

# The Implications for Democracy in a Networked Bureaucratic World

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## ABSTRACT

*Dwight Waldo wrote nearly fifty years ago that democracy is very much more than the political context in which public administration is carried out. Public administration is now less hierarchical and insular and is increasingly networked. This has important implications for democracy, including changing responsibilities for the public interest, for meeting public preferences, and for the enhancement of political deliberation, civility, and trust. Networked public administration can pose a threat to democratic governance and it can open possibilities for strengthening governance, depending on the values and actions of public administrators.*

[B]oth private and public administration were in an important and far-reaching sense false to the ideal of democracy. They were false by reason of their insistence that democracy, however good and desirable, is nevertheless something peripheral to administration.

I have made no distinction . . . between "democracy" within an administrative system and "democracy" with respect to an administrative system's external relations.

If administration is indeed "the core of modern government," then a theory of democracy in the twentieth century must embrace administration.

The focus of this essay . . . is not upon the present and existing, but upon the future and potential. It seeks to discern where the frontier may be tomorrow and how we can move toward it.

Dwight Waldo (1952, 87, 89 n.13, 81, 83)

In a prescient essay written almost a half-century ago, Dwight Waldo called attention to emerging ideas regarding democracy and administration. He noted the insufficiency of

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treating democracy merely as part of the political context for a hierarchical administration. In so doing, Waldo anticipated the emergence of crucial themes and controversies that continue to challenge those who seek to craft an administrative state that comports with the ideals of democratic governance.

The themes emphasized by Waldo, then and since, have had notable impact on public administration; the view of democracy as largely extraneous to administration seems now strikingly anachronistic. Instead, it would appear, the main issue facing students of democracy and bureaucracy near the dawn of the twenty-first century is how, not whether, democratic ideals can be woven more tightly into the fabric of administration.

True enough, echoes of the original orthodoxy still can be heard. In his polemic, for instance, Theodore Lowi seeks a rehabilitation of centralized choice by emphasizing the likelihood of parochialism, inconsistency, and injustice when policy is "dealt out in shares" (to borrow Woodrow Wilson's phrase) to the self-serving alliances of administrative units, legislative committees, and advantaged groups populating the interest-group liberal regime (1979). Such arguments can serve as reminders of real problems but have not diminished the broad contemporary interest in entwining democracy and administration more thoroughly.

In fact, some version of democracy in administration seems to have triumphed as the new conventional wisdom, despite the complications involved, and few would endorse the old injunction, challenged by Waldo at midcentury, that autocracy during working hours is the price paid for democracy after hours.

Still, practice has a way of outstripping even such a consensus. As efforts have been made to open up the workings of bureaucracy to some democratic principles, the institutional form for public administration itself has altered significantly over time. Bureaucratic agencies surely continue to populate the landscape of government and will continue to provide the institutional core for governmental effort far into the future. But a focus on bureaucratic structures alone belies consequential developments in the realm of public administration, changes that carry implications for applying democratic ideals to the practicing world of administration. The reality of much contemporary public administration is that a great number of the responsibilities that administrators have, and a large portion of the programs they seek to energize, require operating in and through *networks* of actors and organizations, rather than individual units—what Hjern and

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Porter (1981) call the "lonely organizations"—that have served heretofore as the primary focus of analytical attention.

Increasingly, a crucial institutional arrangement for the successful operation of government in action is some version of the network (especially networked organizational units), rather than the hierarchy in isolation. This shift is important in many respects, not the least of which are the challenges and opportunities implied for democratic governance.

The assertion itself may be somewhat controversial (but see O'Toole forthcoming). The argument is, nonetheless, that many though not all public administrators currently must mobilize and coordinate people and resources across organizational structures as well as within them; that typically they do not have the formal wherewithal to compel compliance with such cooperative undertakings; that these networked settings may involve a variety of complicated links; and that this state of affairs is likely to persist and even increase in the future.

This sketch requires at least modest elaboration, a task undertaken in the following section. The point of particular emphasis in this article, nevertheless, is a normative one: If the administrative world is increasingly a networked terrain, this development must be taken into account in any thoroughgoing and serious effort to unite democracy and administration. The main part of the subsequent analysis, therefore, raises some questions and implications for democratic theory in the networked context of public administration.

### **FROM MONOCRATIC BUREAUCRACY TOWARD NETWORKS?**

Bureaucratic structures increasingly operate through linked arrays—networks—that comprise the broader institutional context for administrative action. The networked context, in turn, carries implications for the practical tasks of administrators, and it forces a reconsideration of some central questions of democracy and administration.

*Networks* are structures of interdependence involving multiple organizations. They exhibit some structural stability and include, but extend beyond, formal linkages alone. The term is meant to capture a broad range of structural types. And the institutional "glue" congealing networked ties may include authority bonds, exchange relations, and common-interest based coalitions. In networks, the reach of administration is expanded, but administrators cannot be expected to exercise decisive leverage by

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virtue of their formal position (O'Toole forthcoming). In more concrete terms, networks include interagency cooperative ventures; intergovernmental program management structures; complex contracting arrays; and public-private partnerships. They also include service-delivery systems reliant on clusters of providers that may include public agencies, business firms, not-for-profits, or even volunteer-staffed units, all linked by interdependence and some shared program interests. Rare is the policy sector, governmental unit, or administrative office that is not affected by the interweaving of structure and routine extending well beyond the single agency.

Analysts who use greatly differing theoretical perspectives have converged on the importance of networks for administration. The breadth of available lenses is suggested by the mere mention of public choice and institutional rational choice, transaction costs and new institutional economics, sociologically based interorganizational theory, policy implementation, and intergovernmental management. A large proportion of public programs operate in and through networked constellations, and the challenges of administration in a networked world are considerable (see Kettl 1993; Milward 1996; for an early analysis of some of the issues, see Mosher 1980). Studies in a variety of national contexts echo the prominent network theme (examples include Hufen and Ringeling 1990; Hull with Hjern 1987; and Scharpf 1993). The increasing importance of international agreements entailing continuing program responsibilities suggests a broad range of important networking demands for public administrators around the globe (see, for instance, Hanf 1994).

Furthermore, it would seem that today's administrators inhabit an *increasingly* networked world. It is difficult to defend this assertion convincingly, since demonstrating its accuracy would require data that are not available. No descriptive information on the extent to which administrators operate interorganizationally has been collected; neither has systematic data on the proportion of public programs managed in multiactor settings rather than within sole agencies, nor even evidence on shifts over time. It is possible to show, nonetheless, that the current degree of "networkedness" is quite large, and that both technical and political forces appear to be at work to encourage further cross-organizational ties (O'Toole forthcoming). Some evidence even suggests, ironically, that efforts from political levels to trim the scale of bureaucracy and extent of direct administrative responsibility for accomplishing public purposes—privatizing functions, capping budgets, freezing or reducing staffing levels—accentuate the networking impulse. For the administrators who seek to achieve policy goals while they respect the limitations entailed in

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the liberal order, networking impulses are even greater. Even *within* bureaucracies, evidence suggests a diffusing of the standard chains of command into ever more complex, crosscutting patterns (Light 1995).

Network contexts differ from conventional bureaucratic networks. On this issue, it is first useful to acknowledge the continuing importance of bureaucratic structure. Public administrators operate often within the hierarchy rather than laterally across nodes of a network structure, so the considerable knowledge of administration as developed in more standard accounts continues to apply. If the network thesis is accurate, nevertheless, additional implications follow.

In particular, administration aimed at inducing cooperative effort across organizations requires that strategies and tactics be adapted to the realities of limited formal authority, at least along network lines. Administrators are likely to have to turn to a set of more subtle but no less important options, which rely on diplomatic skills; negotiating experience; and exhortative, perceptual, informational, and leadership tools. When they organize public programs in network settings, public administrators can try to inspire participants toward a common purpose, facilitate exchange and a shared sense of obligation, maintain commitment through the use of information, and sometimes alter the network membership to encourage cooperative effort (see O'Toole 1996).

A further implication, more directly relevant for present purposes, is that considering public administration in a networked world shifts the assumptions that ground much normative discourse about proper administration. Normative issues involve questions of ethics and issues of political theory. As Dwight Waldo has emphasized, ethics may sometimes point in one direction, while concerns rooted in political obligation may suggest another (Waldo 1974). In the remainder of this article, I will direct attention toward questions of political choice, examining some implications for democratic governance of the increasingly prominent network settings inhabited by public administrators.

### **NETWORKED PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

At the end of this century, the overriding standard—virtually worldwide—is a commitment to democracy as political ideal. Surely, as Waldo observed, this theme has permeated American culture, discourse, and political action (1952). While Waldo has noted the broad meaning of democratic ideals in the United States, he also has emphasized the complications entailed by the

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juxtaposition of American democratic themes, based significantly on ancient Greek political ideas, with administrative practices and institutions that are largely Roman (1982). It is clear, therefore, that the treatment of the democratic principle cannot be limited to a simple unidimensional value or to formal institutions of governance.

In the present context, the analysis of democratic governance can be considered in terms of three important values that constitute part of the meaning of democracy in contemporary times: responsibility for effecting the public interest; responsiveness to public preferences; and enhancement of political deliberation, civility, and trust.

The role of administration in fostering—or impeding—such political norms has been a long-standing theme in the field. The standard contextual assumption, however, has been bureaucracy. And normative arguments—for enhanced citizen involvement, more internally democratic units, more market-like arrangements, greater support for social equity, and so forth—have tended to use the standard bureaucratic structure as the assumed starting point for analysis. But what if the institutional context for public administration is increasingly not the "lonely organization" or the simple bureaucratic structure? What if administrators inhabit hierarchically established positions *enmeshed within* interorganizational networks?

Only a few preliminary efforts have been made thus far to sketch some implications for the political system of a more networked administrative world. Recent analyses in the new edition of the *Handbook of Public Administration* (Perry 1996), for instance, treat the themes of accountability and responsiveness almost exclusively in terms of administrators inhabiting individual organizations. However, Romzek (1996) offers a thoughtful assessment of the relationship between hierarchical and professional accountability channels, and Cooper (1996) notes the increasingly enmeshed character of administrative responsibilities from such sources as international agreements and contractual ties.

For literature more directly on point, only a few key references can be mentioned. In an important analysis, Mosher noted some complications in effectuating democratic governance under the altered context at the national level (1980). More recently, Milward and colleagues have pointed to some hypothesized consequences of contracting out and the "hollow state," particularly as regards a putative "leakage of accountability" (Milward 1996, 87; see also Milward, Provan, and Else 1993).

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The issue of accountability is surely a central one for those concerned with democracy and administration in settings rife with contracting, as many scholars have suggested (Moe and Gilmour 1995). But since specialists in public law, contracts, and principal-agent relations are helping to highlight this challenge, the present analysis emphasizes other issues. The remainder of the discussion here entails a twofold analytical shift: from relatively simple dyadic ties based on contracts to thoroughly networked structures, and from accountability to—respectively—responsibility, responsiveness, and the fostering of deliberation, civility, and trust.

### **Responsibility**

A person is responsible for an action if and only if that person brings the action about and has done so freely. Responsibility is necessarily a complex and problematic criterion in organizational settings because here both causation and volition are difficult or impossible to determine or individualize. Furthermore, public administrators face responsibilities to follow an array of obligations, not merely the executing of commands hierarchically imposed (note, for instance, reference to professional responsibilities, as mentioned above). These multiple obligations may admit of no optimizing solution, even for the most diligent official.

Still, the responsibility typically treated as primary is that toward the overhead democracy, as operationalized through the hierarchy. It can be argued, on the basis of both logic and evidence, that hierarchies encourage a dulling or depersonalizing of individuals' sense of responsibility for their own actions. There is a tendency for those populating large agencies, in other words, to develop a somewhat weakened or distanced sense of their causation and volition.

Several features of such organizations encourage a distancing of individuals from a sense that they themselves are acting. Among the elements contributing to diffusion of responsibility are agency socialization, systems of authority, objectification of those being dealt with, and the seductive pull of free ridership in the large and often difficult-to-move administrative structure ("what can one person effectively do?"). All in all, organizations can be rather potent environments for the dulling of individually responsible action.

This is not to say that individuals are automatons in bureaucratic settings; numerous examples suggest that sometimes public administrators, acting in good conscience, seek to influence

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results for the better, in defiance of self-interest or organizational pressures. Further, as Dwight Waldo has noted, it is simply not the case that individual defiance of organizational precedent or pressure is necessarily heroic or desirable, despite the heavy bias toward this portrayal in administrative fiction (Waldo 1968). But the reality of the Eichmann syndrome offers a sobering lesson to temper any uncritical faith in the power of hierarchy to ensure responsible action (Arendt 1963).

What, then, of responsible public administrative action in networks? In this context there are both hazards and encouragements. Of particular concern can be the even broader scale of action, and congeries of actors, such that individual administrators may feel less capable of decisively influencing events. A conflicting sense of one's duties, as these are perceived by the boundary-spanning administrators in networks, may produce confusion and even an overall weakening of the sense of responsibility by someone who seeks to manage the cluster toward some outcome. This point, then, goes beyond the concerns raised in discussions about accountability (external, observable lines of reporting and control), and to the internal interpretations of one's obligations as framed in the mind of the administrator.

On the other hand, network settings offer opportunities for administrators to consider their responsibilities in the democratic context. These opportunities stem in part from the weakening of certain of the forces mentioned above.

The jargon and standard interpretations used within agencies are likely to be challenged or complexified in a network, as different actors and organizational understandings compete for the attention of administrators. Systems of authority are necessarily weaker as well. Frameworks for classification of cases and clients, along with other elements that contribute to reification, are likewise less powerful. The sense of free riding, or the feeling that one person is unlikely to be effective, either can be intensified or muted in networks vis-à-vis hierarchies, depending greatly on the structure of interdependence among the units and work processes involved. Some patterns can facilitate recognition of both causation and volition, thus enhancing individuals' sense of responsibility (O'Toole 1985). On the other hand, complex and reciprocally interdependent patterns of networked action can be prone to serious defections from responsible action. In such cases, individuals may not be able to ascertain the impact of their own effort, even if they exert a good-faith effort. Evidence on this proposition is sparse, although classic analyses like Martha Derthick's study of the dynamics of an intergovernmental grant program point to this result (1970, 214).



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In general, then, if bureaucratic structures offer strong influences that encourage a distancing of individuals from the consequences of their choices, so too networked arrangements offer contexts in which both causality and volition can be perceived as so limited that responsibility seems to dissipate. The overall actions of the network may be almost impossible to follow, the task of giving the array a shove in any particular direction may seem unrealistic, and perceived responsibility goes the way of accountability: it disappears. Those who manage public affairs in networks can perform essential roles, but irresponsible action on their part can distort performance toward self-interested paths.

Still, it is equally important to recognize the potential for public managers to enhance the sense of responsibility felt by network participants who execute public programs. The sheer variety of interests, routines, jargon, and perspectives in the network can break the monocratic view. So actors involved in networks may become more sensitive to the array of perspectives involved in implementation and to a richer set of stakeholders than is evident to those operating within "lonely organizations."

Networks, then, provide some raw material for participants' magnified sense of responsibility. The extent to which this potential is actualized depends on many factors. Some of these are in the hands of public administrators. By remaining conscious of the challenges to responsible conduct, administrators can help those involved to be aware of their special obligations. One can call these *moral incentives*, a somewhat oxymoronic term. Framing the issue more directly, one can say that administrators who operate in networks can enhance the sense of responsibility felt by others by pointing to causal paths and consequences (increasing individuals' sense of impact); helping to show actors that responsible options are available (augmenting the sense of volition); and generally focusing participants' limited attention on their obligations toward truth telling, promise keeping, and the need to treat program needs and interests seriously.

These are not merely theoretical possibilities. Empirical work by some public choice scholars, for instance, has demonstrated that self-organizing among actors of diverse interests can result in stable networked patterns that enhance social welfare, even in the absence of authoritative state decisions (Ostrom 1990; see also Bogason 1991). While the systematic avoidance in public choice research of the sometimes essential roles of authoritative actors and truly public administrators (as something more than rent seekers) is an important lacuna, such research has demonstrated that under some conditions leadership and (shall one call

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it) civic discourse in thoroughly complex and decentral settings can leverage responsibility among diverse and differently endowed actors toward long-term cooperation.

### **Responsiveness**

Administrative responsiveness is another criterion by which to assess how public administration fits with the requisites of democratic governance. How responsive are administrative arrangements likely to be in network contexts? The key issue would seem to be responsiveness to whom, or—somewhat more precisely—responsiveness to which portion of the broader public?

Even in administrative settings as traditionally understood, students of pluralistic policy making long have documented patterns of bureaucratic units' responding to the pulling and hauling of stakeholders, and they have sketched different models to portray such patterns. It is a staple of American public administration that agencies' immediate environment exercises substantial pressure on bureaucratic behavior. Some portrayals of the dangers of such responsiveness point to the lack of broad representativeness within these clusters (Lowi 1979). Others, critiquing the caricatured view of closed and intensely self-interested alliances, assert that actual arrays are more open, diverse, and varied (Heclo 1978). In either case, the issue does not boil down to a lack of responsiveness by public administration (despite recent rhetoric about enhancing responsiveness to customers), but rather different criteria regarding the appropriate reference groups.

What of responsiveness in a more-networked world? First, it is clear that in at least some settings found in the United States today, the array of interests and perspectives involved is differentiated, is diverse, and has a complicated patterned (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). Preliminary investigation of where and how decision makers such as administrators obtain cues to assist in their decision making indicates that the stereotypes of capture are not uniformly accurate. Ideas and information matter, and these are likely to be drawn from many sources in the administrative environment (see Sabatier 1996).

Networks, therefore, may be settings in which a kind of responsiveness prevails or can be elicited, even in the face of complex pressures and a relative lack of clear accountability mechanisms. It is best, nonetheless, to keep in mind this question: Responsiveness to whom? Pluralist arrangements, embedded in networks, can at least accentuate responsiveness to intense or well-organized minorities at the expense of a more-diffuse

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majority. Increased trends toward networking may mean that special efforts will have to be made—in formal policy or through the concerted efforts of public administrators—to incorporate within the network arrays some degree of broader representation.

The foregoing discussion is particularly relevant to the American context. In other national settings, where for instance corporatist network arrangements prevail, a different set of considerations can apply. In Austria or the Scandinavian countries, the degree of formal responsibility held by the bargaining participants means that corporatist arrays alter direction more slowly and, in a sense, are less responsive in the short run. Once an agreement has been reached, though, all partners are explicitly expected to help execute it. Widely recognized responsibility can be greater than in the United States, and responsiveness is also likely to be considerable over the long term. There may be some tradeoffs, then, between rapidity and breadth of response.

How to arrange networks so they are responsive to the special needs and concerns of the interdependent partners and to public concerns, and how to structure networked institutional arrangements to capture high levels along both dimensions are challenges for the networked future of public administration. Structurally federated networks may be needed, and administrators could play an important role in crafting and maintaining these so as to encourage the right kinds of responsiveness to particular programs and issues.

Despite the arguments of public choice advocates, there would seem to be important limits to citizens' ability to participate effectively in the service-provision networks envisioned by some proponents. The presence of many complex constellations may intimidate individuals and inhibit deliberation. Administrators are likely to be limited in carving out public space and attention where many arrays operate simultaneously. Encouraging genuinely civic involvement in such settings is not likely to be an easy task. Some implications regarding deliberation and civic discourse, additional elements of the democratic ethos, are the subject of the next section.

### **Deliberation, Civility, and Trust**

*Democracy*, in contemporary political science, often denotes causal linkage between the views of the people and the actions of government. Yet in this form the concept is rather limited. A fundamental component of enduring democratic systems is their capacity for reflective and deliberative civic discourse and engagement. And these requisites would seem to be essential for

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the socialization of thoughtful citizens for the development of broad popular support for policy direction, and for the synthesis and development, not to mention critique, of innovative alternatives to the status quo. In the postmodern era, a time in which some might see the prospect of broadly public discourse as passé, democratic government continues to require a public sphere and its reflective colloquy. One of the most widely noted recent normative arguments on behalf of public administration in the United States, the so-called Blacksburg manifesto, called attention to this issue. In the Blacksburg argument the foundational element of legitimacy is the public organization, grounded in constitutional support and oriented around the "agency perspective" as the locus of public-spirited dialogue (Wamsley et al. 1990). In the present argument, meant to reframe some aspects of democratic theory in administratively networked contexts, the consideration of discourse and civility requires some reorientation.

Dwight Waldo has emphasized the legacy of ancient Rome in contemporary American administrative thought and practice (1982). For purposes of a reflection on implications for civility and deliberation in the American setting, the present analysis draws from a somewhat different Italian ancestry. In the widely noted volume *Making Democracy Work* (1993), Robert Putnam interprets decades of research on Italian regional government and the contributions apparently made by civic ties, associations, and what Putnam calls networks. Putnam makes a strong case that the regional governmental institutions differ strikingly in perceived effectiveness and in many additional performance measures.

The core of the theoretical argument, and the focus of some intriguing evidence, is the idea that the most important explanatory force driving the large regional differences in governmental performance has been the quality and level of "horizontal" civic engagement in regional affairs by individuals and associations. The building of community, the involvement of disparate actors in public affairs and programs, and even the stimulation of involvement in associations with no apparent civic purpose—all these activities are highly intercorrelated with each other and with the degree of effectiveness of regional government. Putnam's key explanatory variable is social capital, which in turn is elicited by networking. "Social capital here refers to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (p. 167). Social capital, built on the basis of "vibrant networks," is the product of "civic community," a pattern "bound together by horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation, not by vertical relations of authority and dependency"

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(pp. 87-88). Putnam emphasizes social networking, especially among individuals via voluntary association, rather than cross-cutting institutional links through functionally driven, sometimes contractual, ties. But his empirical analysis and theoretical discussion embrace such additional forms as well. There is no reason to expect his argument about the importance of horizontal ties not to extend to the kinds of networks discussed here.

A particularly controversial part of Putnam's argument involves the claims that these relationships can be demonstrated and they are closely linked to levels of economic development. He further argues that civic community not only precedes but it helps to stimulate both market-based economic development and effective government: "This history suggests that *both states and markets operate more efficiently in civic settings*" (pp. 181). Furthermore, the evidence leads to the inference that the civic networks in Italy are neither quickly built nor rapidly dismantled.

This claim—that horizontal networks are causally prior to, and more important than, economic forces in explaining regional differences—has been subject to critique. Indeed, serious methodological questions can be raised regarding some of Putnam's temporal inferences (see, for example, Tarrow 1996). There is no denying the centrality of the assertions, however. Despite the dispute surrounding elements of Putnam's analysis, certain implications stand out clearly.

First, there is no reason to believe that higher levels of community and higher degrees of horizontal networking entail a sacrifice of the values most highly prized in liberal societies. In the Italian cases, at least, these attributes covary. Indeed, as Putnam observes, these cases offer support for the arguments of Piore and Sabel (1984) regarding "decentralized, but integrated districts . . . a seemingly contradictory combination of competition and cooperation" (Putnam, p. 160). Of course external validity constraints may be important here, particularly regarding inferences supportable in the highly individualistic United States. Nevertheless, the relationship documented by Putnam suggests, at the very least, that the strength and density of horizontal ties and the involvement of diverse associations in the public as well as the social life of a polity need not necessarily be seen as competitive with governmental authority, legitimacy, and performance. Nor is networking a euphemism for forced, authoritarian rule. Stronger, denser, more vibrant horizontal networks may strengthen public institutions and public administrative capacity and also preserve or encourage values of liberalism and tolerance. Leveraging horizontal ties, building on trust, and encouraging the development of cooperative norms also can

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enhance administrative capacity, and governmental capacity more generally.

In short, deliberation, civility, and trust—all key components of a democratic regime—have been found to be associated with horizontally networked settings; thus on the basis of these requisites of democratic governance, administration within an increasingly networked world may be firmly grounded in democratic principles rather than threatened by competitive institutional links.

Second, there are clearly additional implications for public administration; the precise lessons, nonetheless, depend partly on how much of Putnam's exposition is accepted. If it takes centuries to generate sustainable civic community, administrators cannot do much in the short term to enhance deliberation, trust, or effectiveness. Some critics of this perspective emphasize, however, that government itself may be able to play a more active role in catalyzing and facilitating the growth of horizontal ties and social capital, that opportunities for influence may be larger and more immediate than Putnam's sketch implies.

The exceedingly long timeline emphasized by Putnam may not accurately represent the Italian situation, let alone a general social dynamic. As a matter of fact, Putnam himself has raised serious questions about such developmental dynamics in later arguments, claiming that American associational ties have experienced rapid declines in recent decades (Putnam 1995). If networked arrangements are capable of large shifts over relatively short periods, the implications are at least twofold: First, American administrators cannot take their network infrastructure for granted (and administrators in less-networked settings can avoid a counsel of despair); second, the actions of public administration itself, along with the choices made by other social actors, can either enhance or deplete the networked context for civic community.

In particular, public administrators can focus on ways to encourage network development and a proliferation of horizontal ties in program settings, in field contexts for agency operations, and among public agencies and governments whose cooperation is required for sustained performance. Actions aimed at trust generation, norm development, reciprocity, and other ways to increase the vibrancy of networks in settings for public programs may be not only possible but essential elements of public administration (for a discussion of the fragility of trust in administrative settings, see La Porte and Metlay 1996). Administrators, far from being largely peripheral actors in democratic governance,

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might perform instead essential functions in the fostering of social capital necessary for deliberation, trust, and civility.

It need hardly be said in this context that not *all* network development constitutes a contribution to the infrastructure of democracy. Networks that represent the mere triumph of narrow special interest governance are obvious possibilities. Problems of accountability and representativeness often occur when administrators are granted *carte blanche* for institutional design and management within networks. Since these issues have been more widely discussed than have the less obvious advantages for democracy of networked public action, it would seem useful to consider this additional side to the network coin.

In any event, public administrators may do well to be alert to the importance of networks for concerting and achieving public action and to look for opportunities to facilitate, even in a modest way, the development of the kinds of networks that can help administrative effectiveness over the long run. For instance, administrators can try to ride the waves of—and help perpetuate and encourage—virtuous cycles of action, in which the building of trust among network participants can have a self-fueling and self-fulfilling character. Networks clearly cannot be developed or sustained merely through short-run or episodic efforts, or from only one position in a complex institutional setting. But administrators can probably make a difference if they enhance effective network development and thus foster some of the attractive features of deliberative democratic governance.

This discussion can be interpreted as a network version of the Blacksburg agency-level argument for the importance of administrative institutions as a locus for the ongoing search for the public interest and the development of a public-centered dialogue. The presence of networks is no guarantee against parochialism; indeed, complex interorganizational arrangements may incubate such perspectives unless there are concerted efforts to enhance balance and openness in the institutional setting. Public administrators may be well positioned to help facilitate the horizontal development of network arrays while they also encourage within these arrays a public-interested character.

## CONCLUSION

As Dwight Waldo has suggested, specialists cannot pretend that the obligations of democratic governance are external to the sphere of public administration. The task of seeking an appropriate reconciliation of administration with democracy requires an analysis of contemporary institutions of administration to

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ascertain the extent to which these, and the administrators who lead them, can contribute to the achievement of democratic governance.

As complex interorganizational arrays have assumed prominence as settings for the execution of public policy, some classic normative questions must be considered anew. Does networked public administration pose a threat to democratic governance or offer the prospect of its more complete attainment? To the extent that this issue has been considered heretofore, the question has typically been framed in terms of accountability; on this score it is clear that complex arrays proffer challenges that are not easily managed or minimized. Nonetheless, considering the query along some additional dimensions—responsibility, responsiveness, and the development of deliberative trust in a polity—suggests a more complex assessment. Administration in networks, it would seem, provides both complications and opportunities to facilitate parts of the democratic ideal.

If the argument regarding the increasing importance of networks for administration has merit, scholars and practitioners need to consider in detail the empirical and normative implications of these complex institutional forms. In particular, a commitment to democracy accompanying a recognition of the significance of networks suggests that some classic issues of democratic theory (in terms of forms of overhead control) and the traditional way of framing issues of administration (in terms of bureaucratic structure and process) may have to be reformulated. If administrators have to join rather than beat or ignore the network club, and if they are to assist rather than subvert the democratic ideal, renewed attention must be directed to the long-standing themes of democracy and administration—themes that have long formed a core of Dwight Waldo's inspiring vision.

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