“Public networks” say Americans, “public networks” reply Europeans, but are they talking about the same issue?

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Since the end of the Seventies, public networks have been implemented in many countries to solve “wicked” public problems, addressing such issues as health, social care, local development and education (Agranoff & McGuire, 1998; Ferlie & Pettigrew, 1996; Ferlie et al. 2011; O’Toole, 1997; Milward & Provan, 2003; Provan & Milward, 1995, 2001; Provan & Sebastian, 1998).

Accordingly, scholars from Scandinavian to Italy and from Australia to the US have started to investigate the topic, and the literature on public networks have tremendously grown up.

Despite the “global” nature of the phenomenon, some doubts raise about the existence of a “global” community of public network scholars. In a tentative to systematize the literature on governance and governance network, Klijn (2008) shed lights on similarities and differences between the American and the European approach at public networks, and invite researchers to search from greater levels of integration in the future.

Our paper aims at empirically exploring the existence of different geographical/“Country-based” communities of public network scholars, investigating their similarities and differences, and analyzing their evolution over time.

For these purposes we conducted a content analysis on the abstracts of the articles published on 10 leading public administration/public management academic journals since the end of the Seventies, and correlated some of their characteristics (theoretical framework, main topics and research methods) with the authors’ Country of origin. 160 articles were considered and data were analyzed through the usual statistical correlation tests.

The final section of our paper discusses these results and suggests some instruments to foster the dialogue and build a bridge between the existent public network academic communities.

**The development of literature on inter-organizational relations and networks**

The study of networks is an outgrowth of the study of interorganizational relations. The study of interorganizational relations began in the 1960s. As organizations grew more complex, the problems facing managers could no longer be easily answered by looking only at variables from the intraorganizational level of analysis. Instead, investigators began to look
for answers outside the boundaries of the organization. The study of interorganizational relations therefore began with the relationship of the organization to its environment (Aiken & Hage, 1968; Emery & Trist, 1965; Thompson, 1967).

The literature on interorganizational relations, in America, developed based on two separate, but complementary trains of thought. One was based on the study of organizations by sociologists. The other was based on the studies of organizations from a management perspective.

The study of interorganizational relations by sociologists was related to the concern of the government, in the 1960's, to achieve better “coordination” among various health and social service agencies. It was believed that better coordination was needed between these agencies in order to improve the delivery of services. The problem for the government was to devise new ways for organizations to behave in order to carry out this coordination. The environment of these agencies was viewed as a constraint and sociologists looked at the problems of manipulating variables within the structure of the individual organizations (Zeitz, 1980).

One of the central problems for researchers in these studies, however, was to be able to determine which the “relevant” portions of the environment were. Certainly an organization had to learn to deal with other organizations and to manage the resulting interdependencies. The question was how to determine which were the “relevant” organizations within the total environment. The work of Evan (1966) on the “organization set” was the first attempt to provide a conceptual framework in which the boundaries of relationships could be determined.

Just as the concept of the “organization set” was constructed by Evan (1966) to provide a framework for viewing the interaction of sets of organizations, the “interorganizational network” was developed to provide a framework in which to view the interactions of a network of organizations. As interactions between organizations became more and more
complex, the use of the concept of the “organization set” for studying these interactions became less useful. The concept of the interorganizational network was developed to try to broaden the spectrum within which these interactions could be understood.

Tichy (1984) points out that the study of networks is not new and has its roots in anthropology, social psychology, and sociology. Studies by sociologists, for example, include viewing cities and whole communities as networks (Laumann, et al, 1978; Perucci & Pilsuk, 1970; Turk, 1970, 1973, 1977; Warren, 1973; Warren, et al, 1974). In addition, in the literature on intraorganizational theory, the idea of networks in terms of social network analysis (Tichy, et al, 1979) and communication patterns in organizations (Rogers & Argawala-Rogers, 1976) has been explored. The application of this concept to the study of interorganizational relations, however, was a relatively new phenomenon (Aldrich & Whetten, 1981; Provan, 1983; Zeitz, 1980).

The study of interorganizational relations from the management tradition was centered on the practical concerns of managers in operating their businesses. The increasing complexities of the environment forced managers to consider the effects of the environment in a more systematic manner. This work looked at which aspects of the environment could be manipulated or controlled to achieve their management objectives (Zald, 1966).

The focus was therefore on practical problems of managing within a “turbulent environment”. The concern, however, was not in understanding the underlying social structure of which businesses were a part, but rather on discovering “what aspects of the environment could be better predicted and controlled in order to achieve management objectives, whatever those objectives might be” (Zeitz, 1980, p. 42).

From these initial beginnings of interorganizational relations, however, the importance of interorganizational networks as a field of study grew (Aldrich, 1977, 1979; Aldrich & Whetten, 1981).
In the early literature, Aldrich (1979) indicated that an interorganizational network “is identified by tracking down all of the ties binding organizations in a population defined and explicitly bounded by an investigator” (Aldrich, 1979, p.324). The problem for researchers has been to define the boundaries of the interorganizational network. This problem can be seen in the number of definitions used in the literature. The interorganizational network has been defined as:

- All organizations linked by a specific type of relation. The network is constructed by finding the ties between all organizations in a population (Aldrich, 1979, p. 324);

- All of the groups and organizations, as well as the consumers, (who usually are not organized into either groups or organizations, one of the basic reasons why their interest remain unrepresented), associated with a particular production system designed to service some client or customer (Hage, 1973, p. 18);

- A context in which interaction takes place, and it may affect the nature and intensity of relations between organizations (Molnar & Rogers, 1979, p. 414);

- Consists of a number of distinguishable organizations having a significant amount of interaction with each other (Benson, 1979, p. 230).

In addition to being able to define networks, a number of other considerations have delineated the early work on networks. The early work of Warren (1967) on the interorganizational field emphasizes the characteristics or patterns of networks as a whole. An interorganizational field is the population of all organizations with the same functional interests. The importance of this concept of the interorganizational field is the notion that decision-making within this context is “allowed to form out of the interaction of various organizations” (Warren, 1967, p. 411). The focus is on the structure of the interaction of
actors, rather than on the constraints of the boundaries of the interorganizational network. The concept of the interorganizational field thus points to the centrality of the interaction processes within the interorganizational network. Further, it allows us to look at the total structure of interorganizational linkages.

In the work of Hanf et al (1978) and Porter (1980) on “implementation structures” (i.e., interorganizational networks) they found that there were a number of arrangements possible. Their structures are constantly changing and do not necessarily have to be hierarchically arranged. Finally, networks include an array of actors (both organizational and individual) with a variety of goals and objectives.

This early work led to a number of studies that focused on various aspects of networks (Agranoff, 1986; Gray, 1989; Hanf & Scharpf, 1978; Kickert et al, 1997; Mandell, 1988, 1994). These studies led to a revised definition by O’Toole (1997). He defined networks as:

…structures of interdependence involving multiple organizations or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of the others in some larger hierarchical arrangement (p.45).

This definition has been adapted by most researchers as what is meant today by networks.

Many of the early works on interorganizational networks (Aldrich, 1979; Aldrich & Whetten, 1981; Negandhi, 1980; Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984; Wright, 1983) focused on studies of interorganizational relations from the perspective of a particular organization rather than on a network of organizations. One notable exception was a study done by Stern (1979) on intercollegiate athletics. This was one of the earliest studies that focused on a network of organizations. The emphasis, however, is from a private sector perspective. A number of such early studies focus on arrangements between organizations that are generally competitive in nature, but recognize the need for collaboration. Pennings (1981) refers to these organizations as strategically interdependent organizations. Another area of concern in the private sector is
what Horwich & Prahalad (1981) refer to as multi-organizational enterprises. They see this as an emerging form of collaboration between private and public sector organizations.

The early literature on interorganizational relations and specifically interorganizational networks in the public sector has been extensive. These arrangements have been referred to in a number of different ways:

- Interorganizational systems (Milward, 1982);
- Mandated networks (Porter & Warner, 1979);
- Implementation structures (Hjern & Porter, 1981; Porter, 1985; Porter & Warner, 1979);
- Management networks (Wright, 1983);
- Directed interorganizational systems (Lawless, 1981);
- Federations (Provan, 1983).

The emphasis on interorganizational networks in the public sector grows out of the need to better understand the complexities involved in managing intergovernmental relations. The importance of understanding how managing in networks is different from managing within individual organizations was made clear initially by the work of Agranoff & McGuire (2001) on network management.


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1 It should be noted that these types of arrangements are seen as distinct from public-private partnerships.
emphasized the importance of understanding how management in networks needs to be differentiated from management in single organization.

In spite of a plethora of literature on networks, on a variety of topics, it is not clear if there is a single theory of networks or many theories, or if networks are just a metaphor for the different ways we work together. This paper is therefore meant to begin the dialogue of what we really mean by networks.

**Network approaches around the world: so close, so far**

Little by little that studies on public networks grew up, many authors have started to claim that the conceptual frameworks, the key terms and the methods employed in the public network literature created a “complex and confusing picture” (Berry et al. 2004). In the tentative to wind a skein into a ball, then, during the last years, some authors have started to systematize the existent literature, thus shedding light on similarities and differences among communities of researchers.

In 2004 Berry at al. proposed to identify three communities of network researchers, characterized by a different theoretical background (i.e., sociology, political science and public administration/public management), and their own assumptions about human motivation, their own principal research questions and their own research methods. The first community, focused on “social network analysis”, is grounded in the sociological tradition and more specifically in the sociometric studies rooted in Gestalt psychology (Moreno, 1934), in the Manchester anthropologists (Mitchell and Clyde, 1969; Nadel, 1957), and in the Harvard structuralists (Dahl, 1961; Dahrendorf, 1959; Grannovetter, 1973, 1974, 1985). According to this approach, “structure matters” as predictors of various micro or macro outcomes. In this perspective, some of the most investigated topics deal with the consequences of network structure on attitude similarity, job satisfaction, individual power, leadership (at micro-level), and board interlock, joint-ventures, alliances and shared
knowledge (at macro-level). The employed methods range from case study to quantitative approaches, as block modeling analysis, Euclidean distance analysis, regression analysis and dynamic-network modeling. The second community, Berry et al. (2004) identified, labeled “policy network” community, is rooted in the political science field, and more specifically in studies concerning policy innovation (Berry & Berry, 1990; Mintrom, 2000; Walker, 1969), policy change and agenda setting (Dahl, 1961; Kingdom, 1984; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999), and new institutional economics (North, 1990; O’Toole, 1997; Schneider et al 2003; Williamson, 1975, 1982). Coherently with this theoretical background, studies in the policy network tradition focused above all on how policy actors achieve desired policies, and how their roles within the network influence the policy outcomes. Method employed range from case study to regression analysis, to time series and event history analysis. The third community, “public management network” community (in the Berry et al. (2004) parlance), is rooted in the public administration and public management field. The main aim of studies in this tradition is to understand (1) whether networks exist and how they function (Mandell 1988), (2) how the network managers can successfully manage them and what competences and skills are necessary for this purpose (Agranoff & McGuire 2001; Gage & Mandell, 1990) and (3) what impact networks have on service delivery and clients satisfaction (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Provan & Milward 1995). Research methods are above all based on multiple and comparative case study, social network analysis and regression analysis.

At the end of their article, Berry et al. (2004) also showed how the managerial community is the youngest of the three communities, developed firstly in the US, where scholars produced a wide variety of articles and books focusing on managing networks (Agranoff & McGuire, 1998; O’Toole, 1997; Provan & Milward, 1991, 1995, 2001), and later in Europe, where “a parallel literature developed” (Kickert et al. 997; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992).
Some years later, in one of the first tentative to conceptualize the “governance and governance network” approach in Europe, Klijn (2008) came back to those differences in the public network literature (in terms of what is studied, the used theoretical assumptions and the employed methods) and explicitly related them to the authors’ Country of origin, thus implicitly arguing the existence of two geographical/Country-based communities of network scholars, “American” the former and “European” the latter.

More specifically, first, Klijn (2008) proposed three different theoretical approaches at the study of public networks. The first deals with research on policy networks and is rooted in the British political science tradition (we will label it “British policy networks approach”). It draws back to the works of Rhodes (1988), Marsh & Rhodes (1992), Marsh (1998) on the policy outcomes of different policy networks. This approach conceives networks as a pattern of formal or informal ties linking government and interest groups (politicians, public servants, ministries, municipalities, interest organization, etc.) and focuses on the actors participating in policy networks and having the power to influence the policy agenda and the decision-making process. The second approach concerns research on interorganizational service delivery and policy implementation networks (“service delivery and implementation tradition”, in the Klijn parlance) (Agranoff, 1998; Mandell, 1994; Provan & Milward, 1995). It draws back to the organizational science tradition (Rogers & Whetten, 1982) and views network as instruments to deliver services. It is focused on how to construct and coordinate the activity of different network partners in order to ensure the service production. The third approach is based on research on governing networks (“governance network”, as Klijn labeled it) (Kickert, 1997; Klijn & Koopenjan, 2000), and is rooted in the public administration tradition and in the research on inter-organizational decision-making (Hanf & Scharpf, 1978). It focuses on the complexity of the decision-making to achieve policy outcomes and aims at reconstructing and improving the network functioning and governance. All the three approaches used qualitative
(case study) and quantitative (social network analysis and survey) methods, even if it is easier to find quantitative researches in the service delivery tradition and qualitative ones in the policy network or governance traditions.

Secondly, later in his article, Klijn (2008) explicitly linked these theoretical traditions at what he calls the American and the European approach at network studies. Whereas, in fact, the policy network tradition crosses over the two scholars’ communities, he argued (2008), the service delivery and implementation tradition is typical of the American approach, more focused on the problems of how to ensure the effectiveness of the service-delivery, and the governance network tradition is more proper of the European approach, more interested in the complexity of public decision-making and in the effective policy network governance. Klijn (2008) also suggested a different methodological approach in the two scholar communities: Americans normally employ greater use of quantitative methods (in the classical forms of regression analysis or social network analysis), whereas Europeans almost exclusively relies on case studies and discourse analysis.

On top of it, other authors shed light on some regional differences in the network literature, thus arguing the existence of “subregional” communities of network researchers. Pedersen (2010) spoke of a Danish policy network approach, Taylor (1992) shed light on the differences between the German and the British approach at policy networks and Klijn (2008) also spoke of some differences in the network community between the South and the North of Europe.

**Method**

The aim of our paper is to empirically investigate the existence of different geographical/“Country-based” communities of public network scholars, explore their similarities and differences, and analyze their evolution over time.
For this purpose we conducted a content analysis on the abstracts of the articles published from 1979 to 2011 in 10 leading public administration/public management journals, and analyzed either the existence of a correlation between certain article characteristics (theoretical framework, main topics and research methods) and the authors’ Country of origin, either the evolution of such article characteristics over time (1979-2011).

More specifically, starting from the 1979 Stern’s article on public networks, we designed a three-step procedure to analyze the existing literature on public networks.

The first step concerned the data/article collection. First, we considered all the public administration/public management journals included in ISI, and then selected the top five American journals and the top five European journals (Table 1). As far as American journals are concerned, we took into consideration the five highly ranked journals according to their impact factors: American Review of Public Administration (ARPA); Journal of Policy Analysis and Management (JPAM), Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory (JPART), Public Administration (PA), Public Administration Review (PAR). As far as the European journals are concerned, we considered Governance (GOV), Local Government Studies (LGS), Public Money and Management (PMM), Public Management Review (PMR) and the recently admitted in ISI International Public Management Journal (IPMJ) (as younger than the American journals, in fact, only four European journals have received an impact factor in 2011) (Table 1). We chose to consider five American and five European journals in order to avoid biases in the article selection, due to the fact that it could be easier for American scholars to publish on American journals (and for European scholars to publish on European journals). Secondly, we collected all the articles published from 1979 to 2011 in the ten journals, containing the word “public networks” in their abstract. We chose 1979 as starting point as, as previously showed, we assumed the work published by Stern (1979), “The development of an interorganizational control network: The case of intercollegiate
athletics”, on Administrative Science Quarterly as the first article using the word “network”. 384 articles were then collected (Table 1); the titles and abstracts of those articles were quickly screened in order to be sure they dealt with “public networks”: 224 articles were then dropped. First we considered only articles, research notes, responses and rejoinders, whereas book reviews were excluded, as were letters to the editor. Secondly, we eliminated all the articles generically referring to network as link among people or organizations, and using the word network to indicate the infrastructure in the utility industry, etc. etc. At the end, 160 articles were retrieved and included in our data base (Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

The second step concerned the data reduction. By reading the abstracts of the retrieved articles, we systematically copied and pasted sentences referring to their theoretical background, their research questions and their research methods. When those information were not available on the abstract, we considered the article full text. Then, by comparing the collected data and considering the existent literature, we could identify some umbrella concepts dealing with the theoretical framework, the main topics and the methods of public network research (Table 2). The 160 articles were then coded according to those categories. Following Klijn (2008), we identified three categories to code the article theoretical background; we labeled them: policy network approach (Marsh, 1998; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Rhodes, 1988); public management network approach (to recall McGuire & Agranoff, 2010) and governance network approach (Klijn, 2008). The article main topics were also coded depending on the fact that the articles dealt with the network establishment (in terms of network formation and characteristics), the network functioning (in terms of network management and governance) or the network performance (in terms of network effectiveness for the clients of the provided services or in terms of policy outcome). The research methods were categorized into qualitative or quantitative depending on the fact studies employ
qualitative data analysis procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1994), or quantitative data analysis techniques (e.g. social network analysis, regression models, etc.). According to this approach, works using a case study research design, but then collecting data through a survey and analyzing them through social network analysis techniques, correlation tests or regression models (e.g. Provan & Milward, 1995) were coded as quantitative. As it is usual in citation analysis (e.g. Usdiken & Pasadeos, 1995) the assignment of an article to a specific country or geographic areas (e.g. American, European, Asian, Others, etc. etc.) depends on the University affiliation of the first author (e.g. location of the home institution of the author or, in the case of multiple authorship, on the institutional affiliation of the first author).

Insert Table 2 about here

The third step concerned the data analysis. First, we considered the characteristics of the 160 article, by simply analyzing their distribution of frequencies along our four categories (author’s Country of origin, theoretical framework, main topics and methods); secondly, in order to identify different communities of public network scholars, we empirically explored the existence of a correlation between the author’s Country of origin and the other articles characteristics (Chi test based on Pearson’s index); thirdly, we conducted a longitudinal analysis by mapping the evolution of the identified communities of researchers from 1979 to 2011.

In the following, we will present the study results, in terms of (1) sample description and article characteristics; (2) correlation tests and communities of public network scholars; (3) longitudinal analysis and evolution of the public network scholar communities over time.

**Results and discussion**

Table 3 describes the main characteristics of the public network articles published from 1979 to 2011 in the ten journal included in our analysis, thus shedding light on the main characteristics of the community of scholars generally focusing on public networks.
Out of the 160 articles included in our database, 52 articles are theoretical and 108 articles are empirical in nature. The high number of theoretical and conceptual articles shows the need of the public network scholar community to think over its origin and characteristics; the most of those articles in fact systematize the existent literature in order to understand “Where We Are and Where We Need to Go” (to recall Isett et al. 2011). As far as the article theoretical framework is concerned, the 29.4% of the considered articles assumes the policy network approach, the 33.8% takes the public management network approach and the remaining 28.1% is based on the governance network approach, thus witnessing a main focus of network scholars on the most consolidated British and American approach, whereas the governance approach, typical of the North European Countries, appears new and again in its preliminary steps of development. Concerning the most investigated topics, scholars seem to concentrate more on network performance (39.4% of the articles) and network formation (with the 37.5% of the articles dealing with the network establishment), whereas the aspects concerning the network functioning and management appear to be more neglected (only the 15.6% of the network articles focuses on them). The remaining 7.5% of the considered articles are systematization of the existent literature. About method, the public network scholars reveals a preference for the qualitative approach, dominating in the policy network and governance network community, and also greatly employed in the managerial community: the 68.5% of the considered articles are in fact qualitative in nature and the 31.5% are quantitative.

As far as the author’s Country of origin is considered, the European scholars seem to be more numerous than the American ones, coherently with the early development of the British policy network theory at the beginning of the Eighties (the public management network approach and the governance approach developed only during the nineties). The 54.4% of our
articles are in fact authored by an European scholar (and as better detailed later, the 44.8% of them is written by an English scholar), whereas only the 38.8% is authored by an American scholar. Then, the 6.9% of our articles are written by scholars of other Countries, mainly Australia, Canada and China (Table 4). As far as European articles are considered, the 44.8% of the considered articles are written by English scholars and the 41.3% comes from the North of Europe (Netherlands 21.8% and Nordic Countries 19.5%), thus revealing the North European nature of public network scholar community in Europe. Only, in fact, the 5.7% of the considered articles comes from the South of Europe: France (2.3%), Spain (2.3%) and Italy (1.1%) (Table 4).

On the basis of these considerations, two communities of public network scholars seem to clearly emerge: American the former and European the latter. As a consequence, in the following we will focus our analysis on them and better explore their characteristics and evolution over time.

Insert Table 4 about here

Normally, American scholars seem to prefer publishing on American journals: the 85.48% of the American-authored articles are in fact published on the five American journals considered. Americans seem also to prefer the two journals of JPAR and PAR as target journals for their publication, where the most of their articles appears (JPART 41.98% and PAR 22.58%). Only, the 14.52% of the American scholars published on the other side of the Atlantic, and the most of those articles was published on a special issue of IPMJ. Europeans seem to be more prone to glance across the Atlantic; the 41.38% of the European-authored articles was published on European journals, but the 58.62% was published on American journals. The high number of European publications on American journals can be explained by taking into consideration the peculiarities of PA, as journal both trying to match the American and the European tradition, and giving room at the policy network approach (the
57% of the articles published on PA assumes in fact the British policy network tradition as theoretical framework) (Table 5).

As far as the target journals are considered, then, the European community seems to be more open and “cross-section” than the American one, appearing, instead, focused on a few journals and forming a sort of elite group. This different approach can be also explained by taking into consideration the journal history and reputation, being the American journals normally older and more highly ranked than the European one. Nevertheless, as academic journals are an extraordinary instrument to spread ideas and to favour the researcher communities’ meeting, an invitation can be addressed to American scholars to take into consideration also European journals.

As far as the article theoretical background is considered (Table 6), American scholars seem to prefer the public management network approach (64.52% of the published articles), coherently with their main focus on networks for the joint provision of public services, even if they seem also to take often the policy network theory as their theoretical framework (17.74%). On the other side of the Atlantic, the picture is completely different: Europeans focus mainly on the governance approach (45.98% of the published articles) and neglect the managerial approach (13.79%). They seem to find a point of contact with the American community in the policy network tradition, representing the theoretical background of the 33.33% of the European-authored articles (Table 5). That can also be explained by taking into consideration the origin of the European network approach and its main focus on policy-making networks (Klijn, 2008).

When considering the research topics, coherently with the managerial approach, Americans seem to be more focused on how to measure the network performance and predict the network success (47.37% of the published articles), and how to explain the network
formation and development (29.82%). On the other side, the network functioning and management seems to be more neglected (22.81%). A similar focalization on network origins and results can also be identified among the European scholars, even if the European scholars seem to be more interested to explain the network rationalities (and justify the network formation in comparison with the most traditional organizational forms of market and hierarchies) (48.78% of the published articles) than investigating the network impact on policies and policy outcomes (37.8%). As for the American communities, the internal network functioning seems to be an under-investigated topic, despite the number of invitations to try to better understand the policy network governance and management (13.41%) (Table 6).

As far as methods are considered, American scholars seem to be more quantitative-oriented than the European ones. The 62.79% of the American articles employs in fact quantitative instruments and techniques for the data analysis, whereas the European articles seem to rely almost exclusively on more qualitative and interpretative data analysis instruments (87.5%) (Table 6).

Such insights are confirmed by the results of the correlation test (Table 6). A strong correlation seems in fact to exist between the authors’ Country of origin and both the article theoretical framework ($X^2_{0.05}$ (df3) = 7.82, $p = 2.24694E-11$) and methods ($X^2_{0.05}$ (df1) = 3.84, $p = 1.75849E-07$). A weaker correlation can also be identified with the main topics public network researchers normally focus on ($X^2_{0.1}$ (df2) = 4.61, $p =0.067$).

On the basis of these considerations, the results of our study seem to suggest the existence of two distinct, and not well integrated, communities of network scholars in the world, more managerial-oriented and “American” the former (Agranoff, 1986, 2006; Agranoff & McGuire 1998, 2001; Huang & Provan, 2007a, 2007b; Isett & Provan, 2005; Mandell, 1994; Mandell & Keast, 2008; McGuire, 2002; McGuire & Agranoff, 2011; Meyer

The longitudinal analysis conducted on the American and the European public network communities from 1979 to 2011 does not seem to lead to significantly different results. As far as the evolution of the characteristics of the two communities are considered, in fact, the American and the European communities seem to remain consistent with their main spirit, and seem to weakly invest in the development of a common field. Since its origin, the American community seems to be managerial-oriented, concerned by the problems of network performance and quantitative in nature. From 1979 to 2011, it seems to develop by strengthening those characteristics. The number of articles taking the public management approach remained always higher than that of articles taking the policy network or governance network approach; on top of it, it has been growing tremendously since 1996. Similarly, since 2000 the number of articles focusing on the network performance has been significantly increasing. Concerning methods, the American community has always been
focused on quantitative data analysis techniques, even if the number of qualitative studies has significantly increased during the last years (Figure 1). A similar history can be told if we consider the European community, developing by strengthening its own characteristics, even if some signals of a greater openness toward the American approach can also be identified. As Figure 2 shows the European community developed by strengthening its own characteristics as community focused on network governance, investigating above all the network establishment and qualitative in nature. Nevertheless, during the last years the number of studies focusing on the network outcome and employing quantitative data analysis techniques seem to have been significantly increased.

Insert Figure 1 and Figure 2 about here

**Conclusion**

The results of our study witness the existence of at least two distinct scholar communities in the world: American the former and European the latter, each one with its own theoretical framework, main interests and research methods.

This can be explained by taking into consideration the peculiarities of the American public administration (Peters 1998) and the distinctiveness of the European one (Kickert 2005).

In this perspective, the development of the managerial approach to public networks in America, and of the governance approach to public networks in Europe can be explained against the historical nature of the public administration and state-society relationships in those countries. In the US, the minimalist State normally engages in public-public and public-private networks to jointly provide public services, thus leading to a prevalent focus on service delivery networks and problems related to their functioning in the network literature. On the other side, the prominent role of European governments in the welfare state in Europe and of the strength interest groups in these societies (Kooiman, 1993; Schmitter & Lembruch,
naturally lead to focus on actors’ role within policy networks and their power to influence policy-making.

What is more difficult to explain is the manifest separation between the two communities, that seem to have no or few points of contact, when, as Berry et al (2004) and Klijn (2008) argue, there are many point of contacts between the different theoretical and methodological traditions at public networks that should be positively merged and contaminated.

To follow such invitation, initiatives as the Transatlantic Dialogue Conference organized every year within the framework of the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA) to foster the dialogue between American and European scholars seem to be particularly important. On top of it, internationally co-authored articles can be useful to facilitate the contamination among the existent network communities, but are traditionally neglected. In our data base, in fact, only the 14% of the selected articles are international (i.e. co-authored by authors of different countries). Fostering the collaboration among scholars working in different Universities around the world is, in this perspective, another instrument to encourage the dialogue and build a bridge between the existent and independent public network academic communities.
Table 1 – Public network articles published from 1979 to 2011

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<th>Total no. of articles screened as relevant</th>
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<td>Journal of Policy Analisys and Management</td>
<td>1981-2011</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</td>
<td>1991-2011</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>1923-2011</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Administration Review</td>
<td>1940-2011</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>US - American Journals Total</strong></td>
<td>270</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EU - European Journals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>1988-2011</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Public Management Journal</td>
<td>2005-2011</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Studies</td>
<td>1975-2011</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Money and Management</td>
<td>1988-2011</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Management Review</td>
<td>2000-2011</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EU - European Journals Total</strong></td>
<td>114</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>US + EU Total</strong></td>
<td>384</td>
<td>160</td>
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Table 2 – Methods for data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Public network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Databases</td>
<td>Journal publisher web site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search criteria</td>
<td>“network” in the abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total # of articles retrieved: 384</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of articles screened as relevant: 160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of empirical studies: 108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of normative/theoretical paper: 52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of US-authored articles: 62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of EU-authored studies: 87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of articles from other countries: 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coding system</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author origin country: affiliation of the article first author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy network approach: (Rhodes 1988; Marsh and Rhodes 1992; Marsh 1998)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public management network approach (Mandell 1994; Provan and Milward 1995; Agranoff 1998)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance network approach (Kickert et al. 1997; Koppenjan and Kickert 2004; Klijn, 2008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network formation (network establishment, network structural characteristics and their predictors, rationales for networks against market and hierarchy, role of government in policy network, network development)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network functioning (network management, competences and skills of the network managers, control and accountability issue)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network performance (effectiveness of service-delivery network, predictors of public network effectiveness, policy outcomes, network effects on policy outcomes, network impact on democracy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative approach (interpretative data analysis techniques, discourse analysis)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative approach (social network analysis, regression models, correlation tests)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 – Sample description and article characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total no. of articles screened as relevant</th>
<th>160</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US-authored articles</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-authored articles</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative/theoretical papers</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical papers</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theoretical framework**
- Policy network theory: 29.4%
- Public Management network theory: 33.8%
- Governance network theory: 28.1%
- Organization and economic theory: 8.8%

**Main topics**
- Network formation: 37.5%
- Network functioning: 15.6%
- Network performance: 39.4%
- Literature review: 7.5%

**Methods**
- Quantitative approach: 31.5%
- Qualitative approach: 68.5%

Table 4 – Geographical distribution of public network articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US-authored articles</th>
<th>38.8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-authored articles</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EU-authored articles**
- UK: 44.8%
- Netherlands: 21.8%
- Nordic Countries: 19.5%
- Italy: 1.1%
- Germany: 4.6%
- France: 2.3%
- Spain: 2.3%
- Belgium: 2.3%
- Turkey: 1.1%
Table 5 – US and EU authored articles – target journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Total no. of articles screened as relevant</th>
<th>US-authored articles</th>
<th>EU-authored articles</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>US - American Journals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American review of public administration</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.29%</td>
<td>5.75%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Policy Analisys and Management</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41.94%</td>
<td>8.05%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9.68%</td>
<td>41.38%</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration Review</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.58%</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>US - American Journals Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EU - European Journals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.61%</td>
<td>5.75%</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Public Management Journal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.45%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Studies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.05%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Money and Management</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.05%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Management Review</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.45%</td>
<td>17.24%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EU - European Journals Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>US + EU Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>160</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 - US and EU authored articles – main characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total no.</th>
<th>US-authored articles</th>
<th>EU-authored articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theoretical framework</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy network theory</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.74%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Management network theory</td>
<td>64.52%</td>
<td>13.79%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance network theory</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.84%</td>
<td>45.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and economic theory</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
<td>6.90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(X^2) (0.05) (df3) = 7.82. (p = 2.24694E-11)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Main topics</strong></th>
<th>US-authored articles</th>
<th>EU-authored articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Network establishment</td>
<td>29.82%</td>
<td>48.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network functioning</td>
<td>22.81%</td>
<td>13.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network performance</td>
<td>47.37%</td>
<td>37.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(X^2) (0.1) (df2) = 4.61. (p = 0.067)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Methods</strong></th>
<th>US-authored articles</th>
<th>EU-authored articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative approach</td>
<td>62.79%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative approach</td>
<td>37.21%</td>
<td>87.50%</td>
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</table>
Figure 1 – Evolution of the American community on public networks
Figure 2 - Evolution of the European community on public networks
References


