

Re-Organizing for Public Value: Alternatives and Possibilities

Alessandro Sancino (University of Milan-Bicocca, IT and The Open University, UK), Anjali Fahlberg (Tufts University, US), Helena Liu (University of Technology Sydney, AU) and Owain Smolović Jones (The Open University UK)

The concept of public value refers to the achievement of humanistic progress in the public sphere through the pursuit of societal goals as defined in constitutions and/or democratic institutions of territorial political communities (Benington and Moore, 2010). While public value can be a differently perceived concept across different political communities, there are some key characteristics that still hold across various perspectives and make public value different from private value: i) public value is achieved collectively rather than individually; ii) it is rooted in a relational ontology of public goods, services, assets, resources, and values; iii) and it encompasses the rights, duties, and aspirations of citizens (Bozeman, 2007).

Given the distinctive focus on societal goals collectively determined within constitutional and democratic institutions, the State is central to the production of public value. The State occupies a fundamental share of the economy in many countries (e.g. OECD, 2019) and its central role became even more evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, where public services provided and/or funded by the State were (re)discovered as essential to save human lives.

The State is a political and administrative authority of varying forms that organizes the boundaries of a territory, which may nevertheless 'be combined with other forms of political authority and broader patterns of spatial organization, resulting in different kinds of state and polity' (Jessop, 2016: 11). We also note the inherently contingent nature of statehood, namely its inseparability and porousness with civil society and private economic interests (Gramsci, 1971).

For this Call for Papers, we welcome submissions that offer fresh organizational and critical perspectives on re-organizing alternatives and possibilities for public value, particularly focusing on how the State might be re-organized and re-envisaged as a site of resistance and emancipatory alternatives for the expansion and creation of new and/or added public value (e.g. Mazzucato, 2015; Poulantzas, 1978/2001), either through civil society or more directly (Zanoni, 2020a).

Re-imagining and re-organizing democratic, economic and political life around public value may require a reckoning with unequal power relations, uneven geographical development, and real struggles to dismantle interlocking structures of domination. Re-organizing for public value therefore refers to re-configuring the very basis upon which societies function, involving considerations of where wealth is distributed and where agency resides, and for what purposes. It also means creating the organizational conditions that can add value to society from a collective, socially generative and relational point of view, rather than primarily defining value as the extraction of surplus value and accumulation of capital.

Re-organizing for public value may entail revising the role of the State and democratic authority in their relationships with business to challenge notions of profit-driven and extractive economic growth. For example, as Harvey (2019) points out, the spatial logics of statehood invested in immobile, territorially bounded infrastructures and spaces, while most usually working in favour of corporate interests, may also at times bear alternative and antagonistic conceptions of value to those of capital's need for continuous expansion and mobility across space. Moreover, re-organizing for public value might entail developing governance structures that can empower citizenship and civil society to make deliberations through participatory democracy modes (e.g. Bloom and Sancino 2019), meaning that considerations of public value, within which the State is an inescapable actor, can and should be approached as a more decentred concept (e.g. Bevir, 2020).

This Special Issue connects with existing studies on alternative economic, political and democratic organizing (e.g. Zanoni et al. 2017) and extends these towards perspectives that show promise to change systems in a radical rather than reformist way. The focus is therefore on how we may glimpse possibilities for post-capitalist governance and the power disturbances involved in such projects (Zanoni, 2020a). Submissions should critically examine the State as a central actor in the generation of public value (Milward et al. 2016) that may be complementary, ambivalent or antagonistic to notions of value pursued by capital and civil society. We also welcome explorations of the role of the State, how it mediates and facilitates on behalf of capital to extract value from workers, marginalized and Indigenous populations, even (maybe especially) in times of crisis.

We are open to critical, creative, normative, and interpretative scholarship with an engaged focus on the alternatives and possibilities for re-organizing around public value. Empirical, methodological and conceptual papers will be considered. We also encourage rigorous speculative/futurist submissions that may draw on current and nascent trends and forms to offer potential radical futures of citizenship, rights, and public value (Frase, 2016).

Below there is a list of some of the areas that might be explored, but others may be also considered:

1. **Re-organizing the State for alternative post-capitalist governance.** Some issues for analysis can be: re-accounting and revaluing capitalist flows between the State and other non-governmental organizations (e.g. Zanoni, 2020b); new notions and metrics for organizing the economy, such as for example that of public dividends as advocated by Mazzucato (2020); new cross-sectoral relationships between the State, businesses and civil society (Sancino et al. 2018); new forms of statehood at the international level, especially from the bottom up, for example through the aggregation of cities; collective ownership through the State (at all levels) of big and open data (e.g. Morozov and Bria, 2018);
2. **Re-municipalization and place-based approaches:** Re-municipalization and the role of "the community" or "the local" as sites of transformation (e.g. Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Smolović Jones et al., 2016). Here we are also interested in studies that draw on Marxist, feminist, postcolonial, or critical race theory accounts of space to

help us understand the spatial terrain from which any resistance to post-Covid neoliberal backlash will need to operate;

3. **Practices of public value co-creation amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.** The pandemic represents an opening of the social imaginary in terms of alternatives and possibilities and demonstrated that a radical change from politics to the economy, from society to culture, is possible (Della Porta, 2020). Which experiences, theoretical insights and practices hewn amidst the global pandemic can we draw to learn from the Covid-19 emergency to build a new system of more just and equal societies? How can we build new public organizations with a new role for civil society, for example through collective ownership, self-governance and/or governance of the commons (Ostrom 2008)?
4. **The role of public sector workers and new forms of public leadership in constructing alternatives.** We refer here to issues such as, for example, the possibility to generate novel forms of collective subjectivity and the potential for a re-invigorated workerism; academics and their role in helping to re-organize alternatives to neoliberal institutions, and the practices that can foster this endeavour (e.g. Contu 2020; Dar et al. 2020); new forms of public leadership that can re-envisage values such as democracy, liberty and equality (e.g. campaigns of precarious workers, social movements, with particular attention to digital and post-human forms of leadership) that explicitly fight for workers' emancipation and/or against racism, xenophobia, (neo-)colonialism and that can deal with and diminish social and material inequalities (e.g. Liu 2020; Ospina and Foldy 2009);
5. **Re-organizing from and with less privileged publics** (e.g. Fahlberg, 2016; Sancino et al. 2020). Public value is typically defined as humanistic progress within the public sphere (including the environment), but it is often experienced and expressed in different and possibly contested ways across different political communities. In this respect, how can political-economic systems address a variety of needs of distinct groups? How can the interests of minority groups be effectively accounted for when public value caters to the interests of dominant social/political groups?

Submission: Papers may be submitted electronically from 1st January 2022 until the deadline date of **31st January 2022** (final deadline) at:

<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/organization>. Papers should be no more than 10,000 words, excluding references, and will be blind reviewed following the journal's standard review process. We are also open to other types of articles considered by the journal, such as *Speaking Out*, *Acting Up* and *Connexions* papers; more information here

<https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/ORG#ArticleTypes>

Manuscripts should be prepared according to the guidelines published in Organization and on the journal's website:

<http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal200981/manuscriptSubmission>.

For further questions about the special issue please use the guest editors' contact email:

criticalpublicvalue@gmail.com

References

- Benington, J., & Moore, M. H. (Eds.). (2010). *Public value: Theory and practice*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Bevir, M. (2020). What is the decentered state?. *Public Policy and Administration*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076720904993>
- Bloom, P., & Sancino, A. (2019). *Disruptive Democracy: The Clash between Techno-Populism and Techno-Democracy*. SAGE Publications Limited.
- Bozeman, B. (2007). *Public values and public interest: Counterbalancing economic individualism*. Georgetown University Press.
- Contu, A. (2020). Answering the crisis with intellectual activism: Making a difference as business schools scholars. *Human Relations*, 73(5), 737-757.
- Dar, S., Liu, H., Martinez Dy, A., & Brewis, D. N. (2020). The business school is racist: Act up! *Organization*, 1–12. 1350508420928521.
- Della Porta, D. (2020), Social movements in times of pandemic: another world is needed, *Open Democracy*, 23rd March 2020, available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/social-movements-times-pandemic-another-world-needed/>, accessed on 28th July 2020.
- Fahlberg, A. N. (2018). Rethinking Favela Governance: Nonviolent Politics in Rio de Janeiro's Gang Territories. *Politics & Society*, 46(4), 485–512.
- Frase, P. (2016). *Four futures: Life after capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K., Cameron, J. and Healy, S. (2013) *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (p. 276). London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Harvey, D. (2019). *Spaces of global capitalism: A theory of uneven geographical development*. London: Verso.
- Jessop, B. (2016). Territory, politics, governance and multispatial metagovernance. *Territory, politics, governance*, 4(1), 8-32.
- Liu, H. (2020). *Redeeming Leadership: An Anti-Racist Feminist Intervention*. Bristol University Press.
- Mazzucato, M. (2015). *The entrepreneurial state: Debunking public vs. private sector myths*. Anthem Press.
- Mazzucato, M. (2020), We Socialize Bailouts. We Should Socialize Successes, Too. *New York Times*, July 1, 2020, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/opinion/inequality-government-bailout.html>, accessed on 28th July 2020.

Milward, B., Jensen, L., Roberts, A., Dussauge-Laguna, M. I., Junjan, V., Torenvlied, R., ... & Durant, R. (2016). Is public management neglecting the state?. *Governance*, 29(3), 311-334.

Morozov, E., & Bria, F. (2018). *Rethinking the smart city. Democratizing Urban Technology*. New York, NY: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

OECD (2019), *Government at a Glance 2019*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8ccf5c38-en>.

Ospina, S., & Foldy, E. (2009). A critical review of race and ethnicity in the leadership literature: Surfacing context, power and the collective dimensions of leadership. *The leadership quarterly*, 20(6), 876-896.

Ostrom, E. (2008). Polycentric Systems as One Approach for Solving Collective Action Problems. Research Paper No. 2008-11-02, School of Environmental and Public Affairs, Indiana University.

Poulantzas, N. (1978/2001). *State, Power, Socialism*. London: Verso.

Sancino, A., Rees, J., & Schindele, I. (2018). Cross-Sector Collaboration for Public Value Co-Creation: A Critical Analysis', From Austerity to Abundance. *Critical Perspectives on International Public Sector Management*, 6, 59-73.

Sancino, A., Garavaglia, C., Sicilia, M., & Braga, A. (2020). New development: Covid-19 and its publics—implications for strategic management and democracy. *Public Money & Management*, 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2020.1815380>

Smolović Jones, S., Smolović Jones, O., Winchester, N., & Grint, K. (2016). Putting the discourse to work: On outlining a praxis of democratic leadership development. *Management Learning*, 47(4), 424-442.

Zanoni, P. (2020a). Prefiguring alternatives through the articulation of post-and anti-capitalistic politics: An introduction to three additional papers and a reflection. *Organization*, 27(1), 3-16.

Zanoni, P. (2020b), Whither Critical Management and Organization Studies? For a performative critique of capitalist flows in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Management Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12655>

Zanoni, P., Contu, A., Healy, S., & Mir, R. (2017). Post-capitalistic politics in the making: The imaginary and praxis of alternative economies. *Organization*, 24(5): 575-588.