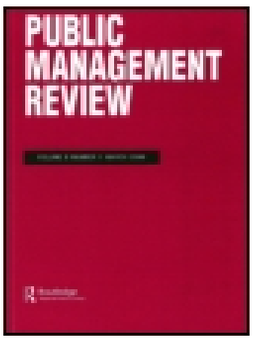

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Public values assessment as a practice: integration of evidence and research agenda

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ABSTRACT

Policymakers and public managers need to identify, reflect and decide on public values for given policy issues. This process is defined as public values assessment (PVA). We conduct a systematic literature review (n = 114 studies) on PVA, and employ a Strategy-as-Practice lens to analyse how the activity of PVA takes place in practice. Based on our integration of evidence, we propose a theoretical framework called PVA-as-Practice (PVAP). We conclude by recommending a configuration approach to future public values research to identify the most effective configurations of PVA activities, taking into account the policy issues faced by policymakers and public managers.

KEYWORDS Public values assessment; public value governance; systematic literature review; strategy-as-practice; configuration approach

Introduction

Policymakers and public managers must balance different, inevitably contradictory public values during the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policy initiatives. While the balancing act of public values has long been the subject of debate in political science as well as public policy and management (e.g. Easton 1965; Lindblom 1965; Moore 1995), we now see a renewed scholarly and practical interest in, what we call, public values assessment (PVA). First, we define PVA, building on (more recent) public values theory and research (Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007; Bozeman 2007, 2019; Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg 2014; Fukumoto and Bozeman 2019; Nabatchi 2012; van der Wal, Nabatchi, and de Graaf 2015; Wallmeier, Helmig, and Feeney 2019; Williams and Shearer 2011). Our definition of PVA stems from scholarship concerned with individuals or entities – e.g. policymakers, public managers, civil servants, elected officials, citizens, public organizations, societies – reaching normative consensus on those values that constitute public values. We build on Bozeman's (2007, 13) notion that 'public values are those providing normative consensus about (1) the rights, benefits, and prerogatives to which citizens should (and should not) be entitled, (2) the obligations of citizens to society, the state, and one another, and (3) the principles on which governments and policies should be based.' In addition, we build on

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scholarship that argues that there is no such thing as universal or self-evident public values, rather, public values are embedded within the empirical world, within policy contexts (Charles, de Jong, and Ryan 2011; Rutgers 2008). As such, we argue that public values can be identified, reflected and decided on by individuals and entities that are part of those contexts. This is in line with Nabatchi (2012) stating 'to address public values pluralism for a given policy issue, administrators must be able to identify the relevant public values (i.e. recognize and name the values), understand those values (i.e. describe or explain the values and interpret their relationship to other values), and reconcile values conflicts (i.e. rank, aggregate, or select among competing public values).' Hence, we define PVA as the practice of identifying, reflecting and deciding on public values, performed for a given policy issue.

While taking into account the long tradition of debate about the assessment of public values, we are seeing a renewed interest in PVA that we link to Public Value Governance reforms within public policy and management (e.g. Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg 2014; Osborne 2006; Stoker 2006). Following Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2014), Public Value Governance reforms point to concerns of public values pluralism that policymakers and public managers are faced with, which have always been present but disappeared somewhat into the background due to the rise of the New Public Management. In contrast with the ideas of the New Public Management, which typically focus on efficiency as central value (cf. Hood 1991), now all sorts of democratic and constitutional values are relevant again and must be considered by policymakers and public managers (Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg 2014). Hence, we argue that looking beyond the value of efficiency implies reconsideration of the values that policymakers and public managers as well as citizens and society at large find important today. As such, we notice that questions related to the assessment of public values are high on the agenda in contemporary public policy and management theory, research and practice.

In a recent account on what is currently missing within public values theory and research, Fukumoto and Bozeman (2019) point towards what they call 'the identification problem', that is the lack of agreement by scholars and public-sector professionals about approaches to identify public values. In addition, Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) point towards the problem of assessment of public values, by indicating that the assessment of public values is even more difficult than the identification of public values. As such, for both scholars and public-sector professionals, ambiguity remains about how to identify, reflect and decide on public values for a given policy issue (Bryson et al. 2017). Due to the variety of policy issues within the public sector, we argue that there is no universal way to identify, reflect and decide on public values. We argue that PVA is something people *do* depending on the policy issue they are faced with. Current public values literature does not yet provide us with an overview of empirical evidence on PVA for given policy issues (Hartley et al. 2017). This study aims to provide this insight, in order to build upon it in the further study and conceptualization of PVA. In line with Elsbach and Knippenberg (2020), based on our integration of evidence, we aim to propose theoretical building blocks for both scholars and public-sector professionals to understand PVA as a practice. Therefore we ask: *What is the state of the art of empirical evidence on PVA, and what does this imply for public policy and management theory, research and practice?*

To answer this question, we review empirical evidence on PVA which has been reported in peer-reviewed journal articles published across the social sciences. We use

the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al. 2009) and the Web of Science Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) for systematic article selection. Because we are interested in how PVA is done in practice, we introduce an adaptation of the Strategy-as-Practice lens (e.g. Jarzabkowski 2004; Vaara and Whittington 2012; Whittington 1996, 2006) as theoretical framework for article analysis. Within strategic management scholarship, the Strategy-as-Practice lens is used to analyse the 'doing' of strategy, i.e. how practitioners arrive at strategy formulation and implementation, by examining the (a) practitioners, (b) practices, and (c) praxis involved (George and Desmidt 2014). Practitioners are those individuals involved within strategizing, practices are shared routines of behaviour at the (extra) organizational level that influence strategizing, and praxis are the actual strategizing activities that practitioners employ (Whittington 1996, 2006). In the present article, similarly, we are interested in how people arrive at a normative consensus on public values. Hence, we use the 'PVA-as-Practice lens', adapted from the Strategy-as-Practice lens, to analyse evidence on PVA as reported in the articles under review in terms of practitioners, practices, and praxis involved.

Our study contributes to public policy and management theory, research and practice in the following ways. We introduce (an adaptation of) the Strategy-as-Practice lens to analyse systematically selected empirical evidence on PVA performed for given policy issues. Our integration of evidence, in turn, results in a theoretical framework for understanding PVA-as-Practice (i.e. PVAP). Based on our proposed framework, we address the need for theory building about the optimal configuration of the PVAP elements, that is practitioners, practices and praxis, in a way that fits a given policy issue and yields a PVA product which affects the given policy issue in the manner desired. Next, we suggest a configuration approach for future public values research to further investigate how a given policy issue influences the configuration of the PVAP elements and how this configuration influences policymaking and, in turn, public value creation. Finally, for public-sector professionals, the proposed PVAP framework makes clear that there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to PVA. To them, our PVAP framework adds to reflecting on the purpose, setup and desired outcomes of PVA to support a given policy issue.

In what follows, we first elaborate on the review methodology used and present our findings. Next, we explain the implications of our findings with reference to public policy and management theory, research and practice.

Methodology

Data collection

We used the PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al. 2009) to systematically select empirical evidence on PVA. The inclusion of literature within our review is based on the following eligibility criteria. First, as to content, we included records that report on a PVA performed for a given policy issue within the public sector, for example, the design of energy policy (Demski et al. 2015), the design of space policy (Bertrand, Pirtle, and Tomblin 2017), the construction of a public library (Kwak and Yoo 2012), and the management of marine and coastal areas (Munro et al. 2017). Following Flynn (2007, 2), we define the public sector as 'those parts of the economy that are either in state ownership or under contract to the state, plus those parts that are regulated or subsidized

in the public interest.' We did not apply any restrictions regarding reported designs and methods to assess public values. We did exclude records that are theoretical in nature or provide anecdotal evidence on PVA, only empirical articles were included.

Second, as to search terms, we included records that contain Boolean variations of public values, social values, and societal values. This because in other social sciences than public administration and in practice the term public values is often used interchangeably with the terms social values and societal values – see, for example, the Public Services Social Value Act that came into force in the UK in 2012 (Dayson 2017), and articles of Demski et al. (2015), Sherrouse, Clement, and Semmens (2011), and Ribeiro and Shapira (2020). We argue that these three value concepts are roughly similar. Within public administration literature, Bozeman's (2007) definition of public values is often referred to, which defines public values as constituting consensus on the principles on which government activity should be based. The foundational work of Moore (1995) on public value creation is often referred to as well, which defines public value as constituting all the benefits that the activity of government produces for society. Within other literatures, for example on societal welfare or wellbeing (e.g. Jordan 2008) and social entrepreneurship (e.g. Guo and Bielefeld 2014), we encounter similar definitions yet under the heading of social value (creation) and societal value (creation). We follow suggestions by van der Wal, Nabatchi, and de Graaf (2015) within their review of public values literature, and, as such, remove our public administration 'blinders' and ensure the multidisciplinary character of the present review by including all three value concepts in our search. Because our initial search resulted in over 5,100 records, we restricted the review to records that contain at least one of these three search terms (i.e. Boolean variations of public values, social values and societal values) in the title thus making further analysis feasible.

Third, as to document type, we included peer-reviewed journal articles listed in the Web of Science SSCI. Walker and Andrews (2015) and George, Walker, and Monster (2019) have argued that by using the SSCI, articles are included that are judged to be of suitable quality for publication since these articles have, at least, passed peer and editorial review. Furthermore, we included only English written journal articles given the practical difficulties of translation. Finally, we included articles from 1990 and onwards because there were few eligible studies predating this period and these studies proved to be inaccessible online.

These criteria were inputted in a search via the Web of Science SSCI database in March 2020. We identified 1,206 records through Web of Science SSCI for period 1990–2020 using search terms "public value*" OR "soc* value*" in the record title. Subsequently, we screened the records in two steps: based on document type and language we excluded 380 records, and based on content eligibility we excluded 712 records. Finally, our search resulted into 114 eligible articles, of which 34 on "public value*" (30%) and 80 on "soc* value*" (70%). The search protocol is presented in Figure 1. The list of selected articles is included in the supplementary material.

Before detailing our data analysis, we describe some more information about the articles included for review. First, within 23 articles (20%) the term public values is used interchangeably with terms social values or societal values. This finding emphasizes our premise that it is relevant and desirable to include multiple value concepts within our eligibility criteria. Second, the number of empirical articles on PVA has increased rapidly in recent years as 50 articles (44%) have been published between 2016 and (March) 2020, and 64 articles (56%) have been published between 1990 and 2015.

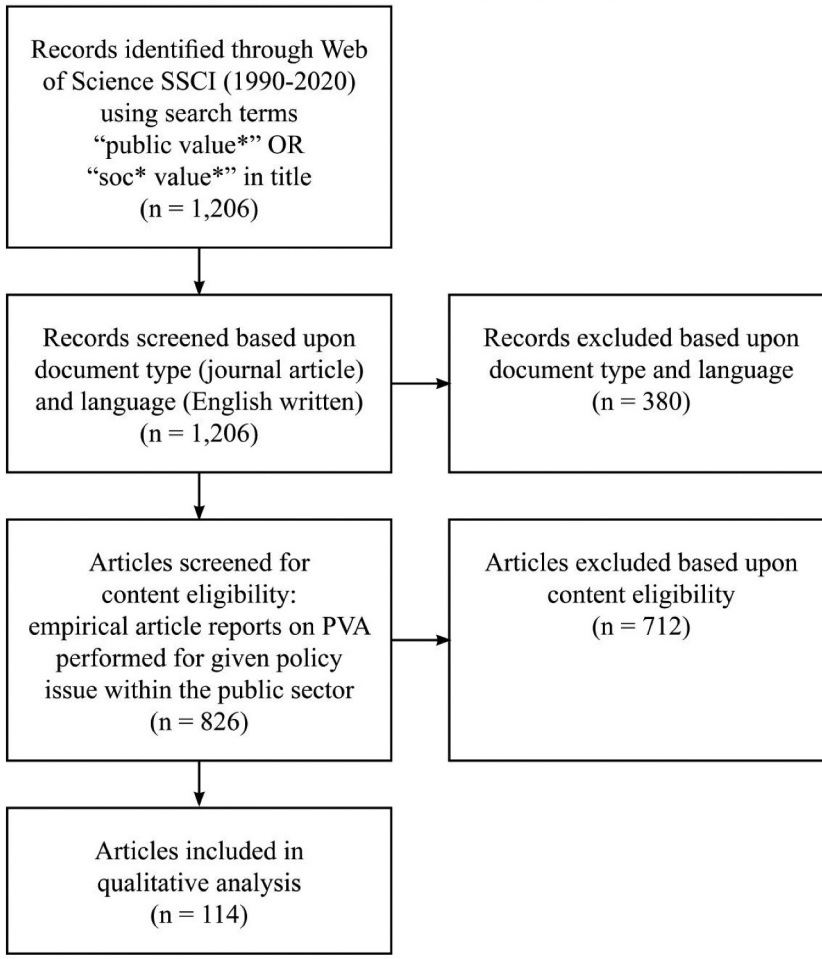

Figure 1. Search protocol. Last update 5 March 2020.

This is not surprising as the number of journal outlets and publications has also increased over time. Hence, we will not go further into this. Third, the article sample reviewed is across such an array of fields that some additional representation of this diversity is important. Following the 'research areas' format of Web of Science, the most common research areas included in the article sample are environmental sciences and ecology (55 records, 48%), business economics (31 records, 27%), health care sciences and services (15 records, 13%), forestry (11 records, 10%), public administration (10 records, 9%), and geography (9 records, 8%). Taking a look at the Web of Science 'categories' format, the most represented categories within the article sample are environmental studies and environmental sciences (69 records combined, 61%), economics (26 records, 23%), ecology (16 records, 14%), health care sciences and services and health policy and services (28 records combined, 25%), and forestry (11 records, 10%). Finally, it is worth mentioning that the articles have been published in 80 different journal outlets, including Energy Policy (3 records), Forest Policy and

Economics (3 records), Health Policy (3 records), Marine Policy (2 records), Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy (1 record), Environmental Policy and Governance (1 record), Land Use Policy (1 record), Resources Policy (1 record), Space Policy (1 record) and Utilities Policy (1 record) to name a few. The diversity of journal outlets included in the article sample, together with the Web of Science research areas and categories as provided above, indicates that we review a wide variety of reported policy issues and assessments of public values, and have succeeded in removing our public administration blinders.

Data analysis

We use the PVA-as-Practice lens, adapted from the Strategy-as-Practice lens, in our study to analyse the articles under review in terms of practitioners, practices and praxis. In line with Whittington (1996, 2006), we define practitioners as those individuals involved within PVA activity, practices as shared routines of behaviour at the (extra) organizational level that influence PVA activity, and praxis as the actual PVA activity carried out to identify, reflect and decide on public values. Figure 2 visualizes the PVA-as-Practice lens. Note that although the PVA-as-Practice lens is based upon the Strategy-as-Practice lens – the latter being quite well known in public management literature (e.g. George and Desmidt 2014) – we believe it is important to visualize our adaptation of the lens for transparency purposes.

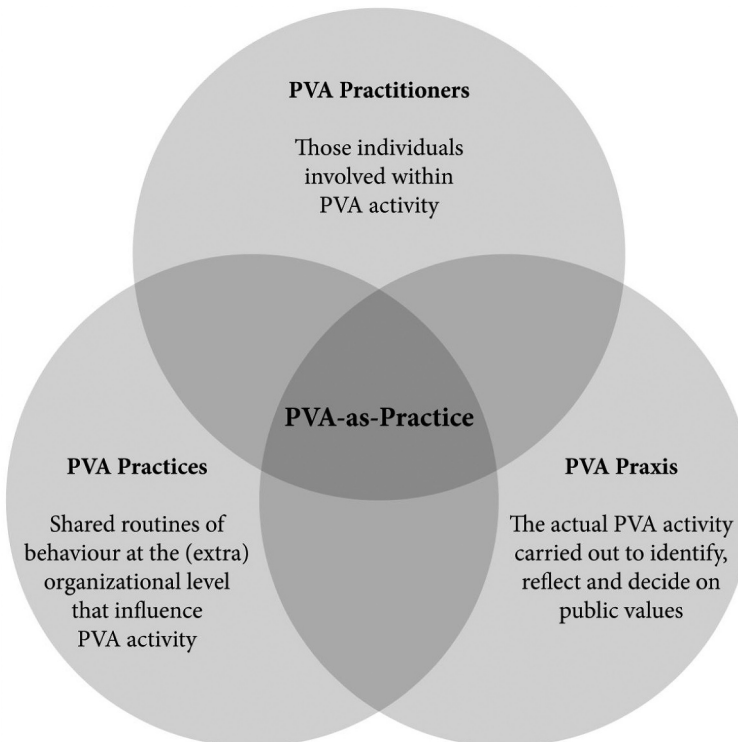

Figure 2. The PVA-as-Practice lens.

We have arrived at the further operationalization of PVA practitioners, practices and praxis inductively, based upon thorough reading of the article sample and continuous debate among the authors. More specifically, the first author read all full articles multiple times. The first and second author discussed the content of about 10% of the articles together in order to arrive at operationalization choices. Operationalization choices were discussed among all authors. We detail our operationalization choices below.

First, practitioners are those people on whose initiative, skills and input PVA activity depends – e.g. policymakers, public managers, civil servants, elected officials, citizens, experts, researchers. We distinguished between analysing practitioners initiating PVA, implementing PVA, and participating within PVA. Initiators put the necessity or importance of deciding on public values for a given policy issue on the agenda, and cause PVA to begin. Next, implementers put PVA into effect, i.e. oversee the activity of PVA. Finally, participants take part in PVA activity. They form the sample of PVA and are asked about those values constituting public values. We explicitly distinguished between these roles because we noticed in the articles under review that these roles can be filled by different individuals or entities – for example, elected officials assign a PVA for a given policy issue, scholars conduct the assigned PVA, and within this PVA citizens are questioned about their value judgements. Note that we use the term 'practitioners' in accordance with our adaptation of the Strategy-as-Practice lens to refer to all sorts of individuals who initiate, implement and participate within PVA. Hence, we also consider the studied articles' authors (i.e. scholars, researchers) under the heading of 'practitioners' if they were the ones initiating, implementing or participating within PVA.

Second, practices are shared routines of behaviour to perform PVA, and include behavioural norms and procedures (i.e. institutions) that influence PVA activity. We distinguished between two types of practices, namely the dominant rationality and routinization. As a start, we analysed the dominant rationality to PVA, distinguishing between two rationalities, specifically a (neoclassical) economic rationality and a political rationality (Bryson 2018; Bryson and George 2020). Within a (neoclassical) economic rationality, PVA is perceived as a rational, deductive choice process. To decide on public values for a given policy issue, relevant economic values must be aggregated. Next, within a political rationality, PVA is perceived as an inductive sensemaking process. For a given policy issue, relevant individuals must be consulted to reach consensus on public values. This implies deciding on public values in a way that is acceptable for most of the individuals involved in or affected by the given policy issue. In addition to the dominant rationality to PVA, we wanted to delve deeper into the actual norms and procedures to PVA. As such, we distinguished between routinizations to PVA inherent to particular institutions. Due to the nature of our article sample, we focus on research areas and scientific organizations or communities. In the present review, we included diverse research areas in which PVA attempts have been reported. We were curious whether we could recognize certain norms or procedures in the various research areas included that influence PVA activity. Our aim here is not to provide a comprehensive picture of norms and procedures per research area, but rather to give an (anecdotal) impression of practices that influence PVA activity through several examples. An example of routinization concerns the repeated use of a research method to arrive at consensus on public

values, such that, in time, the application of this method becomes more and more institutionalized.

Third, praxis are the actual activities that practitioners employ to identify, reflect and decide on public values for a given policy issue. We distinguished between analysing the design of PVA, method of PVA, and temporal and spatial perspective of PVA. The design of PVA involves a qualitative, quantitative or mixed approach to deciding on public values. Next, the method of PVA involves the actual valuation technique used to decide on public values, e.g. contingent valuation, choice experiment, focus group, Delphi survey. The temporal perspective involves the time frame of PVA, being cross-sectional or longitudinal. Finally, the spatial perspective entails the geographical location that is considered during PVA, i.e. the geographical demarcation of PVA.

Findings

Practitioners

As to PVA practitioners, we distinguished between analysing practitioners initiating PVA, implementing PVA, and participating within PVA.

Initiators

We found that the PVA activities reported within the articles under review are mainly initiated by the articles' authors themselves (87 articles, 76%). However, in the remaining articles, the authors explicitly indicate that the PVA activity performed is initiated or commissioned by other (public) individuals or entities than the authors. In these particular articles, we encountered a variety of PVA initiators. For example, Lim, Min, and Yoo (2016, 66) measured the public value of soil remediation in Korea, indicating that 'the Korean government planned to remediate the soil contaminated [...] in [the] Janghang copper smelter [...]. The policymakers are demanding a figure about the public value of the remediation. Therefore, this paper describes an attempt to measure the public value, applying the contingent valuation (CV) method.' Another example concerns Clement and Cheng (2011), who analysed public value orientations to inform national forest planning in the United States, by means of social surveys conducted for three national forests in Colorado and Wyoming. They state that 'understanding public value orientations [...] towards national forests is a critical task for the [United States Department of Agriculture] USDA Forest Service (USFS) during the development of their forest plans' (Clement and Cheng 2011, 393). As such, 'the [social survey] methodology was applied to these three forests at the request of USFS planners and decision-makers, as well as state policy-makers who desired to ensure that social data and analyses were being considered in national forest plans alongside biophysical analyses' (Clement and Cheng 2011, 394).

Implementers

Similar as to findings about PVA initiators, we found that the PVA activities reported within the articles under review are primarily implemented by the articles' authors themselves (90 articles, 79%). Yet, in the remaining articles, the authors explicitly mention the support of other (public) individuals or entities in addition to their own efforts to perform PVA. In these particular articles, we encountered a variety of supporters of PVA.

Following the example of Clement and Cheng (2011, 399–400) above, they explicitly thank 'the USDA Forest Service for all her support and advice in conducting these studies.' Another example involves Dietsch, Teel, and Manfredo (2016), who explored citizens' value orientations towards wildlife by means of a questionnaire sent to residents in Washington, United States, in order to inform biodiversity conservation policy. They explicitly thank 'the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for support of the study of Washington residents' (Dietsch, Teel, and Manfredo 2016, 1219).

Participants

Concerning participants involved within PVA, i.e. the sample of PVA, we present several findings. For one thing, we found that almost half of the articles under review (48%) reports on the involvement of citizens, i.e. members of the general public, within PVA. For example, Layden, Manfredo, and Tucker (2003, 175) 'conducted a study to identify the public's value orientations towards various dimensions of land use to assist La Plata County [Colorado, United States] in its land-use planning efforts and clarify goals for the [Colorado Division of Wildlife] CDOW's wildlife management efforts.' Their survey sample included La Plata Country residents, i.e. citizens. Another example involves Jun et al. (2010, 1475) who 'measured the social value of nuclear energy [...] based on public evaluation of its benefit' in order to inform energy policy. Jun et al. (2010) surveyed citizens within eight cities in South Korea to estimate the citizenry's willingness-to-pay for nuclear energy, by means of a contingent valuation method.

Next, we found that just over a quarter of the articles (26%) reports on specific actors relevant to the policy issue participating within PVA – e.g. policymakers, public managers, civil servants, elected officials, experts. For example, Pike et al. (2010, 412) aimed to find 'a clearer, shared understanding' of the social value of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) in England and Wales 'from a practitioner's perspective, through a series of interviews.' As such, Pike et al. (2010, 415) employed 'twenty-four semi-structured [...] interviews with MCPA practitioners [...] to identify what practitioners understand by social value within their MCPA and activities that encouraged or discouraged it.'

Then, we found that several articles (17%) do not report on the involvement of human participants within PVA. Rather, the authors used a sample of secondary data to identify, reflect and decide on public values. For example, Brainard, Bateman, and Lovett (2009) economically model the social value of carbon sequestration in woodlands within the UK based on secondary data. They do this in light of the Forestry Commission – the UK government agency responsible for forestry – receiving a public grant for storing carbon in woodlands as a strategy to climate change.

Finally, we encountered some articles (9%) that report on a combination of at least two of the sample options mentioned above (i.e. citizens, specific actors, and secondary data). For example, Zagarola, Anderson, and Veteto (2014, 769) explored social values related to watershed ecosystem services and management in South America, distinguishing between surveying general community members and regional researchers and decision-makers – the latter they call 'specialists'.

Practices

Concerning PVA practices, we distinguished between analysing the dominant rationality and routinization. First, as to the dominant rationality, distinguishing between

a (neoclassical) economic rationality and a political rationality to PVA, we found the article sample to be rather balanced. We found that 43% of the articles reports on PVA performed according to an economic rationality. For example, Ressurreição et al. (2012) examined public values for marine biodiversity changes within Europe, in order to inform biodiversity conservation policy. They used 'a contingent valuation survey to explore respondents' marginal willingness to pay (WTP) and motivations to prevent 3 levels of species loss [...] as compared to current levels for fish and all marine species' (Ressurreição et al. 2012, 15). They state that 'in order to generate estimates that are meaningful in an economic perspective, individuals are expected to act as self-interested and perfectly rational beings that seek to maximize a [...] utility function and to express values for different states of the world according to complete, stable and convex preferences [...]' (Ressurreição et al. 2012, 17). Here, PVA is perceived as a rational, deductive process. To decide on public values for biodiversity conservation policy, individual value judgements are economically quantified and aggregated.

Then, we found that 57% of the articles reports on PVA performed according to a political rationality. For example, Marie (2016) examined public values for water management in France. By means of a research-action methodology, specifically focus groups, Marie (2016, 162) asked 'water utility management, staff and consumers [...] to specify the meaning of "public" and how it should be operationalized in the case of publicly owned utilities.' Based on this, Marie (2016, 165) was able to identify and map 'two categories of public values and thirty-three specific public values related to water.' Marie (2016, 164) states that 'the aim of action-research is not to produce general proposals, but proposals with a creative dimension capable of compelling actors to act in new and pertinent ways in relation to the problems they encounter.' Here, PVA is perceived as an inductive sensemaking process – relevant actors are consulted to reach consensus on public values.

Second, as to routinization to PVA, we identified certain norms or procedures in the various research areas included. As said, our aim here is not to provide a comprehensive picture of norms and procedures per discipline, but rather to give an impression of practices that influence PVA activity, by making use of striking examples. For instance, Sherrouse, Clement, and Semmens (2011, 748) used a geographic information system (GIS) application called Social Values for Ecosystem Services to 'assess, map, and quantify the perceived social values of ecosystem services [...] [based on] responses to a public attitude and preference survey.' They claim that, within their research area of geography, 'many examples exist where public value and attitude survey results have been used to [geographically] map values perceived by stakeholders, or social values, as we refer to them in this paper' (Sherrouse, Clement, and Semmens 2011, 749). In addition, they state that 'the use of a GIS for conducting integrated analyses of social and environmental data in a variety of contexts is well-documented' (Sherrouse, Clement, and Semmens 2011, 749). Within our articles under review, we found similar, more recent, GIS applications, e.g. Zhang et al. (2020), Johnson et al. (2019) and Sun et al. (2019), indicating routinization.

Another example of routinization concerns the research area of health care sciences and services. For instance, Green and Gerard (2009) explored the social value of health care interventions related to resource allocation decisions in the UK National Health Service. They made use of a stated preference discrete choice experiment (DCE) to explore social values, surveying members of the general public. They state that 'DCEs have been used widely to elicit preferences in a number of areas [...], and they have

been increasingly used in applied health economics research [...]' (Green and Gerard 2009, 952). Within our article sample, we encountered similar DCE applications within health economics indeed, e.g. Gyrd-Hansen (2004) and López-Bastida et al. (2019), again indicating routinization.

Praxis

As to PVA praxis, we distinguished between analysing the design of PVA, method of PVA, and temporal and spatial perspective of PVA. First, concerning the design of PVA, distinguishing between a quantitative and a qualitative design, we found that 62% of the articles reports on a quantitative design to identify, reflect and decide on public values. For example, Kwak and Yoo (2012) measured the public value of a public library by means of a contingent valuation survey based upon closed-ended questions. Kwak and Yoo (2012, 263) argue that 'building a new public library needs financial supports from the Government and pressure on the public budget makes it important to quantify the value of the public library.' Next, we found that a quarter of the articles under review (25%) reports on a mixed design to PVA. For example, Demski et al. (2015, 59) examined 'public attitudes and acceptability with regards to energy transitions, delineating a set of public values for energy system change', related to the UK national energy policy. They employed a mixed-method approach consisting of several deliberative workshops and a nationally representative survey, in which British adults participated. Conclusively, we found that qualitative designs to PVA, such as that of Brookes and Wiggan (2009), are in minority within the article sample (13%). Brookes and Wiggan (2009, 401) draw on 'qualitative research that explores the concept of public value in the delivery of sport services by the organization Sport England', which is part of the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Brookes and Wiggan (2009, 402–3) employed 'semi-structured interviews and focus groups with elected members and officers in English local authorities, leisure trusts and development agencies and managerial staff within Sport England [...] [and] an "action learning" method was adopted as a form of learning by reflection on experience [...] of participants [involved].'

Second, regarding the method of PVA, within the article sample, we found a wide variety of valuation techniques used to identify, reflect and decide on public values. In what follows, we provide several examples to clarify the diversity of techniques. Barry (2014) used social media analysis to discover public values for natural resource management and park policy within the United States. Barry (2014, 463) argues that public perceptions derived from social media analysis are different 'from those that emerge in a polemical hearing or meeting, and broader than those provided by specific questions in a survey', claiming 'the more nuanced viewpoints revealed in [online] photo comments provide a basis for developing [...] park policy.' Another example concerns Bryan et al.'s (2010) social values mapping exercise, which they performed in order to support the management of ecosystem services within a particular region in Australia. Bryan et al. (2010, 111) interviewed 'a total of 56 community representatives [...] and their values for ecosystem services were elicited and mapped' using a GIS application. A third example is a public value forum, setup by Keeney, von Winterfeldt, and Eppel (1990), to assist the German government in evaluating alternative energy policies. The public value forum combined 'elements of focus groups and direct multi-attribute value elicitation techniques' (Keeney, von Winterfeldt, and Eppel 1990, 1011).

Prior to the forum, the researchers formulated specific policy alternatives and constructed a 'value tree' of objectives and attributes. During the forum, participants involved evaluated the policy alternatives using the value tree. The fourth and final example concerns the use of Q-methodology, that is a method to assess respondents' subjective viewpoints to particular issues, by MacDonald, Murray, and Patterson (2015, 68) to 'characterize different perspectives about what is valued about the ocean, seafood, and the community in the seafood sector of a single coastal community in British Columbia, Canada.' MacDonald, Murray, and Patterson (2015, 68) argue that 'Q-method can help to identify, capture, and compare social values within a sector. In addition, this method can provide participants with a forum to discuss what is important and can provide a common vocabulary that cuts across existing constituencies. This has the potential to facilitate the consideration of a broad range of social values in ocean management.'

Third, as to the temporal perspective to PVA, distinguishing between a cross-sectional and longitudinal design to values assessment, we found that all articles report on PVA activity performed in a cross-sectional manner. This implies that, in order to decide on public values for a given policy issue, public values are assessed at one moment in time. By way of illustration, this is applicable to all the examples of articles described throughout this findings section. Zooming in on one of the examples, Brookes and Wiggan (2009) explored public value in the delivery of sport services by the organization Sport England in the UK, by means of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 21 respondents. They argued that 'there is no time better than the present to understand the public value of sport, given the change of emphasis brought about by the successful bid to host the 2012 London Olympics' (Brookes and Wiggan 2009, 417). They indicate that 'given the political priorities and pressures accompanying the London 2012 Olympics and current economic constraints [...] the performance focus of Sport England has shifted [towards sports for sports sake and sporting excellence] and the impetus to create a public value vision is less attractive to policy makers' (Brookes and Wiggan 2009, 417). Thus, Brookes and Wiggan (2009) deliberately explored public value at this particular moment in time. Finally, concerning the spatial perspective to PVA, within the article sample, we encountered a variety of geographical locations considered during PVA. This is evident from the examples given throughout this findings section. To demonstrate the diversity of spatial perspectives, i.e. geographical demarcations, once more, see, for instance, Berrens et al. (1998) who used two state wide telephone surveys with residents within New Mexico, United States, to investigate public values for water management, to inform water policy debates in New Mexico, and Marie (2016) who employed four focus groups with water utility management, staff and consumers from the Greater Nantes area in France to explore public values related to water, to inform the management of the Greater Nantes publicly owned water utilities.

Discussion

One of the central questions in public policy and management concerns how people come to a normative consensus on public values (e.g. Bozeman 2007). Recent research into public values (e.g. Fukumoto and Bozeman 2019) shows that there is a lack of clarity for both scholars and public-sector professionals about how to identify, reflect and decide on public values for concrete policy issues. In the present article, we have

named this process PVA, arguing that PVA is something people *do*, depending on the policy issue they are faced with. Due to the variety of policy issues within the public sector, we argued that there is not a universal way to identify, reflect and decide on public values. As we currently lack insight into the practice of PVA, i.e. how people *do* PVA, we asked ourselves: *What is the state of the art of empirical evidence on PVA, and what does this imply for public policy and management theory, research and practice?* To answer this question, after systematic article selection, we reviewed 114 empirical, peer-reviewed journal articles, listed in the Web of Science SSCI, that report on PVA performed for a given policy issue within the public sector. We used a PVA-as-Practice lens, adapted from the Strategy-as-Practice lens, to analyse the articles. We have arrived at a further operationalization of the three components of this lens, i.e. practitioners, practices and praxis, in an inductive manner, based on an in-depth reading of the 114 articles.

Answering the first part of our research question, we conclude that, in practice, people assess public values in different ways. The article sample shows a wide variety of PVA attempts. We encountered different initiators and implementers of PVA (given the nature of our review these are mainly scholars, yet they are active in different research areas), who employed different designs, methods, and temporal and spatial perspectives. They choose to involve human participants or use secondary data. Through several examples we have shown that their setup of PVA is influenced by routinization within the research area in which they work and by the prevailing research rationality. Now, what does this imply for public policy and management theory, research and practice? Based upon our review findings, we can conclude that PVA can take various forms. As such, indeed, we cannot establish a universal way to identify, reflect and decide on public values. In this regard, arriving at a grand theory about PVA seems quite impossible and even undesirable. Reasoning from our integration of evidence on PVA, we argue that there is a need for building a practice-based theory (or middle-range theory) of PVA. Theory building should be about finding an optimal configuration of the PVA-as-Practice elements, i.e. practitioners, practices and praxis, in a way that fits a given policy issue. Below we propose such a theoretical framework which we call PVA-as-Practice (PVAP). Subsequently, our call for theory building implies that scholars need to investigate how a given policy issue influences the configuration of the PVA-as-Practice elements, and how this configuration influences policy-making and, in turn, public value creation. Below, we propose a configuration approach for scholars to do so. For public-sector professionals, our findings make clear that there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to PVA. There is a need for public-sector professionals to reflect on the purpose, setup and desired outcomes of PVA to support a given policy issue.

Implications for theory

Our integration of evidence provides building blocks for understanding PVA as a practice. The result of our integration is depicted in Figure 3. We will now elaborate on our proposed framework, and address the need for theory building about the optimal configuration of the PVAP elements, that is practitioners, practices and praxis, in a way that fits a given policy issue and yields a product which affects the given policy issue in the manner desired.

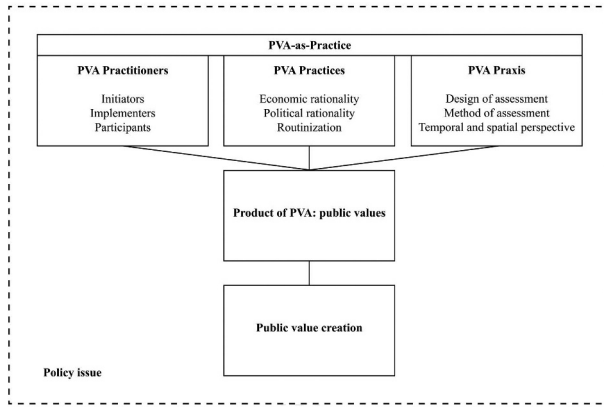

Figure 3. Theoretical framework for PVA-as-Practice (PVAP).

As a start, we argue that a given policy issue influences the configuration of the PVA-as-Practice elements. Next, a certain configuration of the PVA-as-Practice elements results into a certain product of PVA, being the actual public values elicited (Miller 1986; Short, Payne, and Ketchen 2008). In other words, depending on the policy issue and operationalization choices made for PVA, the product of PVA has various manifestations. To illustrate this, we refer to two aforementioned examples. Lim, Min, and Yoo (2016) measured the public value of the remediation of contaminated soil in Korea, applying the contingent valuation method, resulting in figures about Korean households' willingness-to-pay for soil remediation. Based on these figures, they conclude that 'Korean households are ready to shoulder some of the financial burden for contaminated soil remediation' (Lim, Min, and Yoo 2016, 66). Lim, Min, and Yoo (2016) provided policymakers with the figures in order to inform them on the public value found. The second example concerns Sherrouse, Clement, and Semmens (2011, 749) who used public value and attitude survey results to geographically map respondents' social values, resulting in, what they call, 'social value maps' for national forests in the United States. Within their conclusion, Sherrouse, Clement, and Semmens (2011, 759) argue that these value maps have 'potential as a tool for researchers, decision-makers, and stakeholders to explicitly quantify and illustrate the connections between social values, the attitudes and preferences that manifest these values, and the environmental characteristics, locations, and associated ecosystem services that elicit such values.' They argue that these geographical representations of values are informative to land and resource managers deciding on land use. Besides that these two examples make clear that a certain configuration of the PVA-as-Practice elements results into a certain product of PVA, something else stands out as well. Both Lim, Min, and Yoo (2016) and Sherrouse, Clement, and Semmens (2011) touch upon the effect of the PVA product upon the given policy issue, claiming that the result of their assessment is informative to policymaking. Such a claim is made in almost all articles under review, typically within a concluding section to the article. We found the focus of the articles under review to be upon the process of identification and assessment of public values in itself, and, to a lesser extent, on the actual contribution of the product of PVA to the given policy issue. This brings us to our call for theory building again, arguing theory

building should be about finding an optimal configuration of the PVA-as-Practice elements in such a way that it fits the given policy issue and affects policymaking in the manner desired.

Theory building about the activity of PVA for given policy issues and its effect upon policymaking also relates to the notion of public value creation (e.g. Moore 1995), which is central to public policy and management as well. Reasoning from the work of Bozeman (2007) and Moore (1995), we argue that there is a theoretical link between the assessment of public values and public value creation. Building on Bozeman's (2007) definition of public values, we have argued that public values can be identified, reflected and decided on by individuals and entities. Then, according to Moore (1995), public value comprises all the benefits that the activity of government produces for society. In other words, 'public value refers to an appraisal of what is created and sustained by government on behalf of the public' (Nabatchi 2018, 60). Moore (1995) focuses in particular on the strategic activity of public managers in relation to public value creation. According to Moore (1995), '[government] strategy must be (1) aimed at achieving something that is substantively valuable (i.e. must constitute public value), (2) legitimate and politically sustainable, and (3) operationally and administratively feasible' (Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg 2014, 449). Yet, we argue that within the work of Moore (1995) it remains quite vague what exactly is something that is substantively valuable. This question brings us back to the work of Bozeman (2007) examining normative consensus on values constituting public values. We argue that the activity of PVA helps practitioners to find out what exactly is something that is substantively valuable within a given policy context, adding to strategic government behaviour. As such, from theory, we expect PVA activity to be of influence upon public value creation. This has already been suggested by Nabatchi (2012) stating 'to address public values pluralism for a given policy issue, administrators must be able to identify the relevant public values [...], understand those values [...], and reconcile values conflicts [...] in a way that helps create overall public value and prevents public values failure.' We believe it is relevant to build upon this theoretical thought and have therefore added the component of public value creation within our framework as depicted in Figure 3.

Implications for research

Scholars should further examine how a given policy issue influences the configuration of the PVA-as-Practice elements, and how this configuration influences policymaking and, in turn, public value creation. We propose a configuration approach for scholars to do so, which is common within public policy and management research (e.g. Andrews, Beynon, and McDermott 2019; Cristofoli, Trivellato, and Verzillo 2019; Lucidarme, Cardon, and Willem 2016). Underlying such approach to PVA is the assumption that 'elements of [...] [PVA] [...] often coalesce or configure into a manageable number of common, predictively useful types' (Miller 1986, 235; Wolf and Floyd 2017). From this, certain PVA configurations outperform others for given policy issues (Wolf and Floyd 2017). As such, the research goal would be to identify archetypical configurations for different policy issues, and connect those to policy effectiveness and public value creation under certain conditions. We explicitly focus on the importance of policy issue, once again emphasizing that PVA is a practice embedded within the empirical world. In

line with Wolf and Floyd (2017, 1779), the following questions are relevant: What are the archetypes of PVA for a given policy issue and what are the forces shaping them? Under what conditions are different archetypes successful in producing desired outcomes for policymaking and public value creation? If configurations do not work out, which weak points can be identified? In this regard, (at least) two lines of research are relevant. First, in order to identify archetypes of PVA and forces shaping them, inductive and longitudinal case study research within policy contexts or public organizations is necessary (e.g. Bryson, Crosby, and Seo 2020), for example using participant observation, focus groups, interviews or document study over time. Second, scholars can, in a deductive manner, explain how different configurations provide value in different contexts, for example using experimental research designs (e.g. conjoint analyses, group decision-making experiments) or Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). By way of illustration, the use of PVA methods (e.g. social media analysis, public values mapping, focus group, multi-attribute value elicitation, Q-methodology) can be manipulated in experimental designs, and scenarios, cases, vignettes or simulations can be used to mimic diverse policy issues (cf. Wolf and Floyd 2017).

Implications for practice

When it comes to identifying, reflecting and deciding on public values for a given policy issue, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. In order to inform policymaking, there is no one perfect approach to the balancing act of public values. The activity of PVA is about practitioners employing assessment designs and methods according to a temporal and spatial perspective, influenced by rationality and routinization anchored within the policy issue they are confronted with. Consideration of the following questions might be relevant for practitioners: Regarding a given policy issue, what is the aim of PVA and why is the aim as such? What does the desired product of PVA look like and why? Which design and method would fit the aim and desired product of PVA? Who should be involved within PVA, how, when and why? To support policymaking, we argue that it is important to reflect on the purpose of PVA and the desired outcomes of PVA, such that public money is not spent on meaningless PVA efforts.

In the public sector today, we see that many public organizations aim to create public value – typically explicitly mentioned within a mission statement or strategic plan. We argue that this process of public value creation starts with practitioners reflecting on what constitutes public value. We argue that achieving normative consensus on public values forms the basis for public value creation. We encourage practitioners to think about current activities of PVA employed within their work environment, and the forces shaping them, in order to reflect on additional or different activities needed. The questions for scholars raised above are also relevant for practitioners: Under what conditions are different archetypes of PVA configurations successful in producing desired outcomes for policymaking and public value creation? If configurations do not work out, which weak points can be identified? We encourage practitioners to employ the PVA-as-Practice framework as proposed within the present article and critically reflect on one's current and future PVA activities.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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