental cooperation in numerous countries (see for Italy: Cepiku & Meneguzzo, 2005; for Sweden: Montin & Granberg, 2007; for Finland: Haveri & Pehk, 2007; for US: Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Milward & Provan, 2000). A substantial focus is placed on the role of contacts and inter-organizational relations in managing more complex services and on how such services are maintained (Milward & Provan, 2000). The literature also

looks at how consumers are connected to service delivery and the evaluation of service delivery by means of consumer boards, panels and other methods (see for instance: Dent, 2006, but also Lowndes et al., 2001). In the prominence of performance indicators, market-like incentives and consumer influence, one finds echoes of the new public management literature in the literature on inter-organizational service delivery. Networks also are generally considered as an organizational form itself in stead of a loosely couples set of relations between the actors and there is more emphasis on the organizational features and procedures to structure the coordination of actors' strategies and choices..

- *Partnerships and new forms of alliances between public and private actors*
Much attention is devoted to new forms of cooperation between public and private actors (Osborne, 2000; Hodge & Greve, 2005). Public/private partnerships are viewed as new governance forms in which more co-production between public and private actors leads to more efficient and better policies or products. In this literature, we sometimes find a strong emphasis on the organizational form of the cooperation, particularly the contract. The most recognizable example of this is the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in the UK ewhere are selected using innovative tendering processes (Design Finance, Build Maintaining, DFBM contracts) that involves more cooperation than classical tendering. A large increase has been seen in the number of PFI contracts applied in the UK. This practice of involving private actors has spread throughout Europe and we now find PFI-like contracts in Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands (for an overview, see: Hodge & Greve, 2005; CBI, 2007; DLA Piper, 2007; Deloitte, 2006). However, one must also recognize the existence of more loosely coupled partnerships in these countries that are not dominated by contractual forms and tendering (See Osborne, 2000; Hodge & Greve, 2005).

Governance network and democracy: Managerial focus or stakeholder involvement?

There are a number of reasons that account for the emergence of governance networks. One argument is that these are the inevitable result of resource dependencies and the need for more integrated services (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004). Another argument is that they arise simply because one can achieve more efficient and appropriate solutions by combining the resources and knowledge of many different actors and stakeholders (Mandell, 2001; Agranoff, 2007; Frederickson, 2005; Klijn, 2005; Sorenson & Torfing , 2007). Both reasons focus keenly on the performance of governance networks.

Some authors assert that most of the new forms of governance networks have a distinct managerial bias (see, for instance, Pollitt's 2003 discussion of joint up government or Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002 and Papadopoulos, 2003). This certainly is evident in the US literature, which, with some exception (see for instance: O Toole, 1997), pays little attention to the democratic character of networks, or to the possible tensions between governance networks and the traditional institutions of representative democracy Often the implicate assumption seems to be that if there is an initiative from a public actor to contract a public service to a private actor (that organizes the network to provide for the

service) there is also a political decision about goals and conditions (Milward & Provan, 2000; Berry et al., 2004). Complexity in such situations is more seen as a problem of coordination, how to connect the various actors in an efficient way, than as a value problem, how to connect and bridge the different value judgements of the actors involved.

As compared to the American literature, a greater level of attention is paid in the European literature to the tensions that exist between governance networks, institutions of representative democracy and the overarching need to involve stakeholders in decision making. In the European literature, one finds great attention being paid to the horizontal accountability structures of governance networks and to the influence of stakeholders on policy decisions. Both of these are difficult to reconcile with the more vertical forms of accountability traditionally seen in representational democracy in which elected office holders have much greater power over final decisions (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000b; Walti & Kubler, 2003; Papadopoulos, 2003; Sorenson & Torfing, 2007). Also widely discussed in the European literature is the extension of the involvement of stakeholders in the decisions processes, and the anticipated outcomes of such involvement (Lowndes et al, 2001; McLaverty, 2002; Sullivan, 2003; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006). This research focus parallels the frequency with which central and local governments in the northern Europeans states mention increasing stakeholder involvement as an important objective in bridging the 'gap' between government and citizens (see Skelcher et al., 2006). Observations of the various forms of interactive governance (including attempts to involve stakeholders in the designing of public policy) leads one to conclude that such governance does not always foster more cooperation among stakeholders. Neither does it necessarily facilitate better solutions or more democratic processes (see Holtkamp, 2005; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006). There are various reasons for these failures, including the already mentioned tension between the horizontal accountability processes of these interactive governance mechanisms and the vertical accountability procedures involved in classical representative democracy. A very important factor to consider is the management efforts that go into these collaborative processes since they are complex and not easy to manage with classical vertical governance instruments.

Management of governance networks: Constant nurturing

The textbook presentation of a public manager involves work in an identifiable organization with a clear hierarchy of goals and well defined management positions (Robbins, 1980). However, the role of the public manager in governance networks differs significantly from this standard portrayal. Writings published after Hanf and Scharpf's (1978) influential publication generally agree that public managers often lack the clear power and authority structure enjoyed by managers within more formal organizations, and that their situation is plagued by an absence of a clear goal structure (Agranoff, 2003; Agranoff & McGuire 2003; Gage & Mandell 1990; Kickert et al., 1997). The lack of a clear goal structure is partially attributable to the fact that networks involve a variety of actors with different goals that have to be inter-connected, and also to the fact that the managerial activities in the public arena, differ greatly from more classical organizational strategies for management.

Such efforts at network management are very important for achieving interesting results in complex governance processes. Meier and O'Toole have found fairly strong correlations between network management and good outcomes (Meier and O'Toole,

2001; 2007) and other authors have confirmed the importance of this link (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006). Governance networks have to be consistently nurtured if they are to achieve satisfactory outcomes for their participants. Important efforts include the activation and reactivation of actors, the development and maintenance of content related interest among all actors, and the arrangement of opportunities to further interactions. If there is one point that all the authors agree upon, it is that although network governance requires a different form of government, it certainly does not require a less active one.

5. Conclusion: Topics for future research

There is a large world-wide literature on the topic of governance networks that has been growing quickly in the last ten years. Although the largest part of this literature in Europe seems comes from Scandinavia, the UK, and the Netherlands, such networks are apparent across all of Europe, and literature from other European countries is steadily increasing. Based on our extensive review, we conclude that the literature on governance is generally comparable to the literature on governance networks, and there is little reason to see governance as an exclusive entity that exists apart from governance networks.

The literature in this area focuses greatly on the importance of network management and the tension that exists between them and the workings of the traditional institutions of representational democracy. Further, a large number of case studies in this area focus on the complexity of decision making. Although these questions are important for their practical and managerial implications, insufficient research is as yet available on a number of important areas. These include the impact of network management strategies, the conditions under which they are necessary and effective, which strategies are most effective. To use a specific example, the importance of trust is often mentioned, yet there are no systematic studies on this subject.

We should also pay significant attention to the way decisions are reached in networks, the democratic nature of these processes, and how the networks relate to more traditional institutions of democratic representation. There are many signs of the serious tensions in this area, and it is imperative that comparative research be conducted internationally to identify the patterns and how they relate to political cultures and structures.

Fifteen years of research on governance networks has provided us with some answers, including an elementary understanding of how governance networks function and how they convert political and administrative problems into solutions, but there are many questions that await answers. More comparative research- both case research and more quantitative survey research, but certainly focused on international comparisons- should be conducted to bridge such important gaps in our knowledge.

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ⁱ Although Putnam's claims are not uncontested, most authors agree on the fact that society (at least western society) has become more individualized and pluralized in its values.

ⁱⁱ I would like to thank Larry O'Toole and Jacob Torfing for their comments on an earlier draft. Of course no one can be blamed for the opinions in this article but me

ⁱⁱⁱ If one were to seek articles with the word "governance" in Scopus, over 8000 articles are found. The articles fall under the category of social science, with a large number of being from public administration and environmental planning. A significant rise is seen in the number of governance related between 1996 (106) and 2007 (1193).

^{iv} This is a conclusion that Rhodes made in his 1996 article on new governance (Rhodes 1996)

^v This is probably the reason why in their search for governance related articles, Hill and Lynn (2005) found that the vast majority of the studies still adopt a top down approach. However, one can question their selection of journals. As important journals such as "Governance" and other European journals are not included in their analysis. Also, they included articles written on or before the year 2001. From Scopus (see note II), we can see that the number of articles begins to rise from 1996, with a steeper increase beginning in 2003.

^{vi} Frederickson cites Kettl "Government refers to the structure and function of public institutions. Governance is the way government gets its job done" (Kettl, 2002: xi in Frederickson 2005: 296)

^{vii} This does not mean that the classical political institutions have no position at all. Rather, it indicates that they are mostly part of the governance network and that politics, defined as the authoritative allocation of values (Easton, 1954), takes place just as much in the governance network as in political institutions.

^{viii} One can find in the governance literature ideas on governance mechanisms that are related to performance indicators or the use of market-like mechanisms, but these are placed in an inter-organizational context and they focus on the processes between various organizations. This context is quite different from the original NPM ideas and reforms that focus on reforming and changing the public bureaucracies (see Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000).

^{ix} There are several established statistical packages to analyze networks and their interactions (Scott, 1991) but UCINET is the most well known. One can also use Multi Dimensional Scaling techniques to represent the interactions (or other characteristics) of the networks. These techniques can be observed in all three traditions of the research.

^x Like the well known study of Laumann and Knoke (1984) in the policy study tradition, the works of O Toole and Meier (Meir/O Toole, 2001; 2007) in the governing type of research, or the work of Provan and Milward in the inter-organisational relations tradition (Milward and Provan, 2000) to mention a few of the many examples