Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Creating public value in regional policy. Bringing citizens back in

Carlos Mendez [iD][a], Andreja Pegan [iD][b] and Vasiliki Triga [iD][c]

ᵃEuropean Policies Research Centre, School of Government and Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK; ᵇDepartment of Social Sciences, University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne (UK) and Faculty of Management, University of Primorska, Koper, Slovenia; ᶜDepartment of Communication and Internet Studies, Cyprus University of Technology, Lemesos, Cyprus

ABSTRACT
We develop a novel citizen-centred multi-dimensional approach to public value creation in regional policy. Drawing on 47 citizen focus groups in 16 European regions, public values are analysed through an interpretative comparative approach. Goal attainment is a positive and widely held value. However, evaluations of institutional performance and democratic values are more negative. The findings have significant implications for public value management. We propose a five C's public value creation framework emphasizing coherence across public values and the communication and co-creation of public value sustained through capacity building and continuous feedback. Implications for public value theory, European regional policy and future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS Public value creation; public values; citizens; regional policy; European Union; cohesion policy

Introduction

In his seminal book Creating Public Value, Mark Moore (1995) pioneered a new research agenda in public administration on public value creation in the United States. Since then, public value research and practice have expanded to Anglo-Saxon jurisdictions and European countries (John and Moore 2010; Lindgreen et al. 2019). This article provides the first citizen-centred and comparative application of a public value framework to regional development policy by studying citizens' perceptions of regional policy in Europe. In doing so, we provide novel and comparative insights into the public value of regional policy across regions in the European Union (EU), highlight the benefits of a bottom-up citizen-centred perspective on public value and aim to encourage further applications by adopting a broad, multi-dimensional and generalizable analytical framework.

The regional policy domain is an instructive case for investigating public value. Regional development policies aim to reduce territorial inequalities and impact directly on citizens' lives through visible projects supporting growth, jobs and the

quality of life. Being closer and more tangible to citizens' lives than other more abstract (e.g. regulatory, foreign) policies facilitates discussion with citizens about the values that public policies (should) embed. Indeed, a political backlash against mainstream political parties in 'the places that don't matter' is underpinned by public discontent against the inadequacies of regional policy responses to globalization and de-industrialization (Rodríguez-Pose 2018).

The strong 'networked governance' character of regional policy implies that it is relevant for investigating public value creation as a management paradigm emphasiz-ing the collective judgement of different actors about what constitutes public value (Moore 1995; Stoker 2006). Regional policies worldwide operate through multilevel governance models that directly engage public, private and societal actors at multiple territorial levels (Barca, McCann, and Rodríguez-Pose 2012).

In the article, we link scholarship on public value creation – the management paradigm (Moore 1995) - with public values research (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007) to make several contributions. First, we emphasize the importance of a citizens' perspective on public value creation, given their critical yet overlooked role in the 'authorizing environment' that provides public policy with political support and legitimacy. Despite citizens being at the core of the definition and conceptualization of public value (Bozeman 2007; Meynhardt 2009; Moore 1995), existing studies mainly focus on political and administrative elites rather than directly assessing the public values expressed by citizens (Bozeman 2019; Nabatchi 2012; Osborne, Nasi, and Powell 2021). We show that the scholarship on public values is pertinent for public value creation as an analytical framework for identifying citizens' public values, and addres-sing normative issues in public policy and administration by deriving policy implica-tions to enhance the management of public value creation.

Second, we conceptually define and empirically analyse regional policy values comparatively for the first time producing new knowledge on whether and how citizens' public values vary across different geographical contexts and value dimen-sions. We do so based on the case of the European Union, where regional policy is implemented under a shared management regime with common rules. This facilitates international comparative analysis, which remains scarce in public value research (Fukumoto and Bozeman 2019; Hartley et al. 2017) and demonstrates the portability of public value concepts to the supranational and other multilevel settings (Conteh and Harding 2021).

The following section develops a framework for public value analysis. The metho-dology is then presented. Drawing on 47 focus groups in 16 European regions from a major EU (Horizon 2020) research project, the empirical analysis applies the frame-work through a comparative study of citizens' public values in regional policy. The discussion explores the implications for public value management. The conclusion sets out the wider theoretical and policy contributions.

A public value analytical framework

The starting point for our analytical framework is Moore's (1995) foundational work on public value. Moore explains that public value creation is the strategic process involving the continuous alignment of the collective judgement by the 'authorizing environment' (i.e. the 'space' where public policy gains support and legitimacy) on what public value is and the operational capacity to achieve it. Following Moore, much

of the empirical literature adopts a managerial focus by analysing government activity and public managers' views (Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg 2014; Zeger van der, De Graaf, and Lasthuizen 2008; Vrangbaek 2009; Andersen et al. 2013; Hartley et al. 2015; Brookes and Wiggan 2009; Meynhardt and Metelmann 2009). This literature addresses citizens insofar as it explores how to deal with managerial issues that hamper or contribute to citizen participation in the co-creation of public value. To break out of the 'public manager-centric approach' (Hartley et al. 2017), we adopt an interpretative approach by relating public value creation to the subjective perceptions of citizens (Meynhardt and Bartholomes 2011; Bozeman 2019; Nabatchi 2012). We focus on how citizens as one element in the 'authorizing environment' judge the creation of public value. The need to focus on citizens has been most clearly articulated by Nabatchi (2012) who stresses that 'public participation' is an element in the creation of public value, which means that citizens' accounts should be studied to understand what public value is.

To be clear, we do not claim that citizens are or should be the only judges of what constitutes public value. We argue that a rigorous assessment of public value creation must include an exploration of what values 'we the people' want to see expressed and achieved by public policies. Despite a growing theoretical recognition that citizens need to be brought in (Nabatchi 2012; Benington 2011; Moore 2013; Osborne, Nasi, and Powell 2021), very few empirical studies have done so and all appear to focus on a single country or region/city. Through a survey, Bozeman (2019) determined the consensus level on public values among US citizens and found that the public values citizens proclaim are not always the ones they enact. Investigating public values on energy policy through deliberative workshops with citizens in several UK cities, Demski et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of a public perspective derived from societal 'interactions in the world'. Other studies looked at citizen values from a narrower standpoint as individuals (Jaspers 2021) or groups with a direct interest such as 'residents', 'users', 'consumers' and 'stakeholders' (Grüb and Martin 2020; Sherrouse, Clement, and Semmens 2011; Layden, Manfredo, and Tucker 2003; Benetti and Langemeyer 2021; MacDonald, Murray, and Patterson 2015). While the values of individuals and the people directly affected are important, these do not necessarily capture the diversity of public values in society (Fukumoto and Bozeman 2019; Degeling and Johnson 2015).

We argue that to capture public values in a public policy context we need to focus on citizens as part of society (preferably alongside other societal actors, e.g. managers, politicians and stakeholders). This requires investigating the values that policies satisfy or dissatisfy from a citizen perspective. Theoretically, we adopt an interpretative approach recognizing that societal actors collectively construct the meaning of public value (Franziska, Helmig, and Feeney 2019; Demski et al. 2015; Rutgers 2008; Fukumoto and Bozeman 2019). This resonates with the understanding of public value creation as a 'contested democratic practice' between what people see as valuable and what representative institutions consider to add value (usually judged by experts, public managers or elected officials) (Benington 2011; Bozeman 2007; Nabatchi 2012). Since values are socially embedded they are best distilled from participatory and deliberative processes involving people that broadly represent society (Nabatchi 2012; Davis and West 2009).

Before presenting our methodology for bringing citizens into public value discussions, we explore the substantive content and dimensionality of public value creation

or public values in their plural form (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007). A wide range of public value dimensions have been identified (see van der Wal, Nabatchi, and De Graaf 2015 for a review). Moore (1995, 2013) emphasizes three dimensions: delivering services, achieving social outcomes, and maintaining trust and legitimacy. Bozeman's (2007) framework distinguishes norms defining citizen rights and obligations, and the principles of governments and public policies. Jørgensen & Bozeman's (2007) inventory of public values comprises dignity, sustainability, citizen involvement, openness, secrecy, compromise, integrity and robustness. Benington (2011) lists economic, social, cultural, political and environmental values. Institutional performance, moral-ethical obligations and political-social stability are central to Meynhardt and Bartholomes (2011).

In the following, we contextualize the public values literature on the basis of scholarly and policy literature on European and global regional policies which leads us to identify four core values that are pertinent to regional policy and incorporate both market-based and normative values, namely goal attainment, institutional performance, socio-political and democratic values. Table 1 illustrates the dimensions within these values and operational indicators/examples, which were uncovered inductively from our empirical study and literature review.

Goal attainment value

The first value is goal attainment defined in the public values literature as the extent to which public organizations deliver and improve publicly valued outcomes, such as social, economic or environmental outcomes (Page et al. 2015; Faulkner and Kaufman 2018). In most studies, outcome attainment refers to the mission of an organization or the main policy goal. It can also refer to outputs such as public services.

Regional policies' primary and traditional goal worldwide is to reduce regional disparities with a strong focus on less-developed regions, although there has been an increased focus on the competitiveness of all regions in many countries (OECD 2016; Davies et al. 2017). Beyond these overarching goals, programmatic goals in regional policy strategies and instruments tend to distinguish outputs from outcomes (Barca, McCann, and Rodríguez-Pose 2012). Outputs are accomplished with the resources allocated to an intervention (e.g. training courses for the unemployed, number of sewage plants, kilometers of roads built and number of firms assisted), while outcomes are a consequence deriving – directly or indirectly – from a cause and effect relationship, such as new jobs, improved accessibility and firm productivity change.

Citizens' perceptions of the goal attainment value are important because they can contribute to 'output' legitimacy in terms of the ability of policy to resolve problems (Schmidt 2013). Indeed, the perceived ineffectiveness of regional policies (or development aid) in achieving their goals is often used as an argument by net payer states/ regions (or donors) to reduce their financial contributions, partly based on the assumption that their citizens do not value financial transfers to other countries or goal attainment positively (Bachtler, Mendez, and Wishlade 2013). The extent to which regional policies have successfully achieved thier primary goals in Europe or across the world is contested (Barca, McCann, and Rodríguez-Pose 2012). Macroeconomic analyses – assessing the impact of EU funding on GDP growth or employment – produce varied results, some finding effects on convergence but others showing little or no impacts (Pieńkowski and Berkowitz 2015; Davies et al. 2017). Microeconomic

Table 1. Public values in regional policy.

Dimensions	Indicators/examples
Goal attainment (positive social science/policy analysis)	
Project outputs and results	The number of projects and jobs, improved accessibility and increased firm productivity
Convergence and development	Socio-economic impact on macro variables, national or regional convergence (e.g. beta/sigma convergence, Gini coefficients etc.)
Added value	Additional qualitative/governance benefits from implementation (e.g. partnership-working, multi-annual planning, evaluation, funding prioritisation of themes, instruments etc.)
Institutional performance (positive social science/policy analysis)	
Timely delivery/spending	Spending rate and the achievement of milestones
Legal compliance	The error rate of non-compliance, administrative irregularities, fraud, corruption and conflicts of interests
Project management	Effective/efficient project selection, costing, monitoring, evaluation and closure
Administrative capacity	Quality of human resources, systems and tools, and governance structures
Democratic (normative political/ democratic theory	
Multilevel governance	Participation of public, private and societal actors at different territorial levels in programme design and implementation
Communication	Measures to increase publicity, information and visibility (e.g. websites, project advertising, press releases and events)
Accountability	Decision-making and oversight mechanisms involving policy-makers, experts, elected officials, stakeholders and citizens (such as committees, reports and evaluations)
Responsiveness	Decisions that take into account feedback from experts, elected officials, stakeholders and citizens
Deliberation	Democratic innovations engaging citizens in deliberative processes to directly influence policy
Clientelism	Project selection and funding allocation processes influenced by clientelistic and political relationships
Social- political (positive social science/ policy analysis and normative political theory)	
Equity-efficiency	Objectives and allocation decisions that prioritise spatial equity through a focus on less-developed regions/countries with greater needs, and/or a focus on economic efficiency through prioritisation of aggregate development with a bias towards more developed regions/countries
Political identity	Indirect influence of policy on public allegiance and attachment to the state or sub-national territorial jurisdictions

studies examining the leveraging of private sector investment, business development or net jobs creation also produced mixed results. Policymakers and studies also highlight the European 'added value' referring to more qualitative contributions such as the benefits of multi-annual planning, partnership, evaluation culture and changing funding priorities (Bachtler and Mendez 2020).

Institutional performance value

Institutional performance is a prominent value in European and global regional policies. In the public values literature, it relates to the functioning and delivery of

policy in terms of implementation and technical problem-solving (Faulkner and Kaufman 2018; Meynhardt and Bartholomes 2011). This value embodies the principles that an organization and its administration observe when transforming policy into outputs and outcomes such as a cost-effective delivery and the minimization of bureaucratic waste. This dimension also subsumes public value notions of 'robustness' including project timeliness and sustainability (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007).

A common managerial metric used to assess European and North American regional policies' institutional performance is the timeliness of spending (Applica, and Ismeri Europa 2016). A second dimension of institutional performance is financial compliance, i.e. the administrative regularity and legality of expenditure, which has become a central focus of evaluations of regional policies as the role of audit has increased (Levy, Barzelay, and Porras-Gomez 2011; Mendez and Bachtler 2017).

Low spending rates and compliance in European regional policies are attributed to weaknesses in administrative capacity, including lack of competence or insufficient staff, management system weaknesses, poor programme or project management, weak coordination and bureaucratic rules (Tosun 2013; Mendez and Bachtler 2017; Mendez and Bachtler 2022). The literature on federalism and intergovernmental relations in the US has long recognized that the capacity of subnational governments is critical for implementation (Derthick 1970; Elazar 1966; Shama and Pickerill 2012). Capacity has been shown to correlate with implementation performance in federal, state and local authorities (May 1993; Spillane and Thompson 1997) and is associated with the effectiveness of winning and spending intergovernmental grants (Collins and Gerber 2008).

Democratic value

The third dimension identified in the public values and regional policy literatures is democratic value. Democratic value is linked to the relationship between the state and citizens (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007; Talbot 2011). It refers to how policies are made and how well they respond to citizens' preferences. In some aspects, democratic value is linked to the participatory quality of policy processes known as 'input' legitimacy (Schmidt 2013). More generally, democratic values incorporate the rule of law, accountability, citizen engagement, equity and fairness, and the extent to which public policies and organizations are responsive to citizens' needs (Nabatchi 2012). Page's et al. (2015) public value framework distinguishes vertical accountability (responsiveness to legal mandates) from horizontal accountability (responsiveness to wider stakeholders). Similar notions include 'moral-ethical obligations' or social values to fair treatment and equality (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007; Meynhardt 2009; Meynhardt and Bartholomes 2011). We view the latter as distinct from conventional conceptions of democratic value accountability in normative political theory and therefore treat them as a separate socio-political value dimension.

The regional policy domain is often identified as being at the forefront of democratic principles given its multilevel, participatory and networked governance character. The concept of multilevel governance was coined from the study of EU regional policy, since it requires the participation of public, private and societal actors at different territorial levels in designing and delivering programmes (Bache 2010). Despite the democratic values embedded in the partnership principle, EU regional policy decision-making is often technocratic and elite-dominated (by national or

regional civil servants) with weak communication and responsiveness to local needs and can be subject to clientelist and rent-seeking behaviour (Olsson 2003). The increased focus on localized instruments has aimed to involve community stakeholders in developing area-based strategies, but the engagement of citizens has been uneven and low across the EU (van der Zwet et al. 2017). Following its departure from the EU, the UK's new regional policy for levelling up has been criticized as a missed opportunity due to its omission of citizen co-creation governance mechanisms that could contribute to a public sphere and public value (Connolly and Van der Zwet 2021).

Socio-political value

The final values in our framework are socio-political. These values influence society as a whole, carry civic relevance and reflect how public policy is experienced collectively (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007; Risse 2015). Policies provide citizens with opportunities, resources, identities, which help communities co-exist and resolve differences when facing common challenges. Examples include a common sense of identity, social cohesion, solidarity, loyalty to society, altruism and concern for future generations (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007; Meynhardt 2009; Meynhardt and Bartholomes 2011). We add to this group of values the adjective 'political' because they challenge or sustain the acceptability of a democratic political system. As such they can be considered as a form of 'input' legitimacy, since they provide policy legitimacy on the basis of collective identities (Schmidt 2013).

The rationale of regional policy is intrinsically connected to socio-political values. Efficiency and equity criteria underpin the spatial allocation of funding and policy objectives (Farole, Rodríguez-Pose, and Storper 2011). Financial transfers to less-developed regions and social groups embody redistributive norms of solidarity, reciprocity and we-feeling. The creation of regional policies is often linked to state- and identity-building initiatives to bring citizens together, especially in federal contexts. Yet, as a redistributive policy, regional policies can be conflictual by exposing winners and losers in the allocation of budgets. Media coverage of regional policies is salient during negotiations over resources, which are often politically divisive calling into question solidarity goals (Mendez et al. 2020). Nevertheless, public opinion research shows that fiscal redistribution through regional grants can positively impact political regime support and collective European identities (Dellmuth and Chalmers 2018; Borz, Brandenburg, and Mendez 2022).

Research design

The data for the present study were collected from focus groups (FG) with citizens as part of a major EU (Horizon 2020) research project. Focus groups were selected as the most suitable tool for data collection since they allow for the emergence of a wide range of arguments that are used in everyday citizens' discussions, compared to individual interviews, for example. The process of interaction that is facilitated by focus groups brings to the fore contrasting views and nodal points which participants feel comfortable to raise given the less-moderated structure of the discussion (Greenbaum 2000). Moreover, a group setting is important since we define public value as the subjective view of what the public, rather than the individual, regards as valuable (Meynhardt 2009). While focus groups with citizens have been used to

understand how citizens engage with a range of policy issues, they have never been used in public value research to our knowledge.

We conceptualize focus groups from a wide interpretivist angle, the goal of which is to understand participants' intersubjective and context-related constructed and attributed meanings to social phenomena (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009). In the specific domain of public management, our interpretivist approach can be related to a phenomenological understanding of focus groups which is grounded on the premise that to provide explanations for social phenomena we need to understand the way people actively 'establish' and 're-establish' the meanings of their social contexts. The conduct of this type of focus groups is guided by a list of criteria that are explained in detail in the literature with specific rules applying to the role of the moderators, duration of discussion, number of participants etc. (see Calder 1977; Bill and Olaison 2009).

Having adopted an interpretivist, phenomenological approach to focus groups, our analysis needed to follow a strategy that is in line with the principles and criteria of this approach. The primary focus of the analysis was the content of the discussions (in contrast with other linguistic approaches in the phenomenological paradigm) and, more specifically, the meanings and interpretations contained in the arguments used by participants to support their views.

The dataset was coded using a semi-deductive approach that was guided by open research questions which were linked to the four key dimensions namely, goal attainment, institutional performance, democratic and socio-political values. Subsequently we undertook thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; Boyatzis 1998) of the coded material to identify the different meanings linked to public values attributed to EU regional policy. The thematic analysis was chosen as one of the most flexible analytical approaches that can be adapted to a plethora of theoretical frameworks. Themes are considered central organizing concepts that refer to the ways the four dimensions of public value are constructed in the focus group discussions.

We created the themes for every public value dimension through multiple rounds of repetitive readings of the coded material,[1] by isolating ideas of interest and discussing convergence and divergence between codes, and relating chunks of text to codes which were adopted as depictions of established knowledge all through collective judgement (Vaismoradi et al. 2016). The themes enabled us to construct the meanings attributed to public value dimensions (as presented in the section 'A public value analytical framework').

Data

Forty-seven FG with 240 citizens were conducted in 16 regions across 12 EU countries between July 2017 and February 2018. The selection of regions reflects differing economic development levels corresponding to the financial intensity of transfers (Table A1 in the appendix), and also ensures variation in socio-economic and political-institutional variables. Table A2 in the appendix contains the list of the focus groups and their composition. All FG discussions were transcribed and translated into English. The recommended time for the discussion was one hour and fifteen minutes. Depending on the number of participants the discussions varied between one hour to two and a half hours.

The recruitment of participants and the conduct of the discussions were carried out by local researchers who received training and followed a common topic guide probing participants' awareness of regional policy, policy achievements and political attitudes. Standard recruitment techniques were used including a prior telephone survey representative of the regional populations, social networks, snowballing, advertisements, social media and external recruiters. Sampling satisfied the criterion of variety in terms of participants' demographic characteristics rather than representativeness, although we strived to be inclusive and tried to achieve balance concerning age and gender participation. This was important to achieve inclusivity as a condition for deliberation. Participants were encouraged to justify their opinions (i.e. the respect condition of deliberative processes) and to participate (i.e. equal participation).

Method of analysis

As mentioned above the focus group data was analysed inductively using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; Boyatzis 1998). The public value framework in Table 1 was used to nest the identified themes following a more deductive approach. We coded and discussed the meaning of each theme to ensure consistency and reliability. Based on common agreement, we were able to classify and connect all the inductively identified themes into the four deductively identified public values. When themes that are not discussed in the literature emerged, we classified them in the public value framework after discussions.

Each theme was also broken into clusters identifying consensus or dissent among participants to identify differences in perceptions across territorial jurisdictions (European regions in our case), a recently identified research gap (Fukumoto and Bozeman 2019). In our approach, values are not public because there is a consensus on their desirability; they are public because they are spoken of, acknowledged and discussed in a social setting (c.f. Huijbregts, George, and Bekkers 2021).

The analysis provides a qualitative interpretation of themes, which we illustrate with FG excerpts (i.e. an individual coded chunk illustrating a theme). Given the large text corpus, quantitative analyses helped us to identify differences in the discussions across cases. This involved a coding process by group, region and country. We report the number of focus groups and regions where dimensions and public value were discussed. The approach corresponds to a mixed-method content analysis (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie 2003).

Findings: mapping citizens public values

An overview of the empirical findings is presented in Figure 1, distinguishing the four public values and associated dimensions we identified in the focus groups. Shaded colours indicate the valence (negative-neutral-positive) on each value dimension given the share of coded extracts.[2] Table A3 in the appendix includes the data used to represent the size of each tile.

The goal attainment value generated the most discussion and was generally positive in tone. The quantity of discussion was similar amongst the remaining values but with a more negative tone, especially concerning democratic and institutional performance values.
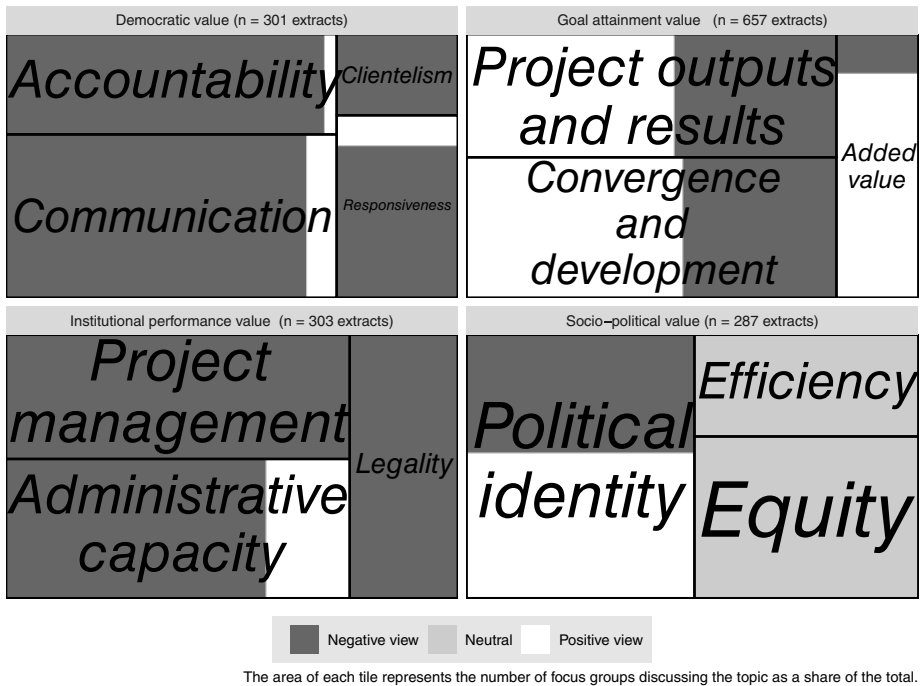
Figure 1. Frequency and valence of public value themes.

Goal attainment value

Goal attainment was discussed in all focus groups as macro-outcomes in terms of socio-economic convergence and development, added value and, at a micro-level, project outputs or results (e.g. roads built and business development). The outcome goal of regional convergence emerged in 42 focus groups in all regions. Convergence was understood in terms of development aiming at and reducing socio-economic disparities across countries and regions (38 FG, all regions). Regional policy was portrayed as being crucial to address territorial disparities by supporting the development of countries, regions and deprived rural areas:

> Participant 2 (Group 1): I think that we experience the same things as in Hungary and in other countries, but I would assume that the gap would be even bigger without Cohesion policy[3] and that in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and even in Great Britain there would be even many more disparities.

Convergence was questioned and described as slow, uneven or absent in 27 FG in 12 regions:

> Participant 1 (Group 2): I am sorry to say that regions are not developing evenly and this is a problem, that so-called pockets of affluence are forming, whereas the remaining areas are poor.

Discussions of convergence triggered debates about added-value in 23 FG across 15 regions. The common view was that EU institutions and policy requirements added value to domestic policies by providing additional resources for regional policy or

specific interventions, improving public management, resolving intergovernmental conflicts, and adding a regional dimension to development. In most regions participants considered that the funding would not have been received without the policy, with scepticism expressed about such 'additionality' in only three groups in old member states regions and one in the UK, for instance:

> Participant 3 (Group 3): No one is considering asking if without these funds, these things would have been done all the same. Because other things were done before. For example, an institute was set up earlier when we weren't in the EU, for sure.

Another theme that emerged in the focus group discussions concerned evaluation of projects in terms of positive and negative effects. Positive evaluations (in 32 FG across 14 regions) mainly focused on tangible outputs and results, such as improved infrastructure, employment opportunities and business creation. The negative evaluation of projects (25 FG, 13 regions) was related to failures in addressing needs, investing too little too late, or wasteful investments in projects with no value. In a small number of groups in new member states, participants spoke of projects deliberately implemented to benefit foreign states and multinational companies:

> Participant 1 (Group 2): Most of the investments implemented in [country name] were done by firms from the 'old' EU, and so the bulk of the funds which were invested went, as profit, back to Germany, France, United Kingdom.

Institutional performance value

Institutional performance value refers to the process of implementation and operational delivery. Discussions revolved around the management of projects, administrative capacity and legality. Compared to goal attainment, institutional performance accounts were more concise, suggesting less knowledge about the operational nuts and bolts of policy delivery. The main themes underpinning the institutional performance value concerned the management, administrative capacity and legality of regional policy projects.

The perceived mismanagement of projects was the most frequently discussed topic under this value (in 33 FG across 15 regions). There was a perception that funds could be better managed and address local needs with improved planning and project selection, for instance in this exchange:

> Participant 3 (Group 4): Take a random project for example.[. . .] I imagine that in any other country [. . .] delivery time, the money allocated [. . .] would be predetermined. This does not happen here. The cost is bigger than planned, and the delivery date much later than the one foreseen . . .
>
> Participant 1 (Group 4): The road project outside [city name] stopped in a village because it stumbled across, I don't know, the house of Yiannis . . .
>
> Participant 2 (Group 4): I agree with what [Participant 3] said and also with that said by [Participant 1] – in the sense that in [country name] there are a lot of project carried out without the necessary preliminary studies.

In new EU member states, negative judgements dominated the discussions on project selection, quality, delivery and sustainability. Participants from old member states were as critical only about project cost overruns and implementation delays. Weaknesses were linked to rent-seeking and subsidy mentalities in Cyprus, Western Transdanubia,

Southern and Eastern Ireland, Podkarpackie, Pomorskie and Andalusia, regions which have benefited from high levels of funding. The key argument put forward was that external grants are perceived as 'free' or 'easy' money, leading to more emphasis on grant capture than good management.

> Participant 1 (Group 5): We [country name] got a lot of money and when people are getting money, maybe they don't always make the very best decision if they were paying a - hundred percent themselves.

A related criticism was the perceived prioritization of spending on low-quality projects to avoid returning unused funds.

> Participant 6 (Group 6): One thing that was highlighted in our region [...] was that they had some funding to spend on cycle paths to get them up to speed. Because if they didn't get the funding they would lose it, so lots of councils applied for it but none of them linked up. So you'd be on cycle paths and then have to cross a major road, and stuff like this.

Absorption challenges were linked to management issues such as the absence of policy measures and a project pipeline in Cyprus, Western Transdanubia, West Romania and West Slovenia, but in only one old EU member state (Central Macedonia):

> Participant 3 (Group 4): The money from the EU exists, but it is us who are unable to manage our programs, even at a preliminary stage, to ask for the respective funds. This results in money not being spent.

There was also a recognition that projects may have good aims, but fail due to unfavourable socio-economic conditions and poor strategic planning. For example, it was claimed that funding for job training can only be effective when there are opportunities in the job market:

> Participant 3 (Group 3): Where I work, there are driving licences courses for the unemployed. Problem is, as [Participant 2] said, that even when people do pass the exam and get the driving licence, there's no way they can find a job here and they go abroad.

Discussion on the sustainability of regional policy projects recognized their long-term utility in principle but criticized their durability without renewed financial support, again implying deficits in strategic and long-term planning, for instance:

> Participant 6 (Group 7): The swimming pool only generates costs for the school because of the heating, cleaning [...] costs. It is a real burden for the school's budget. [...] It was an investment. Now, you must take care of it yourselves. It's your problem now.

The second theme was administrative capacity in terms of public authorities' ability to effectively and efficiently administer regional policy funding (in 32 FG across 15 regions). It was the only theme of the institutional performance value where participants had mixed opinions. Negativity focused on the perceived complexity of rules and bureaucratic procedures that discourage potential applicants or prevent effective implementation:

> Participant 2 (Group 8): It is relatively too much work to familiarize with the regulations and to figure out what I am allowed to do and what not.

Positive accounts emphasized policy-makers' capacity to effectively implement regional policy, improve procedures, minimize bureaucracy, and detect and prevent fraud:

Participant 4 (Group 9): When there is a project co-financed with European funds, everything goes to the millimetre and is perfectly controlled because at any moment they can take it away from you. Where the subsidy has a different origin, control and monitoring is not the same.

The third theme was related to legality issues mostly focusing on fraud and corruption (in 22 FG in all regions except for Baden-Württemberg). Fraud and corruption were discussed intensively in new EU member states (except for the Polish regions and West Slovenia):

Participant 1 (Group 10): As a citizen I have the suspicion that on the basis of the mentality and culture things tend to go crooked, that there is corruption as to the way funds are received and as to whether these funds are spent wholly for the allocated project.

While legality received less attention in old EU member states, it was addressed in the focus groups in Central Macedonia.

Democratic value

Democratic value was discussed at length (in 44 FG across all regions). Participants' views on democratic value were uniform and largely negative. The themes that emerged concerned the communication of funding, democratic accountability, responsiveness, public deliberation and clientelism. While negative views were more frequent, a positive perspective was present in eight groups concerning responsiveness to needs and citizen participation (Scotland, North East England, Pomorskie), accountability (West Romania) and visibility (Baden-Württemberg, Southern and Eastern Ireland and West Romania).

The first theme of communication encompasses views on policy actors' communication of the role and benefits of regional funding to citizens (41 FG, all regions). There was a widespread perception that European regional policy is not sufficiently or effectively publicized, for instance:

Participant 4 (Group 11): You go to Scotland, you go to Wales, there are signs everywhere. It must be a political decision not to and we are now going to suffer because of it.

Blame was attributed to EU and national authorities and the media, with the latter perceived to focus on sensational stories about political conflict, ignoring success stories and failing to inform the public, as in this exchange:

Participant 5 (Group 12): If we talk about the media, they impart little such knowledge. If you're interested, you can browse the Internet, but you need to be interested. Knowledge doesn't come to you without your effort, right? And think that the radio, TV, other . . .

Participant 2 (Group 12): Yes, there is too little coverage.

The Irish Southern and Eastern region was the only region where communication was not discussed extensively. Participants from new member states held views that were more critical about communication despite higher funding levels.

The accountability theme included narratives describing national and local authorities claiming credit for the benefits of regional funding, and ineffective, absent or excessive audit, control and monitoring processes (26 FG, 15 regions), for example:

Participant 2 (Group 4): The funding is good, but there also has to be some control over where it is directed because the situation in the country could be better.

Transparency was emphasized as a crucial requirement for exercising control over the use of funds. Accountability was discussed more frequently in new member state regions than old member state regions.

The third theme under democratic value was responsiveness to citizens' needs (17 FG, 11 regions), which was discussed more often in new EU member state regions. Participants considered that public authorities ought to engage citizens directly to overcome decision-making that is distant from their concerns and needs:

> Participant 2 (Group 13): I think that broad consultations should be in place. Because the ordinary people, residents of the town or municipality, usually learn about everything after the fact.

Finally, participants expressed criticism of perceived clientelist decision-making, such as pork-barrel politics and political patronage (8 FG, 6 regions). This theme was more prevalent in less developed regions in new EU member states, but also in Central Macedonia and Southern and Eastern Ireland.

> Participant 3 (Group 5): And a lot of government ministers, as far as I could see, were able to use those funds under their own area. For example, as you are driving to [city name] [. . .] really you would think you were driving into downtown New York with the roads and the round-abouts and it just because there was a minister there. [. . .] So, maybe the EU didn't control the spending and see that they would be spent a little bit better rather than get more votes for the particular government minister.

Socio-political value

Regional policy is a direct and tangible expression of solidarity through transfers of funding from richer to less-developed regions to reduce socio-economic disparities. In the focus groups, EU regional policy was portrayed as promoting socio-political value in terms of political identity and distributive equity.

The theme of collective identity was discussed in 40 focus groups across all regions. Participants in 14 regions believed that regional policy funding to their cities and regions contributes to their sense of European belonging. The solidarity mechanism of giving and receiving was acknowledged to create a bond between people, but primarily among participants from Central and Eastern European regions:

> Participant 6 (Group 12): We're taking money now, but at some stage we will also have to give money. At least I'm sure such a time will come and, therefore, I feel more connected with the people who are now helping us.

The second theme that emerged was equity, characterized in terms of solidarity and establishing a level-playing field (35 FG, 15 regions). Participants emphasized that funds should be distributed according to needs, with disadvantaged regions receiving more funding:

> Participant 4 (Group 14): If the countries that have joined have worse problem with unem-ployment etcetera than the North East, well they need supporting.

There was surprisingly strong support for equity in more developed regions (except in Central Macedonia). By contrast, efficiency criteria for resource allocation was sup-ported in fewer groups (22 FG, 12 regions), where participants thought that the

allocation of funding to 'the best' projects (irrespective of economic/social needs) was more appropriate:

> Participant 3 (Group 12): I think the money should go to whoever can use it best and has some potential.

Discussion

In the following discussion, we identify the contributions of our findings to the literature on regional policy and on public values as well as the implications for public management practice.

Contributions to the literature

This study has provided the first empirical analysis of the micro-level foundations of public values in regional policy comparatively based on the views of citizens. The analysis elicited four values and several value dimensions across all focus groups, albeit with different intensity and valence across regions. Goal attainment is a positive and widely held public value. However, this value is undermined by negative evaluations of institutional performance and democratic values, while socio-political values are more balanced in tone.

We found important variations in public value narratives across regions. Negative narratives on the institutional performance and democratic values were mainly evident in less developed regions with lower quality of government / administrative capacity levels. The implication is that a comparative perspective is necessary to understand better how citizens form their perceptions on policy values in different institutional contexts and to tailor government action accordingly (Fukumoto and Bozeman 2019), contrasting with the dominant focus on single countries and/or regions in existing empirical studies on public values.

Economic achievements were the dominant focus of citizen discussions on European regional policy. Even discussions around the socio-political value of identity were linked to the material benefits of regional policy. This is consistent with the rationale of regional policy as an economic policy aiming to improve socio-economic conditions but may also be influenced by elite narratives. Economic approaches and assumptions underpin regional policy design and evaluation including rationalist/ positivist perspectives on policy-making through tools such as cost-benefit analysis, SWOT and impact assessment (Hoerner and Stephenson 2012; OECD 2017). The socio-economic achievements and impact of European regional policy also dominate media coverage of the policy especially in local media outlets (Mendez et al. 2020).

However, citizen discussions on democratic values were still very salient in this economic policy domain, implying that an overreliance on instrumental rationality in (regional) policy analysis should not mask the importance of normative perspectives on public value management (Bozeman 2002; DeLeon 1994). Adopting a public value management approach to regional policy provides a comprehensive conceptualization of policy value beyond economic attainment values (Moore 1995; Stoker 2006). The literature on public values is therefore useful to public value management since it provides an analytical framework for public managers to analyse the public support and legitimacy of policy, and by broadening policy-making analysis to socio-political

and democratic dimensions of public value. Our findings highlight the perils of a one-sided focus on the achievement of narrowly-defined policy objectives as in much of the evaluation literature on regional policy, and demonstrate the importance of a normative perspective on regional policy-making that goes beyond effectiveness/efficiency criteria in assessing policy performance.

The findings present an obvious puzzle: why is a policy that proclaims a deep commitment to democratic values not recognized as embodying these values by citizens? The evidence from citizens in this study suggests that key explanations are a perceived lack of responsiveness to citizen needs, communication and direct citizen engagement. These perceived weaknesses are significant because understanding what constitutes public value requires a continuous realignment of the elements in the 'strategic triangle' (Moore 1995) or dialogue and deliberations with citizens and wider stakeholders, allowing the development of policy solutions based on reasoned arguments and mutual understanding. Public value management can promote more extensive citizen participation in policy-making, for instance, through the co-creation of policies. The integration of public values and citizen participation in public value management can enhance accountability by extending citizen involvement and opening up discussions on public policy values. Public value management puts greater emphasis on democratic values than technocratic policy-making. In adopting an interpretative stance on public values and emphasizing citizen participation, public value management can help build trust in policies and institutions.

That said, there are significant barriers facing a more inclusive approach to understanding and enacting citizens' public values in research and practice. First, a citizen perspective is required to understand and close the 'public values gap' between citizens, elites and stakeholders. Despite citizens' appreciation of public value being central to the definition/conceptualization of public value, empirical studies rarely assess the public values expressed by citizens directly. This may reflect the origins of public value theory in the public administration literature and its focus on public sector organizations, while public opinion analysis tends to be the home turf of cognate subdisciplinary perspectives in political behaviour. We argue that citizens' views of public values must receive greater attention in public administration research and highlight the benefits of focus groups as a complementary method which allows a more in-depth and interactive investigation of citizens' public values than opinion surveys or individual interviews. Indeed, focus group techniques are widely used by governments for election campaigning and policy-making purposes.

Second, public value management is about dialogue and the exchange of ideas and/or resources with citizens throughout the policy cycle (i.e. mainstreaming co-creation). Yet, many citizens perceived regional policy as an elitist, technocratic, and centralized policy with insufficient responsiveness to local needs and direct engagement of citizens in decision-making over what is funded by public authorities in their local area. Somewhat surprisingly, the benefits of multilevel governance that are commonly highlighted by practitioners and in the scholarly literature were unobserved in the focus group discussions. This implies a disconnect between the perceptions of policy elites/experts and citizens. While regional policies proclaim a strong policy commitment to accountability, multilevel governance and partnership, there is generally an absence of direct citizen participation in decision-making and a strong emphasis on technocratic expertise and efficiency takes precedence instead. The trading of political accountability for technocratic efficiency is a well-recognized challenge in multilevel

and networked governance policy domains where institutional responsibilities are blurred across and within governance levels (Peters and Pierre 2005). This partly reflects the view that citizen engagement processes can be costly from a resourcing and time management perspective and can delay or obstruct decision-making. However, democratic innovations that engage citizens can enhance participation while maintaining efficient processes (Hong 2015), thereby reducing tensions or trade-offs between institutional performance and democratic values.

Managerial implications

What are the implications for public values management? Our findings provide a novel citizen perspective on how to manage public values, which may be generalizable to public value management approaches in other policy domains sharing similar networked and multilevel governance characteristics. The normative implications for public value creation management can be summarized in our five C's framework:

(1) Coherence. The analysis revealed a range of public value dimensions and sub-dimensions with variations in salience and tone. Accordingly, a coherent approach is necessary to manage public value creation that factors in its multi-dimensional nature. If regional policies are perceived to promote different public values inconsistently, this can confuse the public or at worst reduce public support. For example, positive evaluations of goal attainment combined with negative evaluations of institutional performance and democratic values could be perceived as inconsistent and undermine positive perceptions of goal attainment value creation. Government actors need to address these inconsistencies because public values congruence between policy mandates with those of citizens is an important form of accountability (Guo and Marietta 2015). Existing methodologies such as Moore's 'public value scoreboard' can help in setting up a dialogue on public values in a coherent manner.

(2) Communication. The focus groups revealed that communication of regional policy is perceived to be weak by citizens, yet good communication is essential in achieving many public values (Stoker 2006). The literature on governmental and political communication highlights that positive messaging can increase trust in and loyalty to government institutions (Karens et al. 2016; Teodoro and An 2018; Alon-Barkat 2020) and promote a collective identity (Borz, Brandenburg, and Mendez 2022). Given that ineffective communication can reduce public awareness and trust, regional policy interventions need to be presented as a collective effort to promote public values that are perceived to be important by citizens.

(3) Co-creation. The participants in our focus groups did not feel that citizens were proactively engaged in regional policy decision-making; many expressed an interest in having a greater say in local decisions on project funding, albeit without offering suggestions on how this ought to be done in practice. This is unsurprising given that the EU's regional policy regulations do not provide citizens with direct authority in resource allocation decision-making, and the involvement of civil society is often limited to responding to consultations on broad policy priorities. Implementing policies without engaging early and actively with the people they will affect, increases the likelihood of criticism

and loss of trust. Co-creating policies with the public on an institutionalized rather than ad hoc basis, especially with those most affected in less-developed regions and communities, could improve buy-in. While public value scholars stress the importance of collective preferences and participatory involvement of citizens in public value creation, 'public value approaches are premised on a fundamentally non-democratic notion' where 'bureaucracy and bureaucratic interests predominate and displace democratic preferences' (Rhodes and Wanna 2007). We follow Nabatchi's (2012) call to 'bring the public back into public values' research and management practice through democratic innovations involving direct citizen participation (e.g. citizens' juries, panels, councils and assemblies) in decision-making and oversight over implementation. Unlike traditional and new public management, this approach views citizens as problem-solvers and co-creators actively engaged in creating what is valued by the public and is good for the public (Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg 2014). It is also consistent with the literature on the contested democratic practice of public values and the need for consensus-building mechanisms to forge agreement on public values. The importance of citizen co-creation for developing public value and a public sphere in regional policy has been recognized in public values research even if it is not applied in regional policy practices (Connolly and Van der Zwet 2021).

(4) Capacity. While European regional policy is presented as being one of the most complex and misunderstood EU policies (Bachtler, Mendez, and Wishlade 2013, 11), the deliberative quality in our focus groups suggests that citizens can have constructive discussions on regional policy with the potential to contribute to a more politically informed and engaged citizenry. Most participants in all regions were aware of regional policy, although this was often with a rather vague/superficial understanding of the policy's rationale, objectives and governance. Moreover, it is well-known that 'left behind' people may not see themselves as candidates for co-creating regional policy solutions (Connolly and Van der Zwet 2021). Therefore, citizen capacity development would be important to both inform and engage citizens in value creation processes. This implies the need for adequate public management resourcing for capacity development to engage citizens effectively, especially from less politically engaged and marginalized groups in society. Given the disproportionate impact of regional policies on less-developed regions and communities, specific consideration and targeting of resources is needed to integrate people from these communities since they tend to be more alienated from political and policy processes and harder to engage. Targeted actions can offset problems with access to financial and administrative resources that are needed for citizen capacity development. Although costly and challenging to resource during periods of budgetary consolidation, building the skills and confidence of citizens to participate in decisions that affect them can bring important long-term benefits in terms of social cohesion, transparency and ownership.

(5) Continuous feedback. Ongoing involvement in the various stages of the policy cycle can improve the engagement of citizens in co-creation (Brandsen and Honingh 2018) as well as the outcomes of co-creation in terms of value, ownership and trust (Bentzen 2022). Monitoring the impact of co-creation and providing clear and honest feedback to the public will encourage support for

current and future regional policies if needed. Seeking ongoing feedback from the public on the regional policy public values' evaluations and suggestions for improvement will allow more valued regional policies to be developed. Given the relatively critical assessment of institutional and democratic values by citizens, there is a need for effective and efficient management through continuous alignment of management with citizen values that is proactively communicated to citizens through engaging communication strategies.

To explore the wider implications for legitimacy, it is useful to distinguish input, output and throughput legitimacy (Schmidt 2013). The dominant-negative narratives on regional policy were linked to democratic values corresponding to the key dimensions of input legitimacy (namely, participation and responsiveness) and especially throughput legitimacy (accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, openness and deliberative quality). By contrast, criticisms of institutional performance were mainly associated with output legitimacy (institutional delivery and compliance). Goal attainment and socio-political values were also concerned with output legitimacy in terms of policy impacts and societal effects. These findings are important because legitimacy throughput weaknesses tend to be the most salient among the public, and can weaken both input and output legitimacy. By implication, policy-maker efforts to enhance democratic values and institutional performance could have the largest legitimacy-enhancing gains particularly in terms of throughput and input legitimacy.

Conclusion

This article contributes to public management scholarship by bringing citizens into the conceptualization and empirical analysis of public values, contrasting with the dominant focus on policy elites and stakeholders in existing research. We analysed the social construction of public values involved in regional policy through an interpretative perspective on citizen deliberation that bridges positive policy analysis and normative political theory. Drawing on a major EU (Horizon 2020) research project, the article provided the first empirical analysis of citizen public values on regional policy in a comparative perspective. A multi-dimensional public value approach was applied, integrating public value management and public values scholarship, centred on four public values: goal attainment, institutional performance, democratic value and socio-political values. These values and corresponding dimensions provide a novel, transferable conceptual framework for comparing regional policy public values in different jurisdictions, especially in a democratic setting.

Citizen debates provide evidence that goal attainment is a positive and widely held public value but undermined by negative evaluations of institutional performance and democratic values. To address this public values gap, we proposed a five C's public value creation framework emphasizing the (1) coherence of public values embedded into policy and (2) the communication and (3) co-creation of public value sustained through (4) capacity building and (5) continuous feedback. The key policy implication of our five C's framework is the need to grant citizens a real say over decision-making, radically upgrade communication and public engagement in all policy stages, and thereby contribute to a better valued, more inclusive and sustainable democratic system.

In the domain of EU regional policy, a citizen-centred approach could be promoted through binding legislative obligations on EU member states to spend a minimum share of EU funding (e.g. 1%) in national/regional programmes through participatory budgeting. This would provide a mechanism to identify public values and ensure that citizens have a direct say over public investment decisions on interventions and projects in their communities that are valued by citizens. The European Parliament is best placed to introduce this recommendation in future legislative proposals given that it represents citizens and is directly elected by them. An alternative or complementary approach would be for the European Commission to pilot participatory budgeting experiments in specific regions with an interest in developing such tools and to support the sharing of experiences across countries and regions. To give meaningful substance to EU regional policy's explicit objective of bringing Europe closer to citizens requires a regional policy that is not only for the people but also with and by the people.

Finally, we want to address future research. The development of an interpretivist approach in public value management scholarship can contribute new insights by allowing crucial aspects of public values – definitions, dimensions and deliberation – to be uncovered, interrogated and systematically investigated. Approaches emphasizing citizen perceptions and reasoning can challenge the 'fallacy of elite expertise' over what constitutes public value creation – implicit in the bulk of empirical research focussing on policy-makers and/or stakeholders – while being consistent with both the concept and theoretical goals of public value creation.

Future research would benefit from comparative analysis and triangulation of the views of citizens with those of policy-makers, professionals and stakeholders; the application of mixed-methods analysis of quantitative and qualitative perspectives on regional policy public values; and from studying the application of the five C's principles of a citizen-centred approach in other policies. The increasing use of deliberative democratic innovations across the world (citizens' councils, assemblies, juries, panels and participatory budgeting) provides an opportunity to take this agenda forward.

Notes

1. The material was coded as extracts, which are relatively lengthy chunks of transcribed text so as to maintain the context of the text.
2. A generally positive or negative tone is a tone when a participant or a group of participants expressed an agreement or disagreement on the contribution of regional policy towards goal attainment, institutional performance, democratic value and/or socio-political values. Several logics underpin the funding distribution based on equity or efficiency. Both can be considered legitimate and no positive/negative value can be attributed. Therefore, we choose to label these two as neutral using a different grey shade.
3. EU regional policy is commonly known as Cohesion policy.

Acknowledgement

Disclosure statement

Funding

Notes on contributors

Carlos Mendez is Principal Research Fellow at the European Policies Research Centre at the University of Strathclyde's School of Government and Public Policy. His research interests include public participation, regional development policy, and European Union state aid policy, cohesion policy and budgetary policymaking.

Andreja Pegan is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Management of the University of Primorska (Slovenia). She researchers the representative institutions in the European Union, the democratic qualities of policy-making and new public governance. Research for this article was conducted while she was a postdoctoral fellow at University of Northumbria at Newcastle and Trinity College Dublin.

Vasiliki Triga is Associate Professor at the Department of Public Communication at the Cyprus University of Technology. Her research interests lie in the field of Political Communication, Online Media and Participation and EU Politics.

ORCID

Carlos Mendez 🆔 http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7109-4444
Andreja Pegan 🆔 http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4397-6498
Vasiliki Triga 🆔 http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6932-5389

References

Alon-Barkat, Saar. 2020. "Can Government Public Communications Elicit Undue Trust? Exploring the Interaction Between Symbols and Substantive Information in Communications." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 30 (1): 77–95.

Andersen, Lotte Bøgh, Torben Beck Jørgensen, Anne Mette Kjeldsen, Lene Holm Pedersen, and Karsten Vrangbæk. 2013. "Public Values and Public Service Motivation: Conceptual and Empirical Relationships." *The American Review of Public Administration* 43 (3): 292–311.

Applica, and Ismeri Europa. 2016. "Synthesis Report: Ex-Post Evaluation of Cohesion Policy Programmes 2007-2013." Brussels: European Commission.

Bache, Ian. 2010. "Partnership as an EU Policy Instrument: A Political History." *West European Politics* 33 (1): 58–74.

Bachtler, John, and Carlos Mendez. 2020. Cohesion policy: doing more with less. In *Policy-Making in the European Union*, edited by Helen Wallace, Mark A. Pollack, Christilla Roederer-Rynning and Alasdair R. Young, 8th ed., 232–253. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bachtler, John, Carlos Mendez, and Fiona Wishlade. 2013. *EU Cohesion Policy and European Integration: The Dynamics of EU Budget and Regional Policy Reform*. New York: Routledge.

Barca, Fabrizio, Philip McCann, and Andrés Rodríguez-Pose. 2012. "The Case for Regional Development Intervention: Place-Based versus Place-Neutral Approaches." *Journal of Regional Science* 52 (1): 134–152.

Benetti, Stefania, and Johannes Langemeyer. 2021. "Ecosystem Services and Justice of Protected Areas: The Case of Circeo National Park, Italy." *Ecosystems and People* 17 (1): 411–431.

Benington, John. 2011. "From Private Choice to Public Value." In *Public Value: Theory and Practice*, edited by John Benington and Mark Moore, 31–49. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bentzen, Tina Øllgaard. 2022. "Continuous Co-Creation: How Ongoing Involvement Impacts Outcomes of Co-Creation." *Public Management Review* 24 (1): 34–54.

Bill, Frederic, and Lena Olaison. 2009. "The Indirect Approach of Semi-Focused Groups: Expanding Focus Group Research Through Role-Playing." *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 4 (1): 7–26. doi:10.1108/17465640910951426.

Borz, Gabriela, Heinz Brandenburg, and Carlos Mendez. 2022. "The Impact of EU Cohesion Policy on European Identity: A Comparative Analysis of EU Regions." *European Union Politics* 23 (2): 259–281.

Boyatzis, Richard E. 1998. *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Bozeman, Barry. 2002. "Public-Value Failure: When Efficient Markets May Not Do." *Public Administration Review* 62 (2): 145–161.

Bozeman, Barry. 2007. *Public Values and Public Interest: Counterbalancing Economic Individualism*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.

Bozeman, Barry. 2019. "Public Values: Citizens' Perspective." *Public Management Review* 21 (6): 817–838.

Brandsen, Taco, Marlies Honingh. 2018. "Definitions of Co-Production and Co-Creation." In *Co-Production and Co-Creation Engaging Citizens in Public Services*, edited by Brandsen Taco and Steen Trui, 9–17. London, New York: Routledge.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101.

Brookes, Stephen, and Jay Wiggan. 2009. "Reflecting the Public Value of Sport: A Game of Two Halves?" *Public Management Review* 11 (4): 401–420.

Bryson, John M., Barbara C. Crosby, and Laura Bloomberg. 2014. "Public Value Governance: Moving Beyond Traditional Public Administration and the New Public Management." *Public Administration Review* 74 (4): 445–456.

Calder, Bobby J. 1977. "Focus Groups and the Nature of Qualitative Marketing Research." *Journal of Marketing Research* 14 (3): 353–364.

Collins, Brian K., and Brian J. Gerber. 2008. "Taken for Granted? Managing for Social Equity in Grant Programs." *Public Administration Review* 68 (6): 1128–1141.

Connolly, John, and Arno Van der Zwet. 2021. *Public Value Management, Governance and Reform in Britain*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Conteh, Charles, and Brittany Harding. 2021. "Boundary-Spanning in Public Value Co-Creation Through the Lens of Multilevel Governance." *Public Management Review* 0 (0): 1–25. doi:10.1080/14719037.2021.1942529.

Davies, Sarah, Irene McMaster, Heidi Vironen, Martin Ferry, and Philip Vernon. 2017. "New European Territorial Challenges and Regional Policy: Annual Review of Regional Policy in Europe." EoRPA Paper 16/1.

Davis, Paul, and Karen West. 2009. "What Do Public Values Mean for Public Action? Putting Public Values in Their Plural Place." *The American Review of Public Administration* 39 (6): 602–618.

Degeling, Chris, and Jane Johnson. 2015. "Citizens, Consumers and Animals: What Role Do Experts Assign to Public Values in Establishing Animal Welfare Standards?" *Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics* 28 (5): 961–976.

DeLeon, Peter. 1994. "Reinventing the Policy Sciences: Three Steps Back to the Future." *Policy Sciences* 27 (1): 77–95.

Dellmuth, Lisa M., and Adam W. Chalmers. 2018. "All Spending is Not Equal: European Union Public Spending, Policy Feedback and Citizens' Support for the EU." *European Journal of Political Research* 57 (1): 3–23.

Demski, Christina, Catherine Butler, Karen A. Parkhill, Alexa Spence, and Nick F. Pidgeon. 2015. "Public Values for Energy System Change." *Global Environmental Change* 34: 59–69.

Derthick, Martha. 1970. *The Influence of Federal Grants: Public Assistance in Massachusetts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Elazar, Daniel J. 1966. *American Federalism: A View from the States*. New York: Crowell.

Farole, Thomas, Andrés Rodríguez-Pose, and Michael Storper. 2011. "Cohesion Policy in the European Union: Growth, Geography, Institutions." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 49 (5): 1089–1111.

Faulkner, Nicholas, and Stefan Kaufman. 2018. "Avoiding Theoretical Stagnation: A Systematic Review and Framework for Measuring Public Value." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 77 (1): 69–86.

Franziska, Wallmeier, Bernd Helmig, and Mary K. Feeney. 2019. "Knowledge Construction in Public Administration: A Discourse Analysis of Public Value." *Public Administration Review* 79 (4): 488–499.

Fukumoto, Eriko, and Barry Bozeman. 2019. "Public Values Theory: What is Missing?" *The American Review of Public Administration* 49 (6): 635–648.

Greenbaum, Thomas L. 2000. *Moderating Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Group Facilitation, Thomas*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Grüb, Birgit, and Sebastian Martin. 2020. "Public Value of Cultural Heritages–towards a Better Understanding of Citizen? A Valuation of Austrian Museums." *Cultural Trends* 29 (5): 337–358.

Guo, Chao, and Morgan Marietta. 2015. "Value of Voices, Voice of Values: Participatory and Value Representation in Networked Governance." In *Creating Public Value in Practice*, edited by John M. Bryson, Barbara C. Crosby, and Laura Bloomberg, 67–86. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Hartley, Jean, John Alford, Owen Hughes, and Sophie Yates. 2015. "Public Value and Political Astuteness in the Work of Public Managers: The Art of the Possible." *Public Administration* 93 (1): 195–211.

Hartley, Jean, John Alford, Eva Knies, and Scott Douglas. 2017. "Towards an Empirical Research Agenda for Public Value Theory." *Public Management Review* 19 (5): 670–685.

Hoerner, Julian, and Paul Stephenson. 2012. "Theoretical Perspectives on Approaches to Policy Evaluation in the EU: The Case of Cohesion Policy." *Public Administration* 90 (3): 699–715.

Hong, Sounman. 2015. "Citizen Participation in Budgeting: A Trade-Off Between Knowledge and Inclusiveness?" *Public Administration Review* 75 (4): 572–582.

Huijbregts, Rowie, Bert George, and Victor Bekkers. 2021. "Public Values Assessment as a Practice: Integration of Evidence and Research Agenda." *Public Management Review* 24 (6): 840–859.

Jaspers, Sylke. 2021. "A Conceptual Model for Individual Coping with Value Conflicts." *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance* 4 (3): 277–290.

John, Benington, and Mark H. Moore. 2010. *Public Value: Theory and Practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jørgensen, Torben Beck, and Barry Bozeman. 2007. "Public Values: An Inventory." *Administration & Society* 39 (3): 354–381.

Karens, René, Jasper Eshuis, Erik-Hans Klijn, and Joris Voets. 2016. "The Impact of Public Branding: An Experimental Study on the Effects of Branding Policy on Citizen Trust." *Public Administration Review* 76 (3): 486–494.

Layden, Paul C., Michael J. Manfredo, and Pat Tucker. 2003. "Integrating Public Values Toward Wildlife into Land Use Planning: A Case Study in La Plata County, Colorado." *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 31 (1): 174–184.

Levy, Roger P., Michael Barzelay, and Antonio-Martin Porras-Gomez. 2011. "The Reform of Financial Management in the European Commission: A Public Management Policy Cycle Case Study." *Public Administration* 89 (4): 1546–1567.

Lindgreen, Adam, Nicole Koenig-Lewis, Martin Kitchener, John D. Brewer, Mark H. Moore, and Timo Meynhardt. 2019. *Public Value: Deepening, Enriching, and Broadening the Theory and Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.

MacDonald, Patricia a, Grant Murray, and Michele Patterson. 2015. "Considering Social Values in the Seafood Sector Using the Q-Method." *Marine Policy* 52: 68–76.

May, Peter J. 1993. "Mandate Design and Implementation: Enhancing Implementation Efforts and Shaping Regulatory Styles." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 12 (4): 634–663.

Mendez, Carlos, and John Bachtler. 2017. "Financial Compliance in the European Union: A Cross-National Assessment of Financial Correction Patterns and Causes in Cohesion Policy." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 55 (3): 569–592.

Mendez, Carlos, Fernando Mendez, Vasiliki Triga, and Juan Miguel Carrascosa. 2020. "EU Cohesion Policy Under the Media Spotlight: Exploring Territorial and Temporal Patterns in News Coverage and Tone." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 58 (4): 1034–1055.

Mendez, Carlos, Vasiliki Triga, John Bachtler, Costas Djouvas, Fernando Mendez, and Sebastian Stier. 2020. *The Visibility and Communication of Cohesion Policy in Online Media*. Brussels: European Parliament.

Mendez, Carlos, John Bachtler. 2022. The quality of government and administrative performance: explaining Cohesion Policy compliance, absorption and achievements across EU regions, Regional Studies. doi:10.1080/00343404.2022.2083593.

Meynhardt, Timo. 2009. "Public Value Inside: What is Public Value Creation?" *Intl Journal of Public Administration* 32 (3–4): 192–219.

Meynhardt, Timo, and Steffen Bartholomes. 2011. "(De) Composing Public Value: In Search of Basic Dimensions and Common Ground." *International Public Management Journal* 14 (3): 284–308.

Meynhardt, Timo, and Jörg Metelmann. 2009. "Pushing the Envelope: Creating Public Value in the Labor Market: An Empirical Study on the Role of Middle Managers." *Intl Journal of Public Administration* 32 (3–4): 274–312.

Moore, Mark H. 1995. *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Moore, Mark H. 2013. *Recognizing Public Value*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Nabatchi, Tina. 2012. "Putting the 'Public' Back in Public Values Research: Designing Participation to Identify and Respond to Values." *Public Administration Review* 72 (5): 699–708.

OECD. 2016. "Regional Outlook 2016 Productive Regions for Inclusive Societies." Paris: OECD Publishing. Accessed 11 Nov 2021. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264260245-en

OECD. 2017. "Making Policy Evaluation Work: The Case of Regional Development Policy." Paris: OECD Publishing. Accessed 11 Nov 2021. https://doi.org/10.1787/c9bb055f-en

Olsson, Jan. 2003. "Democracy Par'adoxes in Multi-Level Governance: Theorizing on Structural Fund System Research." *Journal of European Public Policy* 10 (2): 283–300.

Onwuegbuzie, Anthony J., Wendy B. Dickinson, Nancy L. Leech, and Annmarie G. Zoran. 2009. "A Qualitative Framework for Collecting and Analyzing Data in Focus Group Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8 (3): 1–21.

Onwuegbuzie, Anthony J., and Charles Teddlie. 2003. "A Framework for Analyzing Data in Mixed Methods Research." In *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, edited by Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, 351–383. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Osborne, Stephen P., Greta Nasi, and Madeline Powell. 2021. "Beyond Co-Production: Value Creation and Public Services." *Public Administration* 99 (4): 642–657. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12718.

Page, Stephen B., Melissa M. Stone, John M. Bryson, and Barbara C. Crosby. 2015. "Public Value Creation by Cross-Sector Collaborations: A Framework and Challenges of Assessment." *Public Administration* 93 (3): 715–732.

Peters, GuyB., and Jon Pierre. 2005. *Governing Complex Societies: Trajectories and Scenarios*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pieńkowski, Jerzy, and Peter Berkowitz. 2015. *Econometric Assessments of Cohesion Policy Growth Effects: How to Make Them More Relevant for Policy Makers?*. Brussels: European Commission.

Rhodes, Rod A. W., and John Wanna. 2007. "The Limits to Public Value, or Rescuing Responsible Government from the Platonic Guardians." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 66 (4): 406–421.

Risse, Thomas. 2015. *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press.

Rodríguez-Pose, Andrés. 2018. "The Revenge of the Places That Don't Matter (And What to Do About It)." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 11 (1): 189–209.

Rutgers, Mark R. 2008. "Sorting Out Public Values? On the Contingency of Value Classification in Public Administration." *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 30 (1): 92–113.

Schmidt, Vivien A. 2013. "Democracy and Legitimacy in the European Union Revisited: Input, Output and Throughput?" *Political Studies* 61 (1): 2–22.

Shama, Gamkhar, and Mitchell J. Pickerill. 2012. "The State of American Federalism 2011–2012: A Fend for Yourself and Activist Form of Bottom-Up Federalism." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 42 (3): 357–386.

Sherrouse, Benson C., Jessica M. Clement, and Darius J. Semmens. 2011. "A GIS Application for Assessing, Mapping, and Quantifying the Social Values of Ecosystem Services." *Applied Geography* 31 (2): 748–760.

Spillane, James P., and Charles L. Thompson. 1997. "Reconstructing Conceptions of Local Capacity: The Local Education Agency's Capacity for Ambitious Instructional Reform." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 19 (2): 185–203.

Stoker, Gerry. 2006. "Public Value Management: A New Narrative for Networked Governance?" *The American Review of Public Administration* 36 (1): 41–57.

Talbot, Colin. 2011. "Paradoxes and Prospects of Public Value?" *Public Money & Management* 31 (1): 27–34.

Teodoro, Manuel P., and Seung-Ho An. 2018. "Citizen-Based Brand Equity: A Model and Experimental Evaluation." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 28 (3): 321–338.

Tosun, Jale. 2013. "How the EU Handles Uncertain Risks: Understanding the Role of the Precautionary Principle." *Journal of European Public Policy* 20 (10): 1517–1528.

Vaismoradi, Mojtaba, Jacqueline Jones, Hannele Turunen, and Sherrill Snelgrove. 2016. "Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis." *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice* 6 (5): 100–110.

van der Wal, Zeger, Tina Nabatchi, and Gjalt De Graaf. 2015. "From Galaxies to Universe: A Cross-Disciplinary Review and Analysis of Public Values Publications from 1969 to 2012." *The American Review of Public Administration* 45 (1): 13–28.

van der Zwet, Arno, John Bachtler, Martin Ferry, Irene McMaster, and Stephen Miller. 2017. *Integrated Territorial and Urban Strategies - How are ESIF Adding Value in 2014-2020?*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Vrangbaek, Karsten. 2009. "Public Sector Values in Denmark: A Survey Analysis." *Intl Journal of Public Administration* 32 (6): 508–535.

Zeger van der, Wal, Gjalt De Graaf, and Karin Lasthuizen. 2008. "What's Valued Most? Similarities and Differences Between the Organizational Values of the Public and Private Sector." *Public Administration* 86 (2): 465–482.