



# Understanding Public Value Workshop: Report on Proceedings

Prudence Brown, Lorraine Cherney, Sarah Warner  
with Ugochi Cynthia Abazie, Sarah Ball, Lauren E  
Cunningham, Luu Dieu Duc Le, Laura Simpson  
Reeves, Hanne Worsoe



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

© University of Queensland, School of Political Science and International Relations, 2019. Information contained in this publication may be copied or reproduced for study, research, information or educational purposes, subject to inclusion of an acknowledgement of the source.

**ISBN: 798-1-74272-292-4**

### Citation

Brown, P., Cherney, L., Warner, S., with Abazie, U.C., Ball, S., Cunningham, L.E., Le, L.D.D., Simpson Reeves, L., and Worsoe, H. (2019). "Understanding Public Value Workshop: Report on Proceedings."

### Acknowledgements

The workshop was funded by the Australian Political Studies Association and supported by the University of Queensland, School of Political Science and International Studies.

The authors also wish to acknowledge the assistance of the following people for their contributions to the success of the workshop: Megan Price, Bronwyn Crook and Professor Katharine Gelber.

## Executive Summary


The Understanding Public Value workshop was held over one and a half days on 11-12 July 2019 at the University of Queensland, Brisbane. It was funded by the Australian Political Studies Association and supported by the School of Political Science and International Studies, the University of Queensland. A number of public policy scholars from across Australia came together to explore the concept of public value and its application to public policy theory and practice.

Politics has been said to consist of a “web of decisions and actions that allocate values” (Easton 1981, 128-130). For a while, the idea that values pervade the work of policy actors was pushed aside in favour of the ‘rational actor’, whose existence is increasingly called into question (see for example Partridge 2013). Moore’s work on public value management (Moore 2013) has contributed to bringing the concept back into favour, focussing attention as it does on broader ideas of what government is about (Alford and O’Flynn 2018, 7). There are some that even claim that we are moving away from New Public Management (NPM) towards a so-called ‘public value management paradigm’ which better balances democracy and efficiency (Stoker 2005, cited in Alford and O’Flynn 2018).

Williams and Shearer (2011, 1381) suggest that a future research agenda for public value might consist of three strands. Firstly, the concepts need more clear definition – what is the public and what is the value that we are talking about? Secondly, while the concept has clear pedagogical value, arising as it did in an education context, what contribution does it make to understanding the nature of institutions and the policy process? And finally, how can we bring back the critical issues of power and heterogeneity into our consideration of public value? This workshop aimed to contribute to expanding our understanding of ‘public value’ and in so doing, better understand how it contributes to public policy research and practice.

There have been two conceptual schools of ‘public value’ research, which seldom communicate with each other (Fukumoto and Bozeman 2018). The first school sees *public value* as dynamic – something that is created – as in Moore’s framework. Whether this is possible, or desirable, within a Westminster system with accountability to the government of the day, remains an open question. The discussion on the first day focussed on this conception.

Firstly, Brian Head looked at the evolution of the term to become broadly associated with the processes of collaborative negotiation especially between government officials and other stakeholders, directed at resolving social problems and achieving shared goals or purposes. Jenny Stewart then looked at the role of the public sector in public value creation, and Bligh Grant examined why the term has such resonance for local administrators. Creating public value occurs through the exercise of public powers. Ken Coghill argued that understanding the nature of the authorisation for the exercise of that power is central to our understanding



the creation of public value. Following this, Rolf Gerritsen argued that, in the Northern Territory at least, creating public value can fall victim to other more powerful forces of fiscal reality and political expediency.

We then turned our attention to the second way of conceptualising '*public values*', which sees them less as something that exist through their creation, than something which consists of the assumptions and ideas which underpin the rationale of governing. The research on this aspect is more limited. Nonetheless, it is the idea of what it is valuable to do, and who it is valuable to do things for, which influence the policies that are advocated, and the solutions that are considered. As well, ideas of public value provide the legitimacy for the public sector more broadly, as it allows the state to act on behalf of or to do things to/for people.

Firstly, Brown, Cherney and Warner explored how understandings of the 'public' and of 'value' have underpinned Australian policy in three diverse areas – gambling regulation, school education and Indigenous policy. Eva Cox then looked at the ways that public policy areas that are seen as legitimate for funding and policy making continue to have a significant male bias, and how this might be addressed. And finally, Brian Coffey looked at how 'public value' is reflected in environmental policy and the implications for public environmental governance, and what this means for more sustainable forms of development.

Janine O'Flynn then drew our attention back to questions of how has public value developed, what gaps remain, and what issues we should be exploring in understanding public value.

The discussions were lively and a number of themes emerged along with questions for future research.

Some participants saw 'public value' as a simple check, to support other processes when determining and implementing policy. Others saw it as a more holistic mechanism to determine the value of a policy, which would potentially serve as a significant element of decision-making and assessment of outcomes. As a result, there was general agreement that public value has wide application, but as a concept it is messy. There were many different ideas of where public value is created and by whom – and there was no consensus. It does seem to be context specific. So, can we have, indeed do we need, a precise definition? Is it just useful to have the concept front and centre in policy and implementation practice?

Ideas of tensions and balancing came up often. Is it possible in a world of competing demands on fixed budgets and resources and divergent groups and interests to create public value without diminishing value for others? Do we need to talk about redistribution of public value? Or do we need to change the conception of the collective rather than the values?

The way that the public sector develops, manages and positions operational capacities seems to have direct implications for the types of public value that are realisable. So, how can we enable public servants to create PV especially where the area is political?

As well, there was agreement that time is a missing factor in public value analysis. What might constitute a balance in the three elements of the triangle could shift. Also, what might be considered public value may shift over time, and indeed what constitutes the public shifts over time.

The public value concept seems to have been stretched to be some or all of paradigm, rhetoric, narrative and performance. Has it been stretched beyond usefulness? Do we need to get back to basics? How can we better connect value and values? Nonetheless there was agreement that the concept is useful because it resonates with policy actors and focusses attention on the need for a “value creating imagination”. It has the potential to change conversations and to foster the capacity for respectful conversations where there is value divergence. There was also general agreement that we need to start putting value on social and relational, not just economic (ideas of stewardship, trusteeship, fiduciary duty).



# Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Workshop participants.....	6
Introduction .....	7
Day 1 – Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> July.....	8
Session 1: Introduction.....	8
Why this workshop?.....	8
What is public value and why does it matter?.....	8
Group Discussion.....	9
Session 2: Creating Public Value.....	11
Creating public value in a Westminster context: the case of PM&C's Indigenous Regional Network .....	11
Why the local government gang loves drinking the Public Value Kool-Aid--and why, sometimes, it's a bit fizzy. Reflections on a decade of research and teaching.....	11
Group Discussion.....	12
Session 3: Barriers to creating public value.....	13
Public officers' fiduciary duty and the public trust principle .....	13
Path Dependence versus Public Value: Indigenous Service Delivery in Australia's Northern Territory .....	14
Group Discussion.....	14
Day 2 – Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> July.....	16
Session 4: Differing conceptions of public value – part 1.....	16
What is this thing called public value? Exploring how the 'public' and 'value' have been conceptualised in three policy examples. ....	16
Group Discussion.....	17
Session 5: Differing conceptions of public value – part 2.....	18
How far have we come in de-gendering what are seen as public values? Not very far!.....	18
Public value and the environment .....	18
Group Discussion.....	19
Session 6: Where to from here? .....	20
Where to for public value research? Taking stock and moving on .....	20
Group Discussion.....	20
Summary of Key Themes .....	22
References .....	23

## Workshop participants

- Ugochi Cynthia Abazie, University of Queensland
- Sarah Ball, University of Queensland
- Dr Prudence Brown, University of Queensland
- Lorraine Cherney, University of Queensland
- Dr Brian Coffey, RMIT
- Professor Eva Cox, University of Sydney
- Professor Ken Coghill, Swinburne University
- Lauren Cunningham, University of Queensland
- Professor Rolf Gerritsen, CDU
- Dr Bligh Grant, UTS
- Professor Brian Head, University of Queensland
- Luu Dieu Duc Le, University of Queensland
- Professor Janine O'Flynn, University of Melbourne/ANZSOG
- Laura Simpson Reeves, University of Queensland
- Professor Jenny Stewart, UNSW
- Dr Julia Thornton, Fabian Society
- Sarah Warner, University of Queensland
- Hanne Worsoe, University of Queensland





## Introduction

Politics has been said to consist of a “web of decisions and actions that allocate values” (Easton 1981, 128-130). For a while, the idea that values pervade the work of policy actors was pushed aside in favour of the ‘rational actor’, whose existence is increasingly called into question (see for example Partridge 2013). Moore’s work on public value management (Moore 2013) has contributed to bringing the concept back into favour, focussing attention as it does on broader ideas of what government is about (Alford and O’Flynn 2018, 7). There are some that even claim that we are moving away from New Public Management (NPM) towards a so-called ‘public value management paradigm’ which better balances democracy and efficiency (Stoker 2005, cited in Alford and O’Flynn 2018).

There have been two conceptual schools of ‘public value’ research, which seldom communicate with each other (Fukumoto and Bozeman 2018). The first school sees *public value* as dynamic – something that is created – as in Moore’s framework (Moore 1995). Whether this is possible, or desirable, within a Westminster system with accountability to the government of the day, remains an open question. The second sees *public values* less as something that exist through their creation, than something which consists of the assumptions and ideas which underpin the rationale of governing. It links to ideas of what is “perceived to be of value by people” (Alford and O’Flynn 2018, 7). This latter concept is clearly underpinned by assumptions of what it is valuable to do (Bozeman 2007), and who it is valuable to do things for (Benington 2011). It is these ideas which influence the policies that are advocated, and the solutions that are considered and provide the legitimacy for the public sector more broadly.

Williams and Shearer (2011, 1381) suggest that a future research agenda for public value might consist of three strands. Firstly, the concepts need more clear definition – these include what is the public and what is the value that we are talking about? Secondly, while the framework has clear pedagogical value, arising as it did in an education context, what contribution does it make to understanding the nature of institutions and the policy process? And finally, how can we bring back the critical issues of power and heterogeneity into our consideration of public value?

This workshop aimed to contribute to expanding our understanding of ‘public value’ and in so doing, better understand how it contributes to public policy research and practice.



## Day 1 – Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July

### Session 1: Introduction

Session Chair: Prof Janine O’Flynn, University of Melbourne

Discussant: Lauren Cunningham, University of Queensland

#### *Why this workshop?*

Dr Prudence Brown, Lorraine Cherney, Sarah Warner; University of Queensland

The first presentation highlighted the vast array of interpretations of ‘public value’ that have been used by academics since the work of Moore (1995) and Bozeman (2007). Broadly speaking, it has been used to describe the value created for society by the development and implementation of public policy, particularly that produced by the work of the policy manager; or the ‘public values’ that underpin how we make policy, defining the shared ethical and moral norms that are assumed to underpin policy decisions. While the first seeks to describe the ways in which policy managers improve the outcomes for the community from choices about how to develop and implement policy, the second takes a normative approach and attempts to set out a collective view of who policy should benefit and how.


While academics have studied public value through both lenses, there are key elements that have not been clearly defined or agreed upon by those working in this area. Both concepts depend upon a clear understanding of what good a policy will deliver, but without a clear view of who is best able to determine this. However, because members of a society may perceive or prioritise the positive and negative aspects of a given policy differently, consideration of public value is dependent on an understanding of whose views should be given most weight, and this will differ between any two policies. Developing an understanding of who is determining the ‘value’ captured by the concept of ‘public value’ is therefore vital to recognise the political nature of public value and the heterogeneity of ideas around public value.

#### *What is public value and why does it matter?*

Prof Brian Head; University of Queensland

The second presentation discussed the ways in which terms related to ‘public value’ have changed and overlapped over the years, and the role of collaboration in achieving public value. While many terms have been used almost interchangeably, such as public value, public interest, and public good, all of these concepts are fundamentally underpinned by assumptions about *how* we determine what we value. This remains one of the least developed discussions in this space.

Moore’s strategic triangle is central to the concept of ‘public value’, and provides an avenue for teasing apart the different factors that underpin the ability of a policy to deliver the



intended public value. To paraphrase the triangle, policy must be valuable, legitimate and doable.

Government approval and formal decision-making processes help to ensure policies are, and are seen to be, 'legitimate'. The role of elected officials in policy approval is important in providing the legal support for public managers to implement policies, reducing the risk of policies being driven by self-interest, and provides a mechanism to protect and incorporate minority interests in public policy formation and implementation. Such processes also help to protect public servants from perceptions of 'overreaching' or managerial activism, the perception of which can undermine public opinion of policy agendas.

For policies to be determined to be 'valuable', the incorporation of different voices is important to reflect different perceptions and understandings of both positive and negative aspects of the policy. Collaborative policy development processes have been implemented as part of the 'public value' model to address issues of representation and differential levels of influence of different groups. These processes often help to focus policies on the creation of positive shared outcomes. In this process, 'public value' can be differentiated from 'private value' based on the importance of public officials, resources and authorities in problem solving; ministerial decision-making; and having benefits and purposes consistent with public-interest values rather than private enterprise.


Ensuring the practicality of a policy (that it is 'doable') is the area in which public managers can most directly produce public value. Through assessments of existing and necessary resources, public managers are able to design implementation to maximise public good, while minimising any negative outcomes from the policy. This is based on the application of efficient practices and internal principles governing fairness and professional ethics.

At present, all models of public value are too vague to be tested, and therefore serve only as a heuristic for understanding and discussing the policy process. To increase the applicability and utility of the concept, we need to strengthen and clarify it to allow it to be tested and tweaked. After 25 years of use, it is timely to reassess public value's usefulness in understanding how policy agendas and priorities are set, and make necessary changes to ensure it is fit-for-purpose.

### *Group Discussion*

Following these papers, discussion centred around three main questions: who is responsible for determining 'public value'; how do we measure it; and when should we apply the concept?

In order to study 'public value', we must determine what is meant by the term, and who is able to define it in a given circumstance. A key focus of this discussion was on ways to ensure that the groups determining the 'public value' of a policy initiative are able to fairly and evenly consider conflicting interests of different groups who may be affected by the policy. In this



context, the role of the state to bring external groups together to develop policy in a collaborative fashion was highlighted as a way to avoid such limitations. The role of representative democracy in Australia was also referenced as a way in which we seek to ensure informed and non-self-interested decisions be made. However, there is still the potential for both of these mechanisms to be distorted based on who is allowed into the discussions as ‘experts’, as this can significantly skew perceptions about the public good.

To determine whether a policy initiative has been successful in creating public value, it is important to be able to recognise and measure it when it has occurred. It is often something that can be intuitively recognised by its presence or absence relative to the status quo. However, a reliance on internal judgements about a given case significantly risks the undervaluation of existing public value. For example, a policy may have a positive outcome for a certain group within society, while having a negative outcome for others. By only focussing on certain groups and the perception of increased public value, decreases elsewhere may be overlooked. This highlights the importance of considering ‘stewardship’ of existing public value through ongoing government services when discussing and measuring the impact of new proposals.

Along with debate about how to define and measure ‘public value’, there was also debate about the contexts in which the concept may usefully be applied. At present, the concept is primarily seen as applicable to new policy initiatives, rather than the ongoing improvement of implementation of existing programs; this was flagged as an area in which further framing may increase the utility of the concept. Further, the limitation of the concept only to the good that may arise from direct government intervention was questioned: in collaborative projects seeking ‘shared value’, in which both public and private benefits are derived, private actors may be those creating public value. The need to consider how the concept may be applied in considering non-human-induced changes was also highlighted; for example, while there is ‘public value’ created by the natural environment, the current concept of public value does not capture this. This is particularly problematic in relation to discussions above about the destruction of value.

Ultimately, it was proposed, although not necessarily agreed, that if we view ‘public value’ simply as a framework through which to consider the major elements of any successful policy intervention (legitimacy, value, and practicality), then it is not necessary for the concept to prescriptively set out how ‘public value’ can be determined and measured.

## Session 2: Creating Public Value

Session Chair: Prof Ken Coghill, Swinburne University

Discussant: Hanne Worsoe

### *Creating public value in a Westminster context: the case of PM&C's Indigenous Regional Network*

Professor Jenny Stewart, UNSW

The first presentation in this session discussed the importance of organisational networks in achieving public value. Stewart argued that to enhance public value in Westminster systems there needs to be recognition that public servants have a crucial role to play in achieving successful public value policy outcomes, and that they are not simply the “platonic guardians” of their political masters (Rhodes and Wanna 2007). Stewart argues that such a viewpoint overplays the politics versus administration dichotomy, when we need to see the implementation of public policy in its broader administrative and social contexts. To illustrate the importance of public service administrators and their importance in building stronger networks and relationships, Stewart cited the rollout of the Indigenous Regional Network under the Abbott Liberal government in 2013-15. With its politicised imperative, public administrators had little flexibility or freedom to build the regional and cross-agency networks crucial for the centralised agency to work effectively. Stewart’s message is that public value is co-created in the collaborative implementation of policy. When policy implementation is overly centralised and politically driven, it loses its efficacy.

### *Why the local government gang loves drinking the Public Value Kool-Aid--and why, sometimes, it's a bit fizzy. Reflections on a decade of research and teaching.*

Dr Bligh Grant, UTS

The second presentation spoke of how public value is a growing field for local governance projects and how it is appreciated by local government administrators – the “local government gang”. Grant ascribes such keenness on what he calls “Public Value Kool-Aid” as part of a normative, ethical, virtuous and therefore compelling narrative that easily justifies legal, statutory and other organisational requirements at a local government level. Grant then asks, if we can create public value out of such justifications, can we also espouse *saving* public value? That is, should we also consider instances where existing public value is destroyed – both more generally as well as for certain groups. Public value is not often the rationale used to save public services and facilities, instead it is replaced by market-driven discourse, the result being that the public value may only be noticed once a service or facility is gone.

## Group Discussion

The discussion focussed on issues of how public value is created, who creates it, and for whom it is created – how do we define the public, for whom our services have value?

Public value is important in implementation, not just in the rollout of policy. Public value is intrinsic to policy, it is not just value-added. Public value has been created in the doing of policy, but the creation of public policy can also create public value, and value choices are made in field offices by public servants. Public servants are doing more for policy development than is currently “theoretically” described. So, there is a need to consider that policy design is coming through from public servants, albeit after direction from the minister.

Discussion around the historical knowledge of policy, and understanding its origins is also really important, so that we understand the logic and how we are where we are. History plays a huge role. When talking about creating public value, where is the starting point? Public servants don’t need to learn departmental/institutional history when they start work now and this is leading to a “policy amnesia” within the public service.

Public value analysis has the potential to change the policy conversation, but we still need to think through *how* and *by whom*. The concept of intrinsic public value could be a part of this conversation change. However, the point was also made that the public value framework was never intended as an evaluation tool, it was one of the measures for developing good, effective policy.

Stewart noted that notions of public value can change the conversation on a particular issue, however our system often leans away from public value discussions because we don’t know how to have the conversation about it. We have lost the skills to be able to have respectful conversations about value, with the increased politicisation of the public service.

As well, the way we talk about public and private goods may have shifted since Mark Moore published his book in 1995 on Public Value. Grant suggested that public companies could use a public value framework for the construction of corporate social responsibility (e.g. the Westfield in Western Sydney), if they wanted to; public value does not have to be the sole province of the public service.

Grant questioned the application of normative ideas like the public value framework in the public realm. The sociology of norms, in his view, is separate from normative ideas. Putting aside issues of power, things can be operable, sensible and useful in particular contexts and not in others. Further, ‘the public’ is a diverse range of people, who could be better drawn into discussions on what is of value to them.

It was suggested that public managers are creating public value all the time in their work, especially when they have those conversations with all stakeholders, developing policy. Then

once policy is collaboratively established, communicating its importance politically and publicly; networking, refining, evaluating, with all associated parties is crucial to creating, establishing and reviewing public value in policy.

### Session 3: Barriers to creating public value

Session Chair: Dr Brian Coffey, RMIT

Discussant: Duc Le

#### *Public officers' fiduciary duty and the public trust principle*

Professor Ken Coghill, Swinburne

The first presentation began by mapping the concepts and frameworks that are relevant to public value, especially Moore's conception of public value, a value consumed collectively by citizenry, including public goods and remedies to market failures as well as institutional arrangements. The use of Moore's strategic triangle (legitimacy and support – value – productive capabilities) and the introduction of other important concepts like fiduciary duty (of public officers to act in the best interests of the people affected), public trust principle (that public officers undertakes public duty and public trust) and the commons (shared natural or manmade resource as a common-pool resource) also provide background theoretical understandings for the subsequent case studies on the interpretation of ecological public trust.



The presentation analyses multiple examples at different levels of governance: subnational, national, international and global. The examples involve legal institutions being used for novel processes to create public value (for example in Iceland where the Prime Minister was taken to court over lack of action on climate change). These court cases vary in terms of public officers or government agencies winning or losing an appeal around environmental or ecological issues. The various cases involved different stakeholders with different issues and results, in which public agencies implemented relevant or irrelevant policies, succeeding or failing in creating public value in term of environmental protection.

A table outlining enablers (for example, court empowered to discover grounds, peer mechanism, compliance with voluntary targets) and barriers (by court's view or enforcement and public officers' powers to control) in those cases was presented. Then these barriers were linked to the weak practice of the rule of law and the author emphasised the importance of the acceptance of public officers' fiduciary duties and the application of the public trust principle.

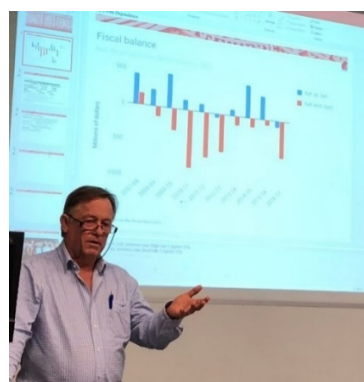
### *Path Dependence versus Public Value: Indigenous Service Delivery in Australia's Northern Territory*

Dr Rolf Gerritsen, CDU

The second presentation focused on one case of the Northern Territory (Australia) of a policy that affects different groups of citizens who are entitled to a public value and showed that public value is not similarly given to different groups of people, especially marginalised groups. This is important for a more nuanced understanding of public value strategy.

In the case of the Northern Territory Indigenous Service Delivery, it is possible to say that the barriers to the delivery of public value is a combination of the scarcity of resources (the loss of the favourable fiscal arrangements) and the imbalanced allocation or distribution of limited resources to different peoples or groups or different competing priorities of target groups. The case also shows that the creation of public value is challenged by path dependence of policy which can be expenditure rising faster than revenue and the urban bias, the practice of diverting general purpose revenue to different projects and outlays.


The key argument of the presentation is that unless the features of path dependency are addressed, public value cannot be created, or created for this group of stakeholders (for example, a government or public managers) but not for other groups, especially marginalised or indigenous groups.



### *Group Discussion*

Based on the two presentations of this section, the key point of discussion was whether the barriers to the creation of public value are just one or two factors or a combination of various factors that public managers must be aware of. If Moore's triangle is applied in these cases,





where the barriers could be potentially located, whether in the authorising environment, the value itself, or the productive capabilities.

Subsequent discussions focussed on the potential to identify enablers or barriers for public value creation. The enablers can be significant actions for reform, for example the role of anti-corruption bodies in Victoria. The use of corruption commissions could be imperfect but the intent is there. In the case of climate change crisis, leadership is crucial for reform and private sectors need to consider climate change in their decision.

The second point of discussion is about the risk of selectivism in creating public value. Some cases in the first presentation involved courts deciding on what public value was important in terms of environmental or ecological issues. The question is whether it is just judicial activism or is it just a rediscovery of fiduciary responsibility. The key component is the link to the public trust. Therefore, there is a need to emphasise that public value justifications must be accepted by the public and to recognise that it is problematic if some groups have power over others in deciding what public value is important. In other words, who gets to decide what? It can never be individual. In some cases, if people protest against a court decision, is there a potential of a public value created by street activism?

Further, there was discussion about the role of considering public value in strategic planning stages. This could involve inter alia, establishing rules for risk management in policy innovation. For example, the case of the Northern Territory, although pessimistic, raised the point that public servants must be aware of the risk of distortion of spending. The key question at the centre of debate is about applicability, whether public servants are doing the most they can with what they have to deliver value, and guard against the destruction of public value. Further, it is the responsibility of actors to raise these issues when they become aware of them, although what is achievable when it is deeply embedded in established logics.

An additional issue is whether there could be an alternative way of framing disadvantage that could change the way the issue is playing out in the Northern Territory. Currently the Commonwealth can say they are doing the right thing financially to acknowledge needs of different groups, it is just that the funding is not delivered correctly. Therefore, this case raises the important questions in relation to what steps are necessary to improve public value – if policy is not perfectly implemented. Moreover, public servants face time pressures in the process and attention on public value is costly.

## Day 2 – Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July

### Session 4: Differing conceptions of public value – part 1

Session Chair: Dr Julia Thornton, Fabian Society

Discussant: Ugochi Cynthia Abazie

*What is this thing called public value? Exploring how the 'public' and 'value' have been conceptualised in three policy examples.*

Dr Prudence Brown, Lorraine Cherney, Sarah Warner, UQ

This presentation examined the normative assumptions which underpin the concept of public value as reviewed by Fukumoto and Bozeman in terms of exploring what is valuable to do and who it is valuable to do things for. The paper provided a focus on the way public values are conceived by examining three social policies – gambling, Indigenous policy and education and the crossovers within these areas, through the three problems in public value theory outlined by Fukumoto and Bozeman (2018), namely:

The identification problem: Definitions from several scholars conceive public value from normative perspectives to include rights, benefits and prerogatives to which citizens should or should not be entitled, obligations of citizens to society, state or one another, the principles on which governments and policies should be based; how do we know public value when we see it? Are public values dictated by what the government constructs as a public value or are they dictated by majority rule? Who is the public? The issue of conflicting beliefs, values and priorities in diverse community makes it difficult to determine whose values we should prioritise given conflict between majority and minorities. Consistent with Van Der Wal and Van Hout (2009), the presentation suggested that determining what constitutes the public interest in a given community is an uphill task. This is because society is fragmented with diverse interests and groups, so who constitutes the public from which we can distil public value?

The motivation problem: How do we know whether public value based policies have good or bad intent? How do we monitor to determine policies not being distorted for personal or private benefit of those with influence? Importance of how metrics and boundaries are set to ensure all works together towards 'public value'.

The instrument problem: which instruments do we utilise to achieve public value? The importance of how policy is implemented to ensure its efficacy regarding monitoring, complexity, involvement of third parties. The achievement and realization of public values require the appropriate and effective instrument and implementation.

## *Group Discussion*

Discussions focussed on how to ensure representativeness in public policy, how to address policies that are not appropriately targeted or for another reason don't achieve, or that actually reduce, public value.

There is a need to recognise the diversity of individuals in the country, and the restrictions and limitations imposed by current democratic system with regards to majority dominating what the agreed 'public value' is. However, with a single government exerting authority it is necessary to come to a single concept agreed within the government of what public value is in a given case.

The relationship between public value and public policy depends on whether public value can be conceived as a thing which can be discerned from public policy or public value is a tool for interrogating public policy which may help in deciding if it is advantageous to implement a policy.

Can we really say someone else's determination based on different priorities and values is 'wrong'? What constitutes the public value and the policy solution will depend on framing and definition of the policy problem. Prioritisation and preferencing will also vary over time as views and attitudes change, and as different outcomes may be achieved as the policy continues. Path dependency can also be an issue, but it is highly context dependent.

Notions of Public Value could potentially be best considered as a tool for assessing policy proposals, not as an end in and of itself. We can't easily answer 'what is the public value', as it is highly context dependent and relies on how the question was framed. However, notions of public value are generally clear when considering a specific context and question, even if harder to define in the abstract.

There was much discussion about the concept of multiple 'publics', with the suggestion that it commodifies the notion of authority. There was a discussion of whether the notion of multiple publics is possible in the considering public value, particularly from Moore's perspective. Nonetheless, we should be reminded by ideas of multiple sovereignties and communities of the different perspectives available.



## Session 5: Differing conceptions of public value – part 2

Session Chair: Professor Jenny Stewart, UNSW

Discussant: Laura Simpson Reeves

*How far have we come in de-gendering what are seen as public values? Not very far!*

Professor Eva Cox, UTS (via Zoom)

Professor Cox's presentation focused on what society views as valuable. From a normative position, 'public value' can be seen as what is considered by the public as valuable. However, we need to question who is deciding what is valuable, and for whom. The effects of gender are particularly evident when examining what is considered public and what is considered private. We typically view 'public work' as work done mainly by men and for economic benefit. 'Private work', on the other hand, is work done mainly by women and is often of little measurable financial benefit; it includes care and domestic work, volunteering, and similar. Private work is considered less valuable as it does not directly contribute to GDP. This has transferred even when we move some of the private work into the public realm; for instance, professions related to caring (e.g. nursing, teaching, childcare) are paid at lower rates and are seen as less valuable than professions related to historically men's work. Professor Cox argued that this distinction is central to understanding public value, and that we need to look beyond what contributes to the paid economy/GDP.

### *Public value and the environment*

Dr Brian Coffey, RMIT

The second presentation focused on the need for considering the environment in public value. Coffey explained that public value was developed as an alternative to market value, however this is not as clear-cut as it may appear. Public value is still understood largely through an economics framework. Public value has been seen as something created by the government through the delivery of services, or through the creation of regulations and laws. However, Dr Coffey argued that it might be created by the government, but also the private sector, or the third sector. However, understandings of public value continue to be discussed in economic terms; for example, public value balance sheets.

Coffey posited that we need to think beyond trade-offs when considering or measuring value. The different value types proposed by Bennington and Moore – economic, social and cultural, practical, and ecological – should not happen in isolation. Ecological systems are complex, dynamic and interconnected, and we need to focus on integration rather than balance. Coffey also discussed how environmental issues are substantively different to other problems, and thus need to be understood in different ways.

### *Group Discussion*

There was a brief discussion about the need to think of the ‘public’ as populations as large, rather than restricted to government or the public service. Public should be thought of as people, and thus public value should be something for all of us, not just a managerial tool. This is part of the critique of public value more broadly, particularly that public value is created by parties other than the government. This reflected earlier discussions from Day 1 about the blurring of public and private, and how the private sector also increasingly creates public value.

The idea of conservation as a value concept was discussed briefly, particularly in relation to practical ways that the public service can incorporate environmental decisions when envisioning public value. However, decisions around the environment are being pushed from the public sector to the private sector. For example, responses to climate change involve better individual purchasing choices, rather than governmental shifts. The idea was also raised that we should talk less about ‘the value’, given its economic connotations, and more about ‘the nature’.

There was a discussion about how governments consider – or don’t consider – gender, particularly in developing countries. The dynamics of gender are still largely not recognised, and as such there are poor gender policies. It was agreed that unless we put gendered work, and thus largely unpaid work, into the public sphere, we will never reach gender equity. We need to include social and relational elements of society in discussions about public value, rather than just viewing the economic elements as valuable.



## Session 6: Where to from here?

Session Chair: Professor Brian Head; University of Queensland

Discussant: Sarah Ball

### *Where to for public value research? Taking stock and moving on*

Professor Janine O'Flynn, University of Melbourne

The final presentation provided a thorough capstone to the public value workshop. O'Flynn began by giving a brief overview of how the concept has developed over time. In particular she stressed the unique power and responsibility government has in delivering services and that this should raise questions of justice and fairness, in addition to questions of efficiency and effectiveness.

Following this brief survey of the history of the concept, O'Flynn used three papers to highlight the three stages of the intellectual life of public value. Her own 2007 paper represented the early stage where the paradigm is stretched to link it to the idea of new public management and change how we think about the role of the state (O'Flynn 2007). The second stage – mapping and synthesis – is represented by her 2009 paper with John Alford (Alford and O'Flynn 2009). This paper identifies four emerging meanings; public value as a paradigm, an alternative to new public management; as a rhetorical strategy used by public management to gain power and control; as a narrative of the world of public managers; and as a performance measurement tool.

The third stage – the current stage – O'Flynn points to her recent work, in its early stages, drawing together concepts of value and values. This iteration attempts to reconcile value as the story of public wealth creation; value as the story of strategic management in the public sector; and values as the story of norms, ethos, and motivations. This maps onto different levels of analysis – macro, meso and micro – not altogether neatly but in a way that can, ideally, provide opportunities to think further about possible conceptual and practical integration.

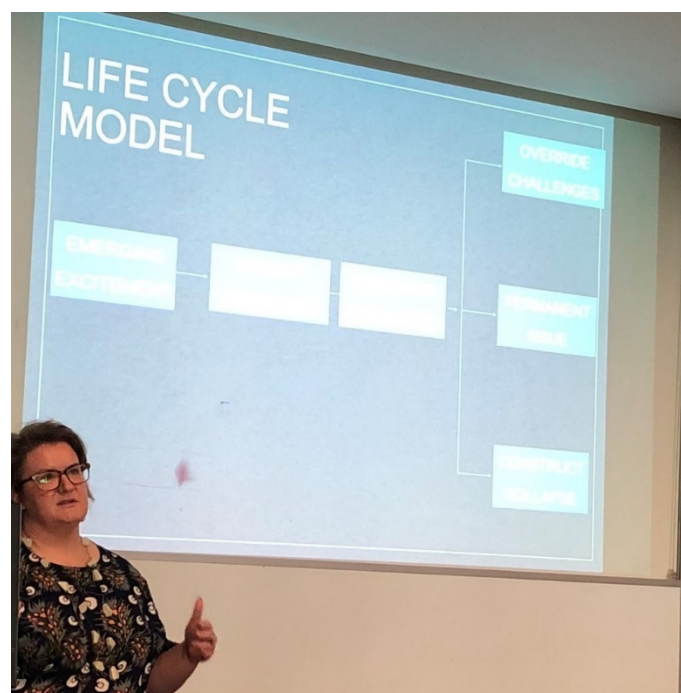
Pointing to the issue of definition, an issue which was raised at several times throughout the workshop, O'Flynn's comment that public value was recognised in the consumption not the production was the point of some discussion as a useful viewpoint.

### *Group Discussion*

The group discussion was sadly short due to time constraints but while brief, it provided food for thought for future research. It began with some brief comments on the presentation, and a few questions about possible ongoing gaps in the development of the concept. In particular the positioning of public value as both an input and as an outcome, but with limited exploration of how to travel from one to the other.

The possibility of undertaking further empirical study was raised as a way of exploring how public value is introduced into the design and implementation of policy. In particular, a shift away from a deductive or descriptive scope, towards more abductive ethnographic studies, might offer a valuable perspective to explore the process. Some of the examples provided throughout the workshop would be fascinating to see from behind the scenes to see how this is enacted and the concept of value is constituted. For example, what are some of the mechanisms behind effective mobilisation of public value? This might represent an opportunity to explore the fit of the strategic triangle heuristic – is this really what is going on or is it just the best heuristic we have? We know when we introduce the idea it speaks to public servants, but it would be nice to really dig further.

The response was that public value, much like new public management, was a term created by academics and then adopted by public managers, a cycle of ideas in which academics try to describe what practitioners do and then practitioners use to describe their work. It is part of an iterative cycle of knowledge.





## Summary of Key Themes

Some participants saw 'public value' as a simple check, to support other processes when determining and implementing policy. Others saw it as a more holistic mechanism to determine the value of a policy, which would potentially serve as a significant element of decision-making and assessment of outcomes. These two perceptions would lead to dramatically different views of what further work or research is necessary. While the concept is fairly fit-for-purpose for the former, significant work on determining how to balance different viewpoints and how to measure potential impacts is necessary to fulfil the latter.

There was general agreement that public value has wide application, but as a concept it is messy. There were many different ideas of where public value is created and by whom – and there was no consensus. It does seem to be context specific.

So, can we have, indeed do we need, a precise definition? Is it just useful to have the concept front and centre in policy and implementation practice? The idea of talking about "saving public value" certainly links to the idea of reminding policy actors that there are broader societal implications that you need to take into account.

Ideas of tensions and balancing came up often. Is it possible in a world of competing demands on fixed budgets and resources and divergent groups and interests to create public value without diminishing value for others? Do we need to talk about redistribution of public value? Or do we need to change the conception of the collective rather than the values?

The way that the public sector develops, manages and positions operational capacities seems to have direct implications for the types of public value that are realisable. So, how can we enable public servants to create public value especially where the area is political?

As well, there was agreement that time is a missing factor in public value analysis. What might constitute a balance in the three elements of the triangle could shift. Also, what might be considered public value may shift over time, and indeed what constitutes the public shifts over time.

The public value concept seems to have been stretched to be some or all of paradigm, rhetoric, narrative and performance. Has it been stretched beyond usefulness? Do we need to get back to basics? How can we better connect value and values? Nonetheless the concept is useful because it resonates with policy actors and focusses attention on "value creating imagination". It has the potential to change conversations and to foster the capacity for respectful conversations where there is value divergence. There was general agreement that we also need to start putting value on social and relational, not just economic (ideas of stewardship, trusteeship, fiduciary duty).

## References

- Alford, John, and Janine O'Flynn. 2009. "Making Sense of Public Value: Concepts, Critiques and Emergent Meanings." *International Journal of Public Administration* 32 (3-4):171-191. doi: 10.1080/01900690902732731.
- Alford, John, and Janine O'Flynn. 2018. "Public Value: A Stocktake of a Concept." Twelfth Annual Conference of the International Research Society for Public Management, Edinburgh.
- Benington, John. 2011. "From private choice to public value?" In *Public value: Theory and practice*, edited by John Benington and Mark H Moore, 31-49. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Bozeman, Barry. 2007. *Public values and public interest : counterbalancing economic individualism*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Easton, David. 1981. *The political system : an inquiry into the state of political science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fukumoto, E., and B. Bozeman. 2018. "Public Values Theory: What Is Missing?" *American Review of Public Administration*:1-14. doi: 10.1177/0275074018814244.
- Moore, Mark H. 1995. *Creating public value: strategic management in government*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Moore, Mark H. 2013. *Recognizing public value* Edited by ProQuest. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press.
- O'Flynn, Janine. 2007. "From New Public Management to Public Value: Paradigmatic Change and Managerial Implications." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 66 (3):353. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8500.2007.00545.x.
- Partridge, Emma. 2013. "Caught in the Same Frame? The Language of Evidence-based Policy in Debates about the Australian Government 'Intervention' into Northern Territory Aboriginal Communities." *Social Policy & Administration* 47 (4):399-415.
- Rhodes, R., and J. Wanna. 2007. "The limits to public value, or rescuing responsible government from the Platonic guardians." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 66 (4):406-421.
- Stoker, Gerry. 2005. *Public Value Management (PVM): A New Resolution of the Democracy/Efficiency Trade-Off*. University of Manchester, UK. : Institute for Political and Economic Governance.
- Williams, Iestyn, and Heather Shearer. 2011. "Appraising public value: Past, present and futures." *Public Administration* 89 (4):1367-1384.