

U Democratic subjectivities in network governance: B Using web-enabled Q methodology with European public administrators

Stephen Jeffares & Chris Skelcher
July 1st 2008

Focus of study

- Managerialism/ network governance increases agency of public administrators
- Impact on design and operation of networks
- What are their tacit democratic subjectivities and how do they inform design?
- Comparatively, to what extent do these subjectivities reflect the different democratic milieux within which public administrators work?

Four Conjectures (Klijn and Skelcher 2007)

Relationship between network governance and representative democracy is:

- Complementary
- Incompatible
- Transitional
- instrumental

Research Design: Q Methodology

- Quantitative based technique to improve rigour of interpretative methodology for mapping tacit subjectivities
- Method:
 1. Identify breadth of debate (concourse)
 2. Represent through sample of debate (Q sample)
 3. Quasi-forced ranking of statements by respondents (P sample)
 4. Principal components analysis to identify main factors
 5. Interpretation of factors
 6. Additional qualitative data collection

**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

Concourse of debate

- Analysis of interview transcripts from previous research
- Review of academic literature
- Recording and analysis of academic and practitioner debates

**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

Devising Q Sample

	Entity relationship	Agency	Motivation
Defining			
Reporting			
Prescribing			

**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

P Sample

- Public administrators studying part-time at Birmingham, Erasmus, and Roskilde/Copenhagen Business School
- Emailed request plus link to webtool <http://hsmcfs3.bham.ac.uk/democracy/>
- Initial analysis n = 43 (23 NL; 20 UK)

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Analysis and results

- Results analysed using PQ for Windows
- Maximise actors loading and ensuring none are confounded
- Consideration of factors with eigenvalues +1
- 7 factor solution – 5 worth analysing

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Example of factor

```
=====
Factor A for Merge.sty (Graphical)
(15/04/2008 16:46:07)
=====
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
-----
11 1 5 4 8 13 17 2 3 12 36
14 15 6 10 22 18 7 25 30
16 21 27 23 20 9 26
33 28 31 24 19
29 34 32
35

Sort with significant loadings:
---label-----sort---load
uk19 8 0.56
uk27 16 0.67
uk30 20 0.50
NL2 22 0.63
NL19 38 0.71
uk22 11 0.57
uk28 17 0.56
NL1 21 0.53
NL5 24 0.50
NL21 40 0.52
```

Factor A: Widening democracy

- Networks help to open up policy making to groups who would otherwise not have a voice (S36; +5).
 - Networks pose a fundamental threat to local government (S11; -5).
 - Building trust is the key to a successful network (S30; +4).
 - Who – 5UK, 5NL
- “Networks can help close the gap between politics and the people” (NL19, A, +5)

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Factor B: Improving the delivery of services by traditional government

- The public are concerned with what networks achieve, not how they make decisions (S13; +5).
 - Networks pose a fundamental threat to local government (S11; -4).
 - Networks can help new forms of democracy to develop (S12; +4).
 - Who – 2 UK, 3 NL
- “The public only see the results of the decisions. This is what affects them and their lives. The majority are only interested in the ends.” (UK26, B, +5)

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Factor D: Networks as a messy management puzzle

- Conflict is inevitable in networks (S18; +5).
 - Networks should have a flexible approach to problem solving (S19; +4)
 - Networks have legitimacy when they are controlled by elected politicians (S31; -5).
 - Who – 3UK, 5NL
- “In my opinion, it’s up to people to bring their own ideas into networks directly. You don’t want the distorted version of the people’s ideas as told by politicians.” (NL15, D, -5)

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Factor E: Networks are poor relation to representative government 1

- Representative democracy should be the main way of making public policy decisions (S10; +5).
- Networks have a very clear view of what they are expected to achieve (S21; -4).
- The value of networks is that they cut through the usual red tape (S6; -5).

Who – 2UK, 1NL

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Factor E: Networks are poor relation to representative government 2

Q: *The value of networks is that they cut through the usual red tape (S6).*

A: The problem of partnerships is that they tend to have too many members to work effectively. Usually a strategic partnership is needed and an operational partnership below it to cover all the work They need to know what is going on in other organisations – huge amounts of time just taken up by briefs, bringing people up to date, pointless reading out of endless reports, new performance management processes ... to monitor and evaluate projects.... (UK15, E, -5)

29 years old, female, working in community safety in the UK, 20 hours per week in networks

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Factor F: Networks are open arena

- Building trust is the key to a successful network (S30; +5).
- Everyone in a network should be able to have their say in whatever way they think is best (S24; +4).
- Networks have legitimacy when they are controlled by elected politicians (S31; -5).

Who – 4UK, 1NL

“The more the opinions, the better the picture of the situation, the better the discussion, the better the solution” (NL10, F, +5)

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

But isn't Factor F the same as A?

Q shows subtleties: on most statements very similar, but, on 5 statements differ by 3 or more positions:

1. Networks are creating direct democratic involvement by people outside political parties and government (S9, A2, F-4).
2. Representative democracy should be the main way of making public policy decisions (S10, A-1, F3).
3. Networks deal with managerial, not political issues (S14, A-1, F3).
4. Most of the decisions made by networks will involve only a few people and take place behind close doors (S15).
5. Everyone in a network should be able to have their say in whatever way they think is best (S24).

**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

Conclusion

- Results reveal more of a complex picture than the quant. or qual. literature
- Public administrators located within different discourses of democracy
- Networks as communicative arenas in which these discourses contest
- Challenges:
 1. To explain institutional design in relation to discursive contest/ hegemony – archetypes/ hybrids
 2. To explain mediating role of democratic milieu
 3. Development of method into interactive research post-Q tool, including applied outputs

**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**
