Networks: Dark, Bright, and Grey:
Toward a More Extensive Research Palette for Public Administration

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How do illegal and covert networks that pursue greed or grievance differ from legal and overt networks that deliver taxpayer funded services like healthcare, mental health or child services? This question has motivated our research on dark networks for the past fifteen years (Raab and Milward 2003; Milward and Raab 2006; Baker, Raab and Milward 2012. Our research has shown that many of the things that make bright networks effective make dark networks effective. However, the fundamental difference is the existential tradeoff that leaders of dark networks must make if they wish to continue to exist. Every insurgent, criminal, and terrorist leader must make the "Act or Exist" tradeoff, the more a covert network acts, the more likely it is that it will be seen, exposed or surveilled by the government or its allies. This makes it easier for the government to foil plans for an attack before the dark network is ready to act. On the other hand, if a dark network wishes to continue to exist, it will go into the jungle or into the mountains where they will be hard to surveil and can rest and resupply. While the dark network may increase the probability that it will live to fight another day, if they stay too long, the people in whose name they fight may cease to care and stop supporting them with money, recruits, and supplies. Thus, the wise leader of a dark network is always trying to find the right tradeoff between acting and continuing to exist. Because this is a dilemma, it cannot be solved, only managed better or worse. As the degree of uncertainty of being killed or captured decreases, the tolerance for risk increases. In a case like South Africa, the dark network, Nelson Mandela's African National Congress, became a bright network when it was unbanned by the apartheid government of South Africa and two years later became the government in free and fair elections.

Figure 1 is a heuristic that graphically conveys the full palette of networks that I argue are relevant for public administration. Each quadrant presents an ideal type of network that presents research opportunities for public administration scholars. Using this taxonomy, there are four network quadrants. Public administration scholarship is largely in the "Legal and Overt" quadrant using a mixture of social network analysis, organizational theory, and case studies to

determine network effectiveness, however measured. The objects of research are typically networks of public and nonprofit organizations at various levels of government that deliver services to clients or regulate the behavior of corporations or private actors. As the remit of government continues to shrink, public administration is committed a research agenda focused on institutions in decline. At a minimum, public administration scholars need to add militaries and national defense organizations to their portfolio. Research on these types of institutions brings public administration research into a world where private organizations operate under contract. This is a new dimension for interorganizational studies of procurement, outsourcing, and various contracting schemes (Brown, Potoski, and Van Slyke, 2013).

As we move from the legal and overt quadrant of Figure 1 to the legal and covert quadrant, there are marvelous research opportunities for public administration scholars. While there are challenges of access to both data and organizations, research on these institutions can pay large dividends in both adding an important research area to the public administration portfolio and raising important questions for democratic theory and practice. We need to study as best we can the huge growth in intelligence and security services in the post 9/11 era (Priest and Arkin, 2011). There are 16 members of the US Intelligence Community. The United Kingdom has MI5, GCHQ, and MI6. There is the BND in Germany and the FSB and GRU in Russia. France has the DGSE and Israel has MOSAD. China has MSS and South Korea has the National Intelligence Service.

Moving to the Illegal and Covert quadrant of Figure 1, we find dark networks like Al Qaeda and its franchises as well as historic dark networks like ETA in Spain, the Irish Republican Army, Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, and the FARC in Colombia. Working with scholars from public administration, sociology, international relations, economics, criminal justice, and management, I have found this to be a very productive domain for research that is consistent with public administration scholarship on networks.

The last of the network quadrants consists of networks that are Illegal and Overt. This includes networks in failed and failing states where weak and corrupt governments are barely distinguishable from gangsters. Charles Taylor's Liberia and Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia are examples.

Figure 1
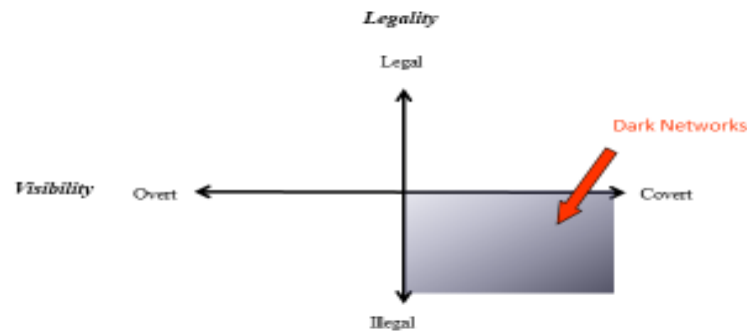
The world is a good bit messier than our four-cell heuristic as networks can occupy more than one cell. What a government may call a terrorist network can be allied with a legal political party. The Provisional IRA was a fighting group in Northern Ireland but a political party, Shin Fein, represented them in the Irish Parliament or Dail. The penetration of many local governments in Mexico by the Cartels provides another example of networks that are neither dark nor bright, but grey.

As we meet 50 years after the original Minnowbrook Conference, there is no reason for public administration to confine its domain to a traditional public sector that includes public organizations with professional civil servants or nonprofit organizations allied with government. Whether we like it or not, liberal democracy is under attack in both the United States and Europe. Critical states like China are not democratic. Public administration occurs in monarchies, dictatorships, and even in proto-states like the ISIS Caliphate in Syria and Iraq. I argue that we should study public administration networks wherever we find them.

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