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The Five Tasks of Public Value Management: Public Value as a Programme of Administrative and Societal Democratisation

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is threefold: (1) to identify the tasks of public managers in public value management (PVM), (2) to start a debate on the relationships between autonomy, entrepreneurship and PVM from the perspective of institutional roles and management levels, and (3) to initiate a discussion about the transferability of PVM to diverse administrative systems and cultures. The public value discourse emerged in the 1990s, justifying the need for the concept through a deficit in democratic legitimacy, the delivery paradox, as well as market failure and the critique of New Public Management. Public value focuses on the ultimate purpose of the use of public resources and can thus serve to strengthen outcome legitimacy and downward accountability. Arguably, the most productive interpretation of the public value concept rests along the lines of a normative, conceptual orientation for managerial action, accompanied by a (so far somewhat sparse) set of practical tools and reasoning for public managers. Five tasks of PVM were identified: (1) conducting political management to secure legitimacy for particular value propositions; (2) leveraging public value opportunities through networks and a range of delivery mechanisms; (3) ensuring continuing democratisation through helping the realisation of politically empowered citizenship; (4) ensuring learning across multiple levels and audiences; and (5) cultivating a wider view of sustainable wellbeing for all. Regarding the applicability of PVM across various dimensions of administrative traditions and cultures, it would seem that the tasks are more compatible with some cultures and traditions than others. For instance, these roles seem more compatible with non-politicised public administrations that grant high societal status and discretion to civil servants, and provide them with generalist training and career options. One of the key open questions is under what conditions can a public value approach contribute to changes in the given public administration culture, in par-

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ticular towards the development of downward accountability mechanisms in the context of democratic backsliding and constraints to bureaucratic autonomy.

1. Public value and public value management

Over the recent years, the field of public value literature seems to be mushrooming (cf. Sami et al. 2018). The concept is not entirely new, however, as the academic discourse on public value emerged throughout the 1990s, with the discourse also to an extent building on established concepts from political philosophy, such as the common good. Several points of departure can be identified for public value. Public value was originally formulated primarily as a critical response to New Public Management (NPM) reforms and market failure (Moore 1995, Benington 2011). Yet even though numerous scholars declare public value to be "the next big thing" (Colin 2009), i.e. a new public administration paradigm fit for the requirements of networked forms of governance and replacing NPM (Kelly et al. 2002, Stoker 2006, Turkel and Turkel 2016, Ventriss et al. 2019), the concept borrows numerous tools and perspectives from the older paradigm of NPM, crafting an uneasy truce. Another point of departure is the emerging deficit in democratic legitimacy cited in the more recent calls for public value, as well as the "service delivery paradox". The latter refers to a situation when the service users or citizens lack awareness of the extent, quality and societal significance of the services provided by public agencies or the organisational achievements of top bureaucrats – and achieving an incremental increase of user satisfaction would incur significant costs (Hoogwout 2002, Blaug et al. 2006, Coats and Passmore 2008).

At its core, public value describes the overall societal value of (usually public) services, and management conducted in the framework of public value rests on managing this value. Said value includes, on the one hand, the character and outcome of the service produced. On the other hand, public value refers also to the manner in which the service is produced, including the deliberation and consultation mechanisms accompanying policy and service design and delivery (Moore 1995, Kelly et al. 2002). Referring to the points of departure above, PVM aims to extend government's measurable responsibility and accountability beyond outputs towards outcomes and impacts, as well as beyond economic efficiency objectives towards meaningful contribution to societal wellbeing. Public value is understood as a normative, conceptual orientation for managerial action – "public value and public value creation are essentially management-centered concepts that focus on the appraisal of activities, actions, and outcomes produced by government agents and organizations" (Nabatchi 2017, 60).

At the same time, since public value also refers to how a service is valued by societal actors (cf. Meynhardt 2015) rather than calculated by "objectivist" expert valuation methods, public management develops democratising aspirations and

aims to increase participation of said actor in the design, delivery and evaluation of policies and public services. Value perceptions even constitute a "separate reality" to be shaped by governmental communication and reputation management (Meijer 2009, Willems et al. 2016) – another route to manage the service delivery paradox.

In the context of such conceptual understanding of public value managers, this essay pursues three objectives: (1) to identify the tasks of public managers in public value management (PVM), (2) to start thinking on the relationships between autonomy, entrepreneurship and PVM from the perspective of institutional roles and management levels, and (3) to initiate a discussion about the transferability of PVM to diverse administrative systems and cultures.

This essay has the following structure. The next subsection (1.1) introduces other common uses of the public value concept; nevertheless, public value as a management framework, and the implications thereof on the roles and tasks of public managers, constitute the main focus of this essay. Section 2 is devoted to the analysis of PVM tasks. It first (2.1) discusses the institutional role of public managers in the context of PVM, discussing topics of autonomy, entrepreneurship and value judgement, as well as comparing middle and top career managers, then delineates five distinct tasks foreseen for public value managers, namely political management (2.2), public value entrepreneurship (2.3), transition towards democratic empowerment of citizens (2.4), ensuring learning (2.5), and maintaining a systemic view of sustainable wellbeing (2.6). The concluding section (3) discusses the transferability of the public value concept and PVM to various administrative traditions and cultures.

1.1 Other uses of the public value concept

I have shown above how the concept of public value addresses the ultimate purpose of the use of public resources (Horner and Hutton 2011) and translates this purpose to a set of practical tools and reasoning for public managers (Moore 1995, Meynhardt 2009). There are, however, also other and related uses of the term in scholarly literature and administrative practice.

First, and more abstractly than the conceptual framework for PVM sketched above, some authors define public value as a governance framework or even a new paradigm for public administration (Kelly et al. 2002, Stoker 2006, O'Flynn 2007).

Second, being a useful metaphor for examining or promoting the value and quality of public services (see also OECD 2019), in practice "public value" is frequently used interchangeably with related concepts such as "value for money" or "value for citizens" – without links to the public value literature or an explicit operationalisation. Exceptions include Blair's administration (Kelly et al. 2002, Lennox 2016) or more recently the government of New Zealand (Norman 2011, Meyer 2020), where public management reforms have directly been informed by the public value literature.

Third, there is a growing body of public value-adjacent literature on public values (plural). Grounded in values research, Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007, 13) define public values – emphasising their public character and cataloguing different types of values – as specifying "the rights, benefits, and prerogatives to which citizens should (and should not) be entitled; the obligations of citizens to society, the state and one another; and the principles on which governments and policies should be based". The legitimacy of government rests on perceived adherence to these public values. The literature on public values is generally understood as closely related to the concerns of public value literature, as it helps to understand the various normative expectations of citizens and service users vis-á-vis the government, as well as how these expectations and the perceived adherence of the government to these norms relate to governmental legitimacy and accountability (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007, Nabatchi 2018, Ventriss et al. 2019; cf. Pollitt 2003, Andersen et al. 2012). Over the recent years, one of the leading research communities on public values has grown around the topic of e-government services (cf. Kearns 2004, Cordella and Bonina 2012, Bannister and Connolly 2014, Scott et al. 2016).

2. The five tasks of public value management

The aim of this section is to first introduce the job of the public value manager in the context of institutional structure of public administration with respect to the issues of autonomy and entrepreneurship, pragmatic value judgements and political role, and hierarchical levels. Five distinct tasks of public value management are then presented, with challenging issues such as accountability and legitimacy, longer-term interactions with external actors, democratisation and politics of PVM, and deontological and utilitarian views of the role of public administration as recurring topics.

2.1 The institutional role of public value managers

In the original conception of public value, public value managers are understood as entrepreneurs with public resources and equipped with authority, securing the creation of the highest value possible in the given circumstances. Moore (1995) defines public value managers through "a bundle of public assets entrusted to their stewardship" as Platonic stewards of public resources placed in "a particular fiduciary role in a democratic system that requires them to behave in certain ways regardless of the consequences for themselves and others" (Moore 2013, 57). This complies with "the self-actualizing administrator model, where the public administrator is chiefly a change agent rather than a handmaiden to a bureaucratic superior" (Bozeman et al. 2017, 23). Nevertheless, the autonomy and entrepreneurial initiative of public value managers implied by Moore became a source of contention.

Besides Moore's entrepreneurial understanding of the role of public value managers, part of the perceived problem was his unquestioned assumption of transferability of their role into other political-administrative systems and traditions. The most vocal criticism in the literature was voiced by Rhodes and Wanna (2007, cf. Alford 2008, Williams and Shearer 2011). They opposed the notion of entrepreneurial autonomy of public value managers in the context of Westminster systems on the account that it jeopardises upward accountability towards their bureaucratic masters and the core business of their management responsibilities. (Note that Rhodes' and Wanna's attitude is largely aimed at the concept of managerial autonomy instead of the concept of public value per se.) Nevertheless, to be entirely fair, Moore saw elected politicians in the role of final arbiters of public value; managers' autonomy was not to be left entirely unchecked. Entrepreneurial leadership is expected to unfold within the bounds of administrative and political accountability (see also 2.1 below): "while the techniques of entrepreneurial advocacy offer good advice about how to analyze and diagnose political settings, the tactics recommended lack the spirit one would like to see in policy-making in a democracy" (Moore 1995, 162).

Public value managers are, however, also to exert pragmatic value judgements when identifying public value and managing for its delivery in situations of conflicting societal interests (Alford and Hughes 2008). This carries its own set of problems. This role of "arbiters of political conflict" seems like a tall order indeed – it might be that "the notion that public managers' values [being] more noble than their political superiors or their citizen clientele is, to borrow a phrase, devoid of empirical support" (Bozeman et al. 2017, 23). Public value managers might be reluctant to step into this politically charged role as they might feel "bound by the established norms of bureaucratic ethos, which constrain them to focusing on achieving administrative efficiency through the application of utilitarian, market-based tools" (Nabatchi et al. 2011:i38 in Nabatchi 2017, 61). Indeed, "utilitarian values alone cannot guide the value [public managers] seek to produce and reflect in the operations of their organisations" (Moore 2013, 57). PVM therefore attempts to bridge the traditional dichotomy between "bureaucratic ethos" and "democratic ethos" (Nabatchi 2017, Hartley et al. 2015a). This dichotomy was traditionally addressed by an institutional separation between elected and career officials. We now know that this line is blurred in practice (Peters 2001, Svara 2001, Hughes 2012, Hartley et al. 2015a); however, PVM might disrupt this "useful fiction" even further.

Public value literature does not clearly define the institutional role of public value managers, although most works imply middle career management in distributive sectors. Career or elected officials at the top level are discussed only rarely. Middle management might represent the decisive level for PVM implementation; an empirical study in the German Federal Labour Agency (Diefenbach 2011, 85) found that "middle managers can increase public value orientation by identifying local needs and acting entrepreneurially upon opportunities." The study found links between higher levels of entrepreneurial orientation and higher levels of public val-

ue orientation in the eyes of the middle managers. Perhaps surprisingly for the Germanic Rechststaat administrative tradition, upward and administrative accountability was not reported to constitute a hindering factor or to impede on public managers' autonomy: "The middle managers' perception of whether the legal mandate demands and allows for entrepreneurial behavior is less important than anticipated … most public managers will only act within the legal framework, whether or not they see room for entrepreneurial behavior" (ibid., 154). At the same time, the relationships between external stakeholders and public managers catalyses an entrepreneurial orientation of the whole organisation: "Multitude of expectations has a strong effect on managerial action and fosters entrepreneurial orientation", while "middle management's localism – their willingness and desire to fulfil the local community's needs" – positively affects the entrepreneurial orientation of their departments (ibid., 153f.). This responsiveness to local expectations and needs is the foundation of external accountability.

The problems with managerial autonomy both in the sense of pragmatic execution of autonomous value judgements and deficit in upward accountability described above are somewhat eased in the case of top-level officials, be they elected or career staff. Notwithstanding, distinctions in the institutional roles and incentives between elected and career personnel need to be acknowledged. Top public career managers enjoy larger autonomy, more plentiful resources at their disposal and less constraining upward accountability mechanisms, while at the same time enjoying a stronger default mandate to adopt "value propositions" which were part of the political programme of the government. Another benefit is the expectation of pragmatic value judgements. With respect to the task of ensuring mechanisms of deliberation and managing the transition towards democratic empowerment of citizens, top career civil servants as well as elected officials have more clout and resources to initiate participatory processes or democratisation reforms than middle managers.

Nevertheless, higher politicisation of top civil service positions, combined with party loyalty, might emphasise adherence to party ideology at the expense of the technical merit of "value propositions". Leveraging public value opportunities might be an area where top civil servants are also at a slight disadvantage in comparison with middle managers. Despite their visibility in the media and the resulting political capital (although meagre still in comparison to elected politicians), they are institutionally placed to make decisions at a higher level of abstraction and thus with lower responsiveness to local needs (see also Diefenbach 2011 above), with less time to nurture networks of delivery and develop trust on the basis of shared experience, and weaker ties to local communities. Their time constraints might also make the more systematic and analytical work required for continuous learning and a wider view quite challenging.

2.2 Conducting political management to secure legitimacy for particular value propositions

The chief task expected of public value managers can be subsumed under the term political management. This term refers to formal and informal activities to do with strengthening individual public manager's mandate, securing resources (including money and public authority, Moore 2013), and attaining specific, situated autonomy with the purpose of implementing a particular "value proposition". The goal of political management is to obtain legitimacy for said "value proposition" from the political, administrative and other stakeholders of and within the organisation, in the context of an existing institutional accountability framework with its "diverse and sometimes competing interests in groups, organizations and societies" (Hartley et al. 2015b, 197). Although the role and mandate of public managers is institutionalised and grounded in longer-term political and organisational goals and expectations, here emphasis is placed on the tactical dimension of managing situated legitimacy. The role of political management in PVM has been acknowledged since Moore's (1995) original conception, where one of the poles of the "strategic triangle" of PVM is "management of the authorizing environment".

Earlier conceptions of public management emphasised top-down legitimacy and upward accountability. Moore's original understanding of political management rests on catering to and negotiating with "actors who are always present and must always be attended to [i.e.] those who appoint managers to their offices, establish the terms of their accountability, and supply them with resources" (Moore 1995, 118f.). Due to the formal authority over the manager, the "most important figures in this context are the managers' immediate superiors" (ibid., 119; cf. "receiving and maintaining mandate" in Biegelbauer and Griessler 2009). This might include politicians (Hartley et al. 2015a), who would act as the "final arbiter[s] of public value" (Moore 1995, 38) – in the context of a narrow notion of politics as limited to existing representative political institutions.

The understanding of this task has undergone certain development since the 1990s, chiefly through the recognition of external forms of accountability and legitimacy. From the perspective of public value creation, political and organisational superiors do not represent the central constituency of a given "value proposition". Instead, the manager needs to ask *whom* is public value to be created *for*. Legitimacy can be secured through guaranteeing quality services responsive to citizen/user preferences (Kelly et al. 2002), through "instigat[ing] a more deliberative and reflexive dialogue with the public about what they value in public services, how resources should be deployed to achieve this, and how to measure the results" (Coats and Passmore 2006, 16). Note that striving for downward accountability through organising, mobilising, and assembling, i.e. management of democratic, participatory political mechanisms above and beyond elections, also expands Moore's original notion of politics.

Later works on public value have further broadened this external dimension of political management. According to Bryson et al. (2014), PVM aims to enhance overall accountability – with accountability serving as the basis for legitimacy – while at the same time pursuing a multifaceted notion of accountability. Such a notion would include accountability not only to law, political norms, and professional standards, but also to community values, citizen interests, and even to technical/scientific standards, secured by deploying expertise (Moore 2014). Furthermore, external legitimacy is strengthened not only by expanding the circle of stakeholders whom the manager is accountable to, but also through extending the scope of manager's responsibility along the chain of effects. In this respect, Horner and Hutton (2011) stress strengthening output or even outcome accountability and outcomes beyond mere user satisfaction.

Some of the more recent approaches to political management (Moore and Fung 2012, Moore 2014) adopt a more social constructivist perspective. The public value manager does not merely identify existing stakeholders and their needs, they bring a specific political community into being ("calls a public into existence"), in other words develops external constituencies that provide a source of legitimacy. Part of the problem is that Moore seems to be oblivious to the heterogeneity of legitimate political interests and constructs "public as a whole", endowed with the task of arbitration on what is valuable, as an idealised aggregation of individual preferences. Such an understanding could "undermine legitimacy of government and … reduce its effectiveness" (Prebble 2018, 2). Furthermore, this notion brings about a particular dialectic problem. If we understand the broad scope and autonomy of managers as limited by the prerequisite of securing legitimacy and existing mechanisms of accountability, by shifting the focus of accountability to external audiences while allowing the managers to define and nurture these audiences, the limits to autonomy are again significantly relaxed. Instead of seeking "value propositions" that grant legitimacy with defined audiences, the manager can seek and build audiences that will support a defined "value proposition". The manager thus defines the public values based on which they are going to be judged.

2.3 Leveraging public value opportunities through networks and a range of delivery mechanisms

The second main task in PVM relates to the purpose of entrepreneurial autonomy of public value managers, the context-specific search for public value. Public managers are responsible for the entrepreneurial enhancement of possibilities and innovative leveraging of public value opportunities (Moore 1995, Stoker 2006). This implies a redefinition of the more common top-down approach to management (Cole and Parston 2006) in that the managers situationally consider the "full array of alternative delivery mechanisms and choose among them based on pragmatic criteria" (Bryson et al. 2014, 448). This includes "contract negotiations, contract management and risk analysis, in addition to more traditional planning and bud-

geting functions" (Cole and Parston 2006, 51), increasingly with the help of digital technologies (Panagiotopoulos et al. 2019).

It should be emphasised that the sources of public value extend far beyond mere government action. Public value can be created as an outcome of actions of other actors, too, including private enterprises, private households, and non-profit organisations – and note that we should also include the nature as an important source of public value. Public value can also be destroyed, "when the wrong decisions are made about the needs to be satisfied, the strategies to satisfy needs, or the processes to produce and deliver services" (Nabatchi 2017, 60; cf. "public value failure" in Bozeman 2002, "dis/value" in Cluley et al. 2020). In this context, leveraging public value opportunities means developing and steering interactions, networks and partnerships between these sectors in order to achieve synergetic effects in public value creation (Stoker 2006, Bryson et al. 2014, Turkel and Turkel 2016, Cabral et al. 2019). "Networks of delivery" (Stoker 2006) need to be actively created and steered – and "governments would benefit from viewing such networks as temporary or semi-permanent partnerships" (Cole and Parston 2006, 51). PVM therefore calls for and advances a "collaborative form of governance" (Turkel and Turkel 2016; cf. Stoker 2006).

This networked form of public service delivery and public value creation is all the more challenging in situations of multiple and conflicting interests (Moore 1995, Bryson et al. 2015). Private interests need to be steered not only with respect to public value creation, but also public value appropriation (Cabral et al. 2019). Here public value managers "need to rely on deontological ideas about their own proper role, right relationships between government and citizens, and what makes a society not only good but just" (Moore 2013, 57). For Moore (1995, 44), government intervenes "to correct [a] defect in the market", and when "there is some crucial issue of justice or fairness in the provision of [a public] service", which also represents deontological reasoning (i.e. government pursuing "just action"). Furthermore, the obligation to adequately treat the plurality of legitimate perspectives held by societal actors, competing or conflicting public values and sources of satisfaction, and the associated problem of social incommensurability, is also of normative relevance. The challenge this represents is far greater than problems of methodological complexity and technical incommensurability (Cordella and Bonina 2012). At the same time, Bozeman and Johnson (2015) hint at an important question regarding value-based leadership and normative legitimacy: To what extent is PVM agnostic towards the actual value content? Also, given the critique of managerialisation voiced against NPM, is it reasonable to enlarge managerial autonomy with the expectation of benign value pragmatism – and to what extent does this weaken democratic control mechanisms (Dahl and Soss 2014)?

The pursuit of public value by the means of networked governance implies several additional challenges. It is probable that win-win opportunities will be lim-

ited and that choices on trade-offs between societal actors, political-administrative and geographical levels, social, economic and ecological domains as well as between short-term and long-term outcomes will need to be made. Furthermore, public value opportunities cannot be entirely planned in advance, i.e. public value creation evolves endogenously (Cabral et al. 2019). Measurement of performance of programmes, organisations and networks of delivery in the context of public value has to cope with the complexity of real-world systems and requires significant analytical capacity, with a set of widely accepted measurement approaches and tools not emerging out of the public value literature so far.

2.4 Ensuring continuing democratisation through helping the realisation of politically empowered citizenship

One of the more underappreciated aspects of public value management is its programme of democratisation and the resulting far-reaching changes to the relationship between citizens and the state. Under a more conservative and technocratic reading, PVM requires the identification of service users' existing expectations and preferences with the help of expert methods, complemented perhaps by some variant of stakeholder relationships management. Nevertheless, from the beginning Moore (1995, 30) stressed the role of citizens rather than mere users or clients and noted the link between PVM and political legitimacy. He distinguished between free individual citizens with their individual preferences who are to benefit from governmental action, and a political, collective and monolithic "we" articulated through the process of democratic elections and representing the aggregation of individual preferences (cf. Jacobs 2014, Prebble 2018, Seibel 2020). Over the last two decades, Moore and other scholars have expanded this understanding in four significant aspects.

First, the recognition of the array of democratic and participatory mechanisms required securing external legitimacy, and the creation and steering of the "networks of delivery" has led towards a focus on "networks of deliberation" (Stoker 2006). Moore (2014, 474) later recognised that his conception of public value "was insufficiently consultative with respect to those affected; it was insufficiently rigorous and imaginative with respect to possible solutions for the problems identified; or it gave insufficient time for a public to be formed out of a group of individuals". Democratising the administration "will need to include other, more direct pathways of participation through which the public can engage with agency administrators, as well as with third party actors working on behalf of the state" (Ventriss et al. 2019, 279; cf. Benington 2015). The shift towards external accountability in PVM is accompanied by "negotiated goal setting and oversight" (Stoker 2006) through various mechanisms and tools of active citizen and stakeholder representation and participation.

Second, for participation to be effective – especially with the shift towards deliberative logic – participatory and deliberative capacity is required on the part of both the organisation and participants of such processes. The task of the manager therefore involves developing participation capacity also through engagement of citizens, fostering longer-term involvement and showing participatory leadership in forming a politically articulate public.

Third, the two-level understanding of a political community has become richer and approached the conception of the Aristotelian *polis* with respect to organised particular interests (cf. Schmitt-Egner 2015). Moore recently (2014) also started recognising the level of social movements and voluntary associations, analytically placed between the level of individuals and the level of the whole community as the will of the people manifested in the government and its actions. Despite the persistent focus on private individuals and a lack of recognition of interests organised in different spheres than civil society, Moore provides a more realistic and, for the purposes of PVM, more actionable model of a political community.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, there is now a recognition of PVM being a project of long-term democratisation of the whole society, citizen empowerment and strengthening of social capacity to recognise and create public value in order to compensate for the shortcomings of representative democratic governance (ibid.). So besides engaging citizens and managing participatory processes with the purpose of increasing the legitimacy and quality of decision making, public managers are also engaged in a long-term project of fostering citizenship and managing the transition towards citizen empowerment.

2.5 Ensuring learning across multiple levels and audiences

As suggested above, public value management involves tackling the uncertainty of causal chains between government interventions and their outputs on the one hand, and desired as well as undesired social outcomes on the other hand (Moore 1995, 40). Coping with risk and uncertainty requires a humble approach to knowing, the ability to learn, interdisciplinary technical expertise, and mechanisms of intersubjective validation. Ensuring continuous social learning (Stoker 2006) therefore belongs among the important tasks of public value managers. This task includes reflexivity, improvement through service user involvement (Horner and Hutton 2011), monitoring and outcome-sensitive evaluation systems, management of responsible innovation (Hartley 2011), as well as recognition of responsibility for advancing knowledge of the communities of practitioners and academics through transfer of best practices and maintaining links to academic debates (Stoker 2006, Bryson et al. 2015).

2.6 Cultivating a wider view of sustainable wellbeing for all

From the discussion of tasks and associated challenges above the notion seems to emerge that public value managers cannot afford themselves the luxury of value agnosticism (cf. Bozeman and Johnson 2015). Care for societal wellbeing implies a utilitarian stance (i.e. government for the sake of "creating the greatest good for the greatest number", Moore 2013), relying on a systemic perspective, prioritisation of ends before means, the recognition of conflicting objectives and measures of various sectoral policies, the ability to reflect on the mission and purpose of one's own organisation, as well as the recognition of direct and indirect stakeholders beyond the immediate constituency and acknowledgement of multiple legitimate perspectives. The responsibility for tough decisions on value choices also implies an ethical stance of actively addressing asymmetries of power, of seeking to represent the voice of the voiceless – those powerless, marginalised, and silenced, but also of ecosystems or future generations – and an earnest dedication to the democratic advancement of the society and the empowerment of its weak.

The public in PVM stands not only for the responsibility for public assets, or for delivery of benefits in the intersection of multiple societal interests, but also for an active and responsible citizenship of this shared, full and interconnected world. As Crouch (2011) deftly puts it, "climate change, environmental damage and globalisation finally confront us again with the primeval sense of the public." PVM can be interpreted along value-agnostic lines as vague management of "anything goes", as long as process requirements such as fair access and transparency on the one hand and quality criteria such as cost-efficiency and user satisfaction on the other hand are met. The task of ethical action in the context of a wider, systemic view on public value and sustainable wellbeing requires, besides the democratic aspirations mentioned immediately above and the "soft boundaries" of external legitimacy, also the search for and the enforcement of "hard" boundaries of realistic, equitable and sustainable politics, i.e. the "social floor" and "ecological ceiling" (Raworth 2017, Horniak et al. 2018).

3. Conclusion: public value as a programme of administrative and societal democratisation

This essay pursued three objectives. Primarily, it identified the tasks prescribed to public value managers by the public value literature. Five clusters of tasks were identified: (1) conducting political management to secure legitimacy for particular value propositions; (2) leveraging public value opportunities through networks and a range of delivery mechanisms; (3) ensuring continuing democratisation through helping the realisation of politically empowered citizenship; (4) ensuring learning across multiple levels and audiences; and (5) cultivating a wider view of sustainable wellbeing for all. These tasks of public value management rely on both deontologi-

cal and utilitarian value propositions, defensible only through extended notions of accountability and legitimacy.

This essay also discussed the institutional role of public value managers with respect to autonomy and entrepreneurship, pragmatic value judgements and the political role of public managers, as well as appropriate hierarchical levels with respect to PVM. This dimension of the debate is not yet very present in the literature – the modest contribution of this essay lies in suggesting that middle managers have numerous advantages over top-level career officials, in particular a higher measure of responsiveness to stakeholder expectations and needs.

This concluding section seeks to initiate a discussion about the transferability of PVM, as defined by the five tasks above, to diverse administrative systems (Painter and Peters 2010, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017). Due to its context specificity, PVM emphasises iterative redefinition and recontextualisation, issue-based processes and structures as well as stakeholder constellations, and continuous learning and evolution. This implies higher compatibility with public administration traditions that favour change and openness to ambiguity over permanence, risk aversion and the need for rational expectations (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007). The higher measure of autonomy and trust granted to public managers from political representatives, as well as lower partisan control over the institutions and processes of public administration and lower clientelism implies professionalised and managerialised administrations, with high societal status and discretion granted to civil servants, along with generalist training and career options. PVM also thrives in settings with less hierarchical power and higher autonomy of network actors, blurring the boundary between state and non-state actors in the co-production of public value (Stoker 2006, Bryson et al. 2017). It is to be expected that such networks would revolve around informal institutions (shared beliefs and expectations, common identities, vocabularies and frames of interpretation, mutual trust) and flexible management practices (negotiation and deliberation, shared tool and document development, structured reflection), rather than strict regulation, top-down authority and tight legal framework as, e.g., in the Germanic Rechtsstaat tradition. Such a vision is more compatible with public administration traditions that actively pursue democratisation and decentralisation (federalism, subsidiary principle), and possessing a vital civil society as well as mechanisms ensuring horizontal as well as vertical cooperation (see also Bozeman 2002). PVM's orientation on stakeholder involvement and deliberation could also imply higher compatibility with consensual executive governments. PVM relies on a large spectrum of sources of policy advice – while balancing scientific expertise, participatory input and political pragmatism seems to constitute one of the biggest challenges of PVM.

The picture is, nevertheless, uneven in terms of actual reception of PVM. The public value discourse arrived and resonated primarily in countries belonging to the Anglo-Saxon administrative tradition, namely the US, UK and New Zealand – all

of which were pioneering New Public Management reforms. In continental Europe, judging from academic production, the concept found purchase in the Netherlands, Italy and Denmark (Sami et al. 2018), while limited experimentation takes place also in German-speaking countries, i.e. Germany and Switzerland (Meynhardt et al. 2017), as well as Austria (Schantl 2014). The profiles of these countries differ across several dimensions of administrative traditions and cultures, so it would seem that when PVM finds purchase, it is with different motivations or due to different reasons (and might also get translated or "domesticated" into national contexts differently). A difficult future for the concept might also be predicted in Central and Eastern European administrations with their dual, layered character (i.e. a shallow "constructed administrative tradition" based on a compilation of European administrative values vs. inherited "indigenous" legacies shaping and limiting reform, see Verheijen 2010, 218). Even if hopes are placed on PVM to reverse the loss of trust in public institutions and an increasingly charismatic politics, it might well be that PVM finds reception in traditions and systems that are already more resistant to democratic backsliding.

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