

Finding the Holes, Filling the Gaps: A Bibliometric Analysis of Expert Expectations on Public Administration Trends and Key Concepts in the Literature

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Introduction

This paper aims to examine academic perceptions of the discipline of public administration, and how that connects with the reality of the literature written in the discipline. Through bibliometrics, it aims to provide an alternative, and quantitative, approach to review articles that shows the nature of public administration as a discipline. The main research question is:

1. Do academic perceptions of key trends in public administration correspond with the actual literature written in the discipline?
2. Does this indicate an expectations gap between what the discipline should be, as defined by academics, and what it is?

In parts, this paper focuses mainly on a bibliometric analysis of multi-level governance, due to time constraints and data availability.

The Theory Behind Expectations, and Expectations Gaps

This work builds on literature around economic gap analysis, marketing research and public expectations and travels the concept to the realm of the public administration academe and practitioners. There is a growing body of literature looking at expectations and public service delivery (for example, see James, 2009; Lyons, Lowery & DeHoog, 1992; Van Ryzin, 2004), but this satisfaction approach has been applied less extensively to the practitioner/academic divide. The expectations gap explored in this work is between the research provided by academics, and the reception of this information by practitioners. Gap analysis allows for the understanding of the perspectives of both sides of a service relationship (Brown & Swartz, 1989, p. 92) – in this case public administration scholars and public administration practitioners. This relation produces a set of expectations and outcomes, and a comparison of these reveals any gaps between the outcomes of the provider (the academic) and the expectations of the recipient (the practitioner). If the recipient's expectations are lower than the provider's outcomes, then the gap results in satisfaction from the recipient. If the expectations and outcomes are the same, then there is a neutral outcome and no gap. Finally, if the recipient's expectations are greater than the provider's outcomes, then the gap created results in dissatisfaction from the recipient. Of course, these outcomes can be conceived as a continuum. This has been branded a confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm (Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins, 1987, p. 305), but this is not uncontested in the literature. Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins introduced a modified view of expectations as experience-based norms, which reflect desired performance in meeting needs and wants that are constrained by the performance that receivers expect is possible based on prior performance (Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins, 1987, p 306). In addition, there is a zone of indifference between satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Brown & Swartz, 1989, p. 93), which can fit into a 'neutral' outcome.

Resultant gaps may take several forms. The most obvious is the gap between the receiver's expectations and their experiences, which is the focus of this paper, but there are also gaps between receivers' expectations and the providers' perceptions of receivers' expectations,

and between receivers' perceptions of outcomes and providers' expectations of outcomes (Brown & Swartz, 1989, p. 93). The way in which expectations are developed can also be varied. Expectations may be a result of past experience, or based on other people's experiences or information gathered about the nature of what the provider can provide. Expectations can also be developed based on ideological grounds, or other (potentially unfounded) perceptual bases. This may result in yet another gap - a perception gap where groups may hold certain positive or negative prejudices that then colour how they perceive the performance of the provider (Flinders & Kelso, 2011, p. 253). The gap is then between those perceptions and the actual level of service that is provided. An expectations gap occurs when the receiver expects more than can be provided; in contrast, a perceptions gap occurs when the provider meets expectations but the receiver fails to recognise this (Flinders & Kelso, 2011, p. 254). All of these expectations can be developed *ex ante*, based on promises and commitments, or *ex post*, based on previous experience (Flinders & Kelso, 2011, p. 251). The gaps can be closed by the provider in three ways. The provider can increase/adjust their provision in line with the expectations of the receiver; the provider can reduce the expectations of the receiver; or there can be a combination of reducing expectations and increasing delivery (Smith & Swartz, 1989, p. 97; Flinders, 2011, p. 252). This work will not go down a recursive wormhole of multiple gaps and only focus on the gap between recipient's expectations and provider's results and outcomes. While expectations as experience-based norms are an interesting adaptation of a standard confirmation/disconfirmation idea of expectations, the data in this study does not allow for examination of how expectations are formed. Instead, the work will just focus on whether a gap exists between academics and practitioners, and look at why and how this gap has developed.

Methodology

Bibliometrics as a method of analysis grew out of library science and can be used to examine literature to reveal specific subjects, concepts or trends in large bodies of literature (Lawani, 1981; Hung, 2012; Bornmann, 2013) and has been used before in examining politics- and public administration-related concepts (Curry and Van de Walle, forthcoming; Vogel, 2013). Analyses looking at concepts can examine a full body of literature for

1. The quantity of literature on a subject;
2. The temporal span of this body of literature;
3. The types of literature;
4. The general importance of the literature, as measured by total citation counts;
5. The key titles for each field, as measured by citation counts for individual articles;
6. The origins and the spread of the literature (adapted from Lawani, 1981, p. 309).

Articles were collected through Web of Science using the WoS Core Collection database. A topic search (which includes instances of multi-level governance in title, keyword or abstract) was conducted in all WoS journals, using variations on the terms addressed from 2007-2016. The articles were then analysed using Bibexcel (available at <http://homepage.univie.ac.at/juan.gorraiz/bibexcel/>, Persson, Danell and Schneider, 2009) and VOSviewer. Analyses were conducted using WoS field codes, including title, author, journal, publication year, abstract, key words and author addresses. This identified 15,694 articles, and 672,757 citations for analysis.

References cited within those texts, drawn from the WoS CD field code, were also analysed to determine conceptual depth. These citations were likewise analysed in Bibexcel to the full extent of the data, looking at cited authors, journals and years. The major limitations to this type of study are 1) the extent of the records kept by Web of Science, and 2) the extent of bibliographic information available on each article. WoS focuses mainly on articles, which can be seen as limiting. However, other sources – most notably books – are incorporated through the citation analysis, which covers any material cited and not only articles. Second, bibliographic information on the journal articles can be limited, especially as one explores further and further back through the years. For this reason, the analysis focuses on more recent years, and the large number of sources helps to limit the effects of any outlying or poor data.

The article focuses on two analyses of the vitality of the concept – breadth and depth. Conceptual breadth looks at the bodies of literature to determine the spread of the concept through political science and potentially into other disciplines. This will be measured in three main ways. First, journal sources will be analysed to see where articles are published. Second, authors and countries of origin will be examined. Finally, title, abstract and keyword searches were conducted.

Source of Analysis	Sign of Conceptual Vitality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal sources • Authors and country • Titles, abstracts and keywords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread of journals • Spread of authors and author locations • Robust, discrete word co-occurrences

Conceptual depth examines the sources that articles cite. This allows for exploration of how authors engage with the wider literature. Here, three main measures can be used to assess the vitality of the literature. First, the extent of diffusion of references indicates whether a wide range of material is used to address the subject. Second, reference specialisation (i.e. lack of reliance on review publications) indicates a continued and updated approach to studying the concept. Finally, the usage of contemporary references shows that study has not stagnated by referring to older publications, and that authors continue to engage with new literature on the subject.

Source of Analysis	Sign of Conceptual Vitality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference diffusion and co-citation • Specialisation of references • Reference age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread of references • Lack of reliance on review literature and significant co-citation • Usage of contemporary references

Vitality of the body of literature can therefore be assessed in these two ways, looking at the literature itself and the references that that literature uses.

The research identified different terms that were deemed to be either increasing or decreasing in importance in the public administration literature. The top ten of each declining and

increasing terms were analysed. This produced a total of 18 terms, as three terms were on both lists of most declining and most increasing in importance, and there was one tie.

Increasing	Declining
1. Performance management	1. New Public Management
2. Network governance	2. Performance management
3. Accountability	3. Local government
4. Regulation	4. Network governance
5. Ethics	5. Bureaucracy
6. Innovation	6. Privatisation
7. Collaboration/cooperation	7. Accountability
8. Co-production/co-creation	8. Institutions
9. Public Sector Motivation	9. Public sector reform
10. (Tie) Austerity E-governance	10. Human Resources

The literature on these topics identifies almost 16,000 articles.

Term	Number of Publications 2007-2016
Performance Management	314
Network Governance	137
Accountability	1322
Regulation	1629
Ethics (ethic*)	591
Innovation	1955
Collaboration/cooperation	1563
Co-production/Co-Creation	153
Motivation	862
Austerity	147
E-Governance	106
New Public Management	524
Local government	1580
Bureaucracy	658
Privatisation	434
Institutions	2350
Public sector reform	705
Human resources	664
Total	15,694

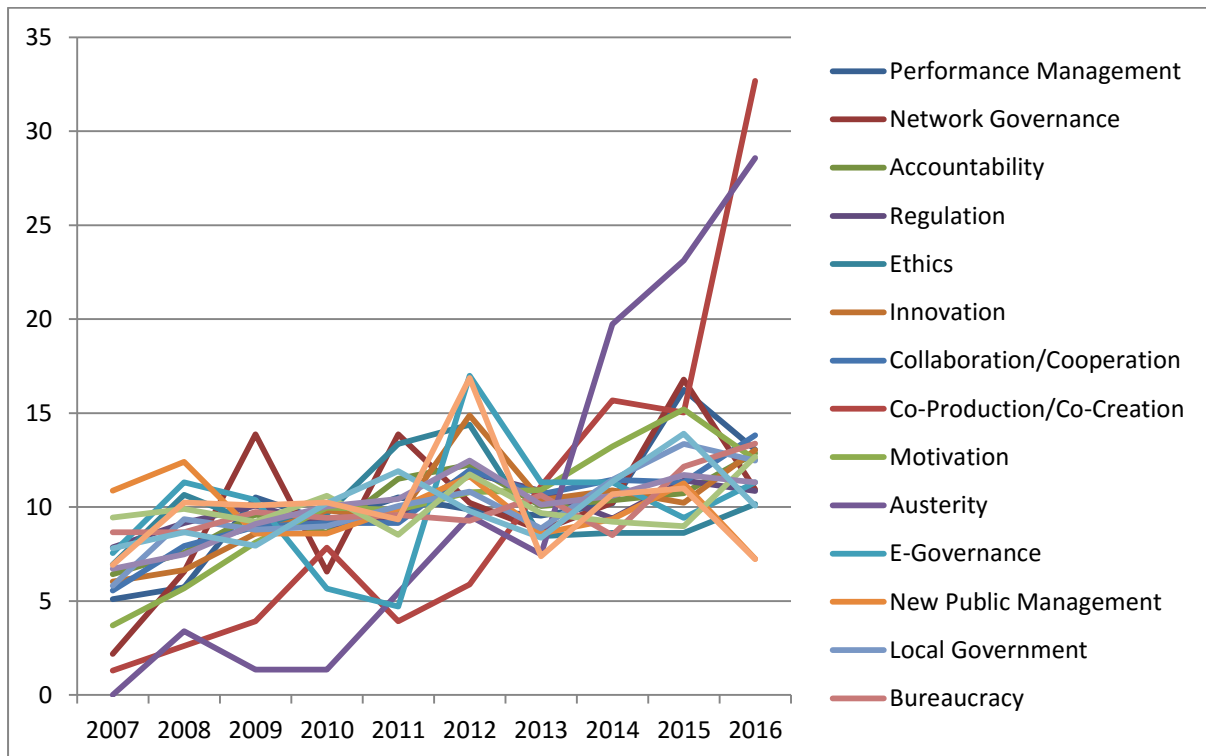
A Bibliometric Analysis of Multi-Level Governance in the Academic Literature

Conceptual Breadth

Articles and Journal Sources

A straightforward comparison between terms is difficult, as some of the concepts are much broader than others. Instead, trends and increases and declines in literatures will be compared. All concepts published somewhat more articles at the end of the ten year period than at the

beginning, but this is likely simply a result of an increase in sources available on Web of Science. Some trends did not increase significantly and even remained stagnant, which indicates a concept that is not developing significantly in the literature. Particularly, Human Resources, New Public Management, ethics and privatisation did not develop significantly over time. Many terms fluctuated between years, but a few also showed significant growth over the time period. Most markedly (and unsurprisingly), research on austerity increased significantly over the time period. There was also significant growth in the study of co-production and co-creation. Roughly 30% of the literature dealing with both concepts came in the last year of study (2016).



There was significant variation in journal spread for articles on each concept, with a maximum of 139 journals covering institutional issues, and a minimum of 35 journals addressing austerity. These numbers roughly correspond to the number of overall articles on each topic, as does the ratio of articles to journals.¹

Term	Number of Journals	Most Common Journal	Article/Journal Ratio	Authors	Author Ratio
Performance Management	59	Public Performance and Management Review (44)	5.32	493	1.57
Network Governance	46	Public Administration (22)	2.98	228	1.66

¹ As this research only covers public administration journal, spread can only extend as far as the journals covered in Web of Science under the Public Administration category.

Accountability	112	Public Administration Review (91)	11.8	1971	1.49
Regulation	137	Regulation and Governance (184)	11.89	2542	1.56
Ethics (ethic*)	95	Public Administration Review (50)	6.22	872	1.48
Innovation	131	Science and Public Policy (274)	14.92	3343	1.71
Collaboration/cooperation	132	Public Administration Review (82)	11.84	2704	1.73
Co-production/Co-Creation	46	Public Management Review (26)	3.33	322	2.10
Motivation	101	Public Administration Review	8.53	1204	1.4
Austerity	35	Social Policy and Administration (20)	4.2	270	1.84
E-Governance	49	Conference Proceedings	2.16	179	1.69
New Public Management	79	International Review of Administrative Sciences (53)	6.63	840	1.60
Local government	111	Local Government Studies (240)	14.23	2288	1.45
Bureaucracy	93	Public Administration Review (72)	7.08	959	1.46
Privatisation	74	Public Administration Review (27)	5.86	604	1.39
Institutions	139	Journal of European Public Policy (202)	16.91	3754	1.6
Public sector reform	84	International Review of Administrative Sciences (72)	8.39	1122	1.59
Human resources	101	Review of Public Personnel Administration	6.57	1139	1.72

E-governance was the most fractured literature, with slightly over 2 articles per journal, whereas institutions was the most concentrated (again, this is likely due to the large number of articles on institutions). Network governance was also relatively fractured. Despite these being more specific terms, this has not led to a concentration of articles in any one source.

There was less spread in the ratio between authors and publications. The largest ratio was in co-production and co-creation, with 2.10 authors/publication, and the smallest was in privatisation and public sector motivation. A smaller ratio can be seen to indicate a more concentrated literature and a smaller community.

This diffusion is also evident in the Web of Science categorisation of the publications. Notably, the number of articles categorised under Environmental Studies has significantly increased relatively recently, with it overtaking Political Science as the most-referenced subject only in 2016.

Author Diffusion

This section focuses mainly on literature on multi-level governance. The vast majority of the publications were journal articles (84.6%) and almost exclusively published in English (97%). Geographically, there was a significant spread of countries with authors writing about MLG, with 62 different countries producing articles on the topic. Despite its European origin, 3 of the top ten countries producing MLG literature are non-European (Australia, Canada and the United States). The United Kingdom produced the most articles on MLG by a substantial margin (more than 100 papers), and the top 10 countries accounted for 93.6% of all articles. In comparison, the top ten countries for NPM literature accounted for only 77.1% of all articles, with 59 countries overall. This indicates that there was a more even spread across countries in the NPM literature, whereas it was more concentrated in fewer countries (with a long tail of countries with very few articles) for MLG. However, within the top ten, there was a more even spread between countries, with five countries having more than 100 articles on the topic, compared to only two countries for NPM.

The most cited article on MLG was Hooghe and Marks' 'Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-Level Governance' with 585 citations, followed by Adger et al.'s 'Social-Ecological Resilience to Coastal Disasters' (573) and Folke et al.'s 'Resilience and Sustainable Development: Building Adaptive Capacity in a World of Transformations' (573), with a significant drop after those articles. Interestingly, three of the top ten articles were clearly outside the politics sphere of academic literature, and seven of the top ten articles dealt with environmental issues. Overall, 23 (1.9%) articles had more than 100 citations, which is slightly higher in comparison to the NPM literature (with 1.4% of articles having 100 or more citations). The corpus as a whole was similar to that of NPM literature, with 13,390 citations (without self-citations) in 11,249 articles, an average of 12.75 citations per item and an h-index of 54. NPM articles, which had a similar number of articles, were cited 12,657 times in 9148 articles, an average of 13.21 citations per article and an h-index of 51.

When one looks at all the terms, there is a wide variance in the countries that are writing on various concepts.

Term	Top Countries	Top Research Areas	Top Author
Performance Management	USA (31) China (19) England (9) Denmark (4) South Korea (4)	Political Science (10) Management (9) Planning and Development (7) Industrial Relations Labour (4) Economics (3)	DP Moynihan (3.5%)
Network Governance	England (18) USA (17) China (13) Netherlands (12) Australia (9)	Political Science (41) Plan & D'ment (10) Management (6) Env'tal Studies (4) Social Work (2)	XN Zhu (3.6%)
Accountability	USA (32) England (11) China (9) Australia (7) Netherlands (7)	PS (22) P&D (10) Management (7) Social Work (3) Economics (2)	T Schillemans (0.983%)
Regulation	USA 26 China 16 England 11 Canada 5 Netherlands 5	PS 37 Law 13 P&D 8 Economics 7 Management 6	A Prakash (0.737%)
Ethics (ethic*)	USA 31 China 20 England 11 Canada 6 Netherlands 5	PS 15 PD 11 Management 10 ES 5 Social Issues 4	Z Van der Wal Z Zhang (1.354%)
Innovation	China 27 USA 21 England 11 Canada 5 Netherlands 5	Management 27 PD 22 PS 20 ES 8 Economics 8	Y Liu (0.46%)
Collaboration/cooperation	USA 30 China 19 England 9 Australia 5 Netherlands 5	PS 21 Management 14 PD 13 ES 7 Economics 5	XN Zhu (0.832%)
Co-production/Co-Creation	England 20 USA 20 Netherlands 14 Australia 10 Wales/Scotland 6	Management 24 PS 16 PD 14 Social Work 7 Social Issues 6	T Bovaird G Van Ryzin (3.268%)
Motivation	USA 42 China 15 South Korea 7 Netherlands 7 England 6	Management 13 PS 13 Industrial Relations Labour 5 PD 5 Economics 4	SK Pandey (2.436%)
Austerity	England 40 Germany 12	PS 32 PD 26	V Lowndes (2.721%)

	USA 10 Netherlands 8 Scotland 8 Denmark 7	Social Issues 24 Social Work 21 Env. Studies 3	
E-Governance	India 28 USA 12 China 10 Romania 8 Spain 7	PS 40 Computer Science 14 Information Science 9 Business 4 PD 4	Y Pardhasaradhi (4.717%)
New Public Management	China 15 USA 13 England 10 Netherlands 7 Australia 6	PS 22 Management 12 PD 10 Social Issues 3 Social Work 2	M Bolivar (1,336)
Local government	USA 25 China 18 England 14 Australia 6 Wales 5	PS 33 PD 21 Management 5 Env. S 3 Economics 2	R Walker (1.772%)
Bureaucracy	USA 41 England 6 China 6 Germany 5 Netherlands 4	PS 26 PD 6 Management 6 Social Issues 3 Social Work 2	D Pitts (1.368%)
Privatisation	USA 34 England 12 Spain 9 China 7 Canada 6	PS 24 PD 13 Social Work 7 Social Issues 6 Management 6	G Bel (4.839%)
Institutions	USA 24 England 11 China 11 Canada 6 Germany 6	PS 33 PD 11 Management 7 Env. S 6 Social Issues 5	R Feiock (0.553%)
Public sector reform	USA 19 China 13 England 9 Australia 8 Netherlands 7	PS 19 PD 13 Management 9 Social Issues 6 Social Work 5	R Battaglio T Christensen (1.135%)
Human resources	USA 34 China 27 Canada 5 South Korea 4 Australia 3	Management 14 PS 10 Industrial Relations Labour 9 Economics 7 PD 6	D Goodman (1.355%)

Title/Key Word/Abstract Usage

This section focuses on MLG literature. Once multi-level governance and variations thereof were removed, a few notable words and phrases were prominent in the literature. ‘Climate’

and ‘Climate change’ were used frequently, with climate being the fifth most-used word in titles. Environmental issues were strong overall, with ‘Environmental’, ‘Water’, ‘Sustainability’ and ‘Sustainable’, ‘Biodiversity’ all placing highly as most commonly used words. There was still a strong focus on Europe in the literature, with ‘Europe’ being the second-most used word and ‘EU’ being the 11th most-used word. Structural terms such as ‘structures’ and ‘institutions’ were also prominent, as were related relational terms such as ‘relation’ and ‘network. Inputs were mentioned 20 times, outputs 25 times and throughputs 7 times.

The papers covered a wide range of topics, but certain specific areas (either geographic or policy-related) could be discerned. In analysis of titles, ‘European’, ‘Europe’ and ‘EU’ (combined) were the second most-used terms, and ‘climate’ was the fifth most-used term, with ‘Environmental’ and ‘Water’ also high on the list. Other signifiers, such as ‘Regional’, ‘Local’, ‘Urban’ and ‘global’ were commonly used in titles. ‘Climate change’ was also the third most-used key word (behind only ‘multi-level governance’ and ‘governance’), even higher than the European Union and Europeanization (fourth and fifth respectively). However, there was not a significant overlap of key words, with only 35 being used in more than ten papers each. In terms of subject fields, Environmental Science & Ecology was the second most-used category as well (376 occurrences).

Conceptual Depth

An analysis of the citations of each term produces a database of almost 700,000 sources. While conceptual breadth relies on Web of Science sources, and thus strongly biases journal articles, citation analysis brings in all sources, including books, websites and articles.

Term	Number of Citations	Citations/Article
Performance Management	14,116	45.0
Network Governance	7,064	51.6
Accountability	59,519	45.0
Regulation	63,628	39.1
Ethics (ethic*)	22,518	38.1
Innovation	74,087	37.9
Collaboration/cooperation	61,325	39.2
Co-production/Co-Creation	7,707	50.4
Motivation	47,624	55.2
Austerity	6,717	45.7
E-Governance	2,673	25.2
New Public Management	23,621	45.1
Local government	64,483	40.8
Bureaucracy	34,351	52.2
Privatisation	21,282	49.0
Institutions	102,690	43.7
Public sector reform	35,511	50.4
Human resources	23,841	35.9
Total	672,757	

Reference Diffusion and Co-Citation

At this time, only a full analysis of MLG was possible. There were a total of 51,022 citations in the 1191 articles, slightly more than the number for NPM (over 47,000 citations). Hooghe and Marks' 2003 'Unravelling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-Level Governance' in *American Political Science Review* was the most cited article, with 201 citations. Article citations reveal a few notable factors. First, perhaps unsurprisingly, Liesbet Hooghe is the most cited author, followed by Gary Marks, Harriet Bulkeley, Elinor Ostrom, Ian Bache, Fritz Scharpf, Michele Betsill and Andrew Moravcsik. The European Commission (and its predecessor, the Commission of the European Communities) was also highly cited, as was the OECD.

There were 279 articles cited at least 10 times, as compared to 175 for NPM. There were also a higher number of journals cited at least 10 times compared to NPM. This indicates a reasonable spread of citations, with greater diffusion than was evident with NPM. While conceptual literature may get routinized over time, where certain sources – such as Hooghe and Marks – may become the 'default citation', this appears to be less the case with MLG than with NPM. Co-citation did not reveal any pairings between article citations that were unexpected (e.g. the most common pairs were between the most significant pieces of MLG literature). There did however appear to be the genesis of two separate MLG bodies of literature – the traditional body of 'governance' literature and the newer environmental policy literature – but more analysis must be done to confirm this. In terms of subject depth, there was the noted move towards environmental policy, and expanding the scope to include non-European countries. In terms of general conceptual review articles, Hooghe and Marks' ground-breaking work, and Bache and Flinders 2004 update, were the latest highly-cited pieces. As those are between 10-15 years old at this point in time, there appears to have been less development in further conceptualising MLG.

Specialisation of References

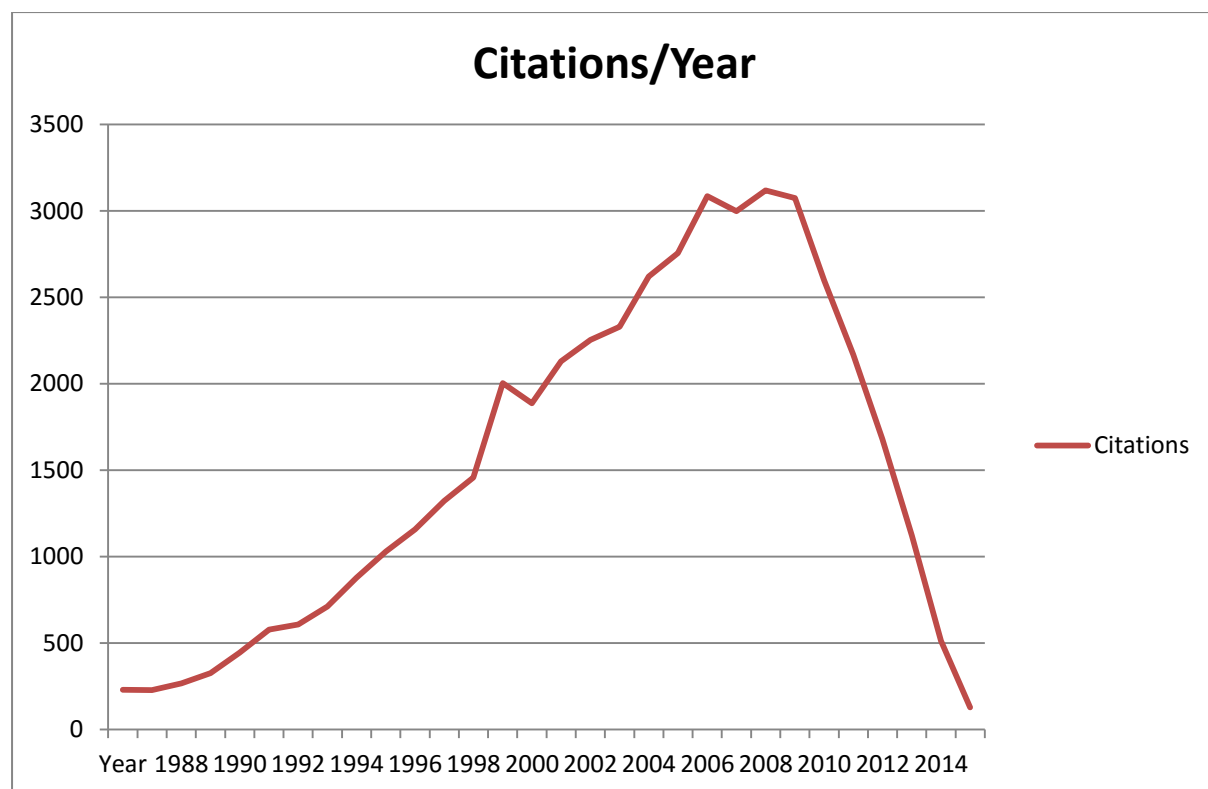
While not a perfect proxy, the number of books that are heavily cited can be used to indicate a focus on review literature. 19 of the top 50 references were books, compared to over half of the top 50 in NPM, indicating a stronger journal presence for MLG. There was a similar spread of authors in the top 50 cited articles between the two terms, with 31 authors for NPM and 30 authors for MLG. However, there was more spread in the most heavily cited articles. While Hood and Pollitt dominated the most cited articles in NPM, there were at least six authors near the top of the most-cited list for MLG. While Hooghe and Marks are, to a certain extent, the 'default' authors of MLG, their citations are spread over multiple articles, and interspersed with significant numbers of citations to other authors as well. The move to MLG as an environmental concept has also increased the specialisation of references evident in the MLG literature.

Usage of Contemporary References

32 of the top 50 references came after the year 2000, compared to only 15 for NPM, signifying a much newer literature for citations in MLG, and 65% of the top 100 articles date

from 2000 or later. The most recent articles in the top 100 most cited articles are six dating from 2010. The most cited year for MLG research was 2009, with 3118 citations. The top ten years for citations all came in the 2000s, with the earliest year being 2003 and the latest being 2012. These findings contrast sharply with the NPM literature, where references focused on much older literature, with a significant majority (over 65%) of the articles being written in the 1990s or earlier, and the latest article in a list of 100 most-cited articles dates from 2007. 16.8% of articles cited were from the previous 5 years,² which is a common benchmark for the ‘newness’ of a concept (Price, 1970), a significantly greater proportion than the 8% of citations for NPM. These findings support bibliometric research and the concept of obsolescence (Line and Sandison, 1974; Sandison, 1987; Line 1993; Rowlands and Nicholas, 2007, pp. 226), which states that ‘literature of the past few years account for a large proportion of total citations’ in non-obsolete cases (Lawani, 1981, pp. 31; Meadows, 2005, pp. 91).

Citation Years



The mean reference age is 10 years old, which puts it at significantly lower than that for NPM (16 years) and at the low end of average compared to (outdated) averages for economics (10.6), business (10.9) and sociology (12.5) (Glanzel and Schoepflin, 1999, pp. 41).

Conclusions, and a Way Forward

The bibliometric analysis of these terms shows little correlation between those concepts that academics felt were increasing or declining in importance. This illustrates a disconnection

² As the cut-off date was 2015, the previous five years were 2011-2015

between academic perceptions of the discipline and the actual direction and focus of its scholarship as a whole. This points to an expectations gap within academia, between what the discipline should be and what it actually produces.

In terms of MLG, where the research was able to go into more depth, the bibliometric analysis points to MLG as a vital and current concept. In terms of breadth, the literature has spread into new areas, most notably environmental policy, and there is a wide spread of journals that write on MLG, even outside of the traditional political science and public policy channels. While the spread of countries with authors writing on MLG was somewhat limited, there was a larger number of countries producing significant numbers of articles on NPM, including many countries outside of Europe. This indicates that the concept has moved beyond its traditional EU trappings.

In terms of conceptual depth, as measured by the works cited in the MLG literature, the concept also proved vital. There was a greater diffusion of references – both in terms of authors and journals – than was evident in comparable literatures such as New Public Management. There was a greater spread of authors being cited as well, and a heavier reliance on journal articles, rather than books, than NPM. Finally, references were significantly more current for MLG than NPM, with both a higher number of articles from the last five years being heavily cited and a much shorter average article age than NPM (10 years, as compared to nearly 16 years for NPM). Overall, this points to a vital concept that is still developing and moving in new directions.

The quantitative analysis of MLG as a concept does point to some ways in which the concept can develop. While MLG is moving into new policy spaces, there is still a heavy reliance on original conceptualisations of MLG developed by Hooghe and Marks. In other words, MLG is being used in different ways, but the ways in which the term is understood have changed less and not been refined beyond the Hooghe and Marks' typology. This points to more room to examine what MLG actually *means*, not just where it is evident. While the literature is vital enough to not require a prescriptive remedy for how to further develop it, conceptualisation of MLG is still somewhat underdeveloped and can be expanded upon. This paper now turns to a qualitative examination of MLG and governance more generally, along with a proposed refinement of the traditional MLG typology.

Furthermore, this paper has illustrated that a possible expectations gap exists between how academics perceive the discipline and what they actually produce in terms of research. More importantly, it has illustrated that there exists a gap within academic understanding of public administration, between what the literature can deliver and what academics look to be able to address. This internal perceptions gap needs to be taken into account when trying to develop a place for academic research.

The internal perceptions gap exhibited by academics has shaped how public administration scholars engage with the discipline. Most of the academic literature on public sector reform has focused on public administration approaches or doctrines, or public administration *responses* to external issues (e.g. the current literature on public sector responses to the fiscal

crisis) while spending considerably less time on figuring out what those external issues are that might become important in the future. In other words, the gap between internal perceptions on what can and should be produced is also marked by an internal focus within the discipline. In contrast, practitioner-orientated research has spent more time focusing on external pressures (Pollitt, 2014). However, practitioners can still learn from the longer-term perspectives offered by academics. In turn, academics must apply the same rigour to understanding the future of public administration as they do to understanding current and past reform trends.

Even if a gap exists between what academics can provide and what they feel they should provide, there are a considerable number of recommendations within the discipline's literature on what can be done differently. More generally, there should be more connections fostered between academics and practitioners to combat problems with the discipline, through research that is accessible to practitioners, emphasising problem-based learning techniques that can be applied in real-world settings. In addition, there should be more active participation of academics in practical settings (Bushouse et al., 2011), which is shown to be somewhat limited by the relative lack of consultancy-based funding in academia. Public administration is reliant on history, context and contingency (unexpected issues). Therefore there must be greater focus on public sector training and skills development (Perry and Buckwalter, pp. S243-S244) that draws not only on practice but also on historical context. These changes can be achieved through an increased focus on comparative public administration and sharing of best practices, as well as further development of collaboration and interdisciplinarity (as well as intradisciplinarity between different strands of public administration), which require sustainability and continuity of study, dialogue and promotion of policy learning (Bowornowathana, 2010, pp. S64-S68; Walker, 2011). There should be more engagement with other academic communities, and particularly more engagement with practitioners (Isett et al., 2011). More prosaically, public administration as a discipline must remain relevant and develop strong methodological (particularly statistical) approaches to appeal to public officials in practice (Durant, 2010). Diverse and rigorous methodological approaches should be encouraged, along with promotion of theoretical diversity and maintenance of relevance in a wider world (Nesbit et al., 2011).

There is a need to take a more global approach to public administration that allows for worldwide sharing of best practices and innovation in the public sector, as major policy issues are often cross-national in nature and thus require cross-national solutions (Hou et al., 2011). More metastudies should be conducted to improve the understanding of how public administration as a whole discipline fits into broader academic and practical debates. New technology should be used to promote more participative and collaborative research and scholarship across traditional disciplinary and geographic boundaries (Schweik et al., 2011). Sub-disciplines must also be further developed. There should be increased use of public financial management theories and methodologies in order to better inform debates in public administration research, especially as financial matters become more central to public administration (Kioko et al., 2011). Networks literature should be expanded by looking at

work on networks in other disciplines, developing more advanced methods and measures of networks (Isett et al., 2011) (Curry, 2014c, p. 24-25).

This research can be further developed to put a finer point on what sort of expectations and perceptions gaps exist within academia. The data showed considerable difference between how different countries perceive public administration as a discipline, in what discipline public administration academics obtained their degrees and sources of research funding. The key point to take away from this research is a need for academics, in their research and their practice, to be more realistic about what academic research can and should do. While more academic navel-gazing might sound counter-productive, it is important that academics are aware of what their research is looking to accomplish, whether it can accomplish this, and how that fits into a practitioner perspective about what is necessary in practice.

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