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## Creating public value in global wicked problems

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### ABSTRACT

This essay seeks to explore in which way Public Value Theory (PVT) would be useful in guiding analysis and action with respect to global wicked issues like forced migration. We found that (1) PVT enables envisioning global, collective, public value as well as value for individuals, communities and states by including voices of ‘all affected interests’ even when discourses prove to be extremely conflicting; (2) PVT enables acknowledging collaborative innovation as a possible means of facilitating cross-sectoral and local – global (transnational) connections which might help reframing wicked global issues and delivering results; (3) When PVT is applied to global wicked issues it offers an opportunity to explore which kind of institutional innovation is required to convene an appropriate authorizing structure in the ‘institutional void’ at the transnational level. Requisite adjustments to PVT are identified.

### Introduction

‘Wir schaffen das’ – We will make it, exclaimed German chancellor Angela Merkel of her commitment to assimilate hundreds of thousands of refugees heading towards Germany, at the end of summer 2015. For weeks, both old and new media had shown desperate refugees in rubber boats struggling in heavy seas to reach European shores, including a 3-year-old Syrian boy Alan Kurdi, lying drowned on the Turkish coastline.

Managing waves of persons displaced by war and famine was hardly a new problem. But the exodus of Syrian refugees headed for European havens was especially difficult for Merkel and for Germany at least, but also perhaps for Europe as a whole, and for the ‘international community’ – to say nothing of the refugees themselves. Mindful of Germany’s shameful past, Merkel decided to set a brave example: she proclaimed that Germany would step up to the challenge, and commit itself to resettling many in Syria who reasonably feared for the lives. In response thousands of refugees fled towards safety in Europe, especially Germany and Sweden.

Merkel’s bold leadership initially sparked a positive response in German media and society, helping to create a welcoming culture for refugees. Soon, however, as the realities of accommodating such a large, disparate (and desperate!) flow of refugees became

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apparent, there were second thoughts. The German organizations responsible for welcoming and accommodating the refugees were overwhelmed by the sheer numbers, which were particularly worrisome when projected into likely future expenditures on housing, education, employment, and health care. They received little help from their European neighbours – except Sweden – who erected fences against the onslaught, and demanded payment for any efforts they made to prevent, divert, or help manage the flood.

Right wing nationalists in Germany began organizing marches against refugees and other migrants. They stigmatized all refugees as ‘bogus’ – motivated more by economic opportunity than fear for their lives. More dramatically, they warned that the refugees could include criminals who would exacerbate the problems Germany already had with human traffickers, and terrorists. Some, particularly concerned about equality for women, worried that the influx of Arab men would slow the expansion of European women’s rights.

So Merkel had waded into a problem that could be seen *simultaneously* as: a humanitarian crisis based in the suffering of individuals who had abandoned their homes; a geopolitical conflict ranging across countries and continents; a security threat for both receiving and transit countries; a potentially heavy financial burden on already overtaxed states; and the breakdown of collaboration in the network of EU member states. Furthermore, the problem would not be addressed in a single political forum where all those with stakes and capacities could together devise a solution, then rely on their common assets to deal with the issue effectively and fairly. The response, instead, would emerge from a disjointed discourse spanning many different polities, government jurisdictions, and even private organizations, who exercised only to lose control over the assets that could help solve the problem. In short, she faced a very ‘wicked problem’ – one characterized by: (1) multiple, potentially conflicting values, (2) strong political passions on different sides of the issue, (3) substantive uncertainty on how best to solve the problem, and (4) multiple independent arenas for social deliberation and action.

Wicked problems have attracted interest from many scholars. But to date, the relationship between wicked problems and Public Value Theory (PVT) has not been carefully explored. In this essay, we seek to close this gap. We first define wicked problems in terms of two dimensions: (1) the degree of complexity of the substantive values at stake and (2) the institutional (or ‘political’) complexities (see Roberts 2000; Head and Alford 2015). We then explore each of these dimensions in turn, to determine how the main concepts in PVT might help to understand and guide an effective and just response to such problems.

Obviously we are not able to analyse in detail the complex situation Merkel and others face. Even if we could accommodate a deeper analysis, it is not at all clear that the diagnosis would point precisely to the ‘best’ line of action. There is simply too much uncertainty to allow a confident ‘optimization’ in the context. But a more realistic test would be to determine whether Public Value provided a useful guide for action in the short run, *and created a context in which the strategic actors could continue to learn and adapt their combined efforts as they handled a complex problem.* We start with the concept of ‘wicked’.

### **Wicked issues and problems: a definition**

Today, we seem to be more aware of problems, such as chronic poverty, violent crime, infant mortality, child abuse and neglect, the vast sea of illiteracy and

ignorance, and the virulent racism and social prejudice that undermines individual rights and social solidarity. But none of these problems is particularly new. Most have been around for a very long time indeed – so long, that many are treated as part of the human condition. Perhaps what is new, then, is not the problems, but instead our tendency to treat them as problems to be solved rather than conditions to be endured. Additionally, access to new technologies has given people affected a new possibility of showing their conditions, raising awareness with a global population, and creating leverage for possible change.

But when we begin to think of these conditions as malleable – even solvable – we start to notice significant differences among them: some seem more ‘wicked’ than others, in the sense that wicked problems present more obstacles to solution than the tamer problems. Some problems we face are largely problems of scale: from experience and experimentation we know the solution is not technically difficult; the problem is simply to garner enough will and resources to solve it on a large scale (e.g. purifying drinking water). Other problems are challenging because they are defined and located less in material conditions (access to food, shelter, education, health, etc.), and more in a cultural web that degrades the conditions in which individuals live (e.g. ethnic or religious rivalries; the systematic oppression of certain classes of individuals.). In both types of problems we do not know enough about what actions are capable of improving the targeted social conditions. These problems are hard, but not necessarily wicked.

What makes a problem a wicked problem are two additional features: significant political conflict over the values at stake in and the very definition of the problem at hand, and the absence of any institution, structure or process that provides a natural social or political location in which the problem can be nominated for attention, sized up in a process of deliberation and design, and used as the platform for directing co-ordinated action across many different independent organizations. We can call this a problem of ‘institutional fit’.

This last problem – institutional fit – is particularly important when the problems to be addressed are global – in the sense that they are both experienced at the global level, and the plausible means of solving them lie at the global level. Indeed, it seems that increasing globalization has turned many conditions that used to be seen as primarily national problems into global ones. Castells (2008) indicates that at present there is a ‘growing gap between the space where issues arise (global) and the space where the issues are managed (the nation-state)’. Some would call these problems ‘superwicked’ (Levin et al. 2012, 127–128): ‘those who are expected to solve the problem are also the ones who cause it ... time is running out ... a hyperbolic discounting occurs that pushes responses irrationally into the future ... and the central authority needed to address it is weak or non-existent’.

In what follows, we offer a preliminary test of the degree to which PVT can help to frame global wicked problems for effective social action. More significantly for this analysis, we suggest some important amendments to the conventional view of PVT which tends to focus on the management of single government agencies. In particular, we tap the literatures on democratic theory, networked governance and cross-sector problem solving to find interesting pathways to the development of effective social capacities for wicked issues.

## Substantive public values in the case of forced migration

In issues like forced migration, many different dimensions of public value are at stake. Political discourse often helps us identify the values which are important to protect or advance as we search for improved ways of dealing with apparently intractable problems. These can be perceived in terms of ‘discourse coalitions’ (Hajer 1995). In the case of forced migration (refugees) we can observe two such coalitions. Each has its own narrative that calls attention to the particular values they want to be sure to protect or advance. The first would be the discourse that focuses on human rights and the protection of the safety and welfare of individual refugees. The second focuses on protecting national interests, consisting of firstly economic interests and protecting the welfare state, secondly sociocultural issues focusing on community identity, and thirdly security interests (Geuijen 2004). These two coalitions are dominant in the contemporary Syrian refugee crisis in Europe as well.

Moore’s recent book, *Recognizing Public Value* (2013), offers guidance about how to construct a ‘public value account’ for understanding an issue like displaced persons. Table 1 shows the different kinds of philosophical/political values at stake in public issues, and how they might register in the individual and collective life of a society. On one hand, he describes the distinction between two broadly different philosophical traditions in ethical and political theory: a utilitarian or consequentialist idea in which the value of particular actions is judged in terms of whether it improves the welfare (roughly, the satisfaction or material well-being) of particular individuals, and a deontological or principled idea in which the value of particular actions is judged in terms of whether they are consistent with ideas about justice, fairness, and right relationships in the society. On the other, he distinguishes between value judgements made by individuals affected in some way by a given policy, and value judgments at the social or collective level – not only how individuals were treated, but also the degree to which aggregate social outcomes were achieved. This simple concept produces four different quadrants in which different values at stake in the immigrant crisis could be listed.

Table 2 presents a first cut at naming the different values that are seen to be at stake in assessing the refugee crisis, and in acting to ameliorate current conditions. Improvements or advances in the pursuit of each of these dimensions of value compared with the status quo could be seen as public value creation. Losses or retreats would be viewed as public value reduction. These values become the scorecard to be used both in characterizing current conditions, and in making predictions about how the world might change with the adoption of different kinds of policies and programs.

**Table 1.** Criteria for evaluating public value creation.

	Philosophical tradition of evaluation	The good (Utilitarian)	The fair and just (Deontological)
Level of evaluation			
Evaluated at individual level of experience		Client satisfaction	Fair treatment Individual rights vindicated
Evaluated at collective level of experience		Achievement of desired social outcomes	Towards more just social relationships

**Table 2.** Values at stake in refugee policy (a public value scorecard).

Philosophical tradition of evaluation	The good (Utilitarian)	The fair and just (Deontological)
Level of evaluation		
Evaluated at individual level of experience	Refugees feel safe Refugees are satisfied about their treatment and living conditions Material conditions of refugees improved	Refugees feel rights conferred and obligations imposed on them are just and fair in interim processing period (limbo) and afterwards
Evaluated at collective level of experience	Internal security maintained Financial costs to government kept low Refugees successful integrated into the economic, social, and political system	Ultimate status of refugees in society is consistent with ideas of justice and right relationships among different individuals in society

What is important about these values is that they are all *actually at stake in the choices we make about how to treat refugees*. Regardless of our intentions, and regardless of whether we take action or not, actual conditions in the world – measured along these different dimensions of value – will change. The critical issue in PVT is the degree to which we can imagine actions that could reliably improve social conditions along each of these key dimensions of value

Equally important is the fact that the *different political discourses call attention to only subsets of these values*. The discourse coalition on national interests emphasizes the values of protecting security, minimizing financial costs to government, and protection of social solidarity. The other discourse coalition emphasizes the values of minimizing the suffering of the refugees, protecting and vindicating their human rights, helping them integrate into the wider society, and enacting a just conception of right relationships between host country citizens and refugees. Yet both discourse coalitions would presumably assign value to each of these dimensions if they could be assured that in doing so, they would not necessarily betray their zeal for some set of the values, or their practical effectiveness in advancing those particular values.

Finally, since each of these value dimensions is intrinsically tied to the refugee issue, and advanced or degraded as a consequence of actions we take, the public discussion about the issue often seems to oscillate from one partial value to another. If one narrative, emphasizing one value over another, dominates for a while, the other never completely disappears; it pops up again and again in times of crisis or other major contextual shifts. This happens because both contain central values that are important to most people: human rights as well as national interests matter. Hardly anybody discards one of those completely, at least not when reminded of their potential importance (Geuijen 2004).

The challenge for rational and democratic policymaking and action taking is partly to keep all of these different values in mind as we explore a given problem and its solution, and resist the temptation to shrink the value dimensions of the problem into the small subset that is one faction's particular preoccupation. It is important for those considering or making policy and action to remain alive to all the dimensions of value that could claim their moral commitment.

This seems fine when one is seeking to understand the problem, and develop solutions, but ultimately, many would argue, one must decide which policy to embrace, and that means making a value judgment about the importance of one dimension of value relative to another. As the economists love to tell us, there is no such thing as a free lunch. One usually has to trade gains from the advance of one value against losses with another. The only way to make such trade-offs rationally is to decide which dimensions of value are worth more than the others.

In the current world, discourse coalitions differ over whether public value would be created or diminished in certain situations. For example: preventing asylum seekers from arriving in Europe can be perceived as public value creation when focusing on national economic value, sociocultural identity, or security of society. But others may perceive it as destroying public value when focusing on safety and the protection of individual human rights.

Neither discourse coalition is very understanding of the other. Each seems to frame policy options as trade-offs rather than as values that could be strived for simultaneously. This is perceived as a zero sum game, taking the debate into a deadlock.

This is often a persuasive argument, and it occasions much hand-wringing and anguish about the ‘tough value trade-offs’ one must make in confronting wicked problems. It is also the belief that causes advocates of particular values and policies to gain political advantage by constructing narratives in which their preferred values and policies are emphasized with the aim of disqualifying any other values and options.

But a key analytic point is often overlooked in this familiar trope. Economic theory tells us that decision makers only face a trade-off among values when they have reached what economists call ‘the production possibility frontier.’ That frontier is a theoretical construct which defines the outer limits of the values society seeks to achieve with an existing stock of resources, and existing methods of production. In principle, if current policies lie *inside* the production possibility frontier – that is, if current policies are not among the policies that do the best possible with respect to all important values – then *it is possible for the society to make improvements on all dimensions simultaneously!*

One can scoff at this analysis and claim that it is simply too optimistic. If there were a better solution, people argue, we would have found it by now. That may be a credible counterargument in the commercial world where there are strong pressures on firms to keep searching for the production possibility frontier to sustain profitability, and where there are good measures of financial performance. But even in business, we routinely find that most firms operate well inside the production possibility frontiers of their industry. It seems highly likely, then, that given the lack of competition, and the difficulty of measuring value in most public sector operations, most government organizations would be operating well inside the production possibility frontier. It seems particularly likely that better options would be available in situations like forced migration *when we do not have all that much documented experience with trying to solve that particular problem, and where the actions to be taken are distributed across organizations whose actions are not well coordinated.* The implication, then, is that if we held the goal posts steady enough, and measured enough dimensions of value, and tried different ideas, we might well find that we could improve on all dimensions simultaneously.

Even if improvement on all dimensions is substantively possible, it may still turn out to require political agreements to search for these improved methods. One path through this dilemma would be simply to accept that there are multiple values at stake, and focus on finding methods that could improve things on as many dimensions as possible. This would emphasize the search for creative solutions rather than politically clubbing one another over what values should be given priority, and dictate an interim policy conclusion which is almost certainly going to be found wanting in the future. Knowledge and expertise about both the wide distribution of values, and plausible means for advancing those values, might succeed in pushing narrow discourse coalitions aside, or finding grounds on which they could agree.

Whether this is possible depends critically on how the political discourse is carried out. In the environmental controversy it turned out to be possible to reframe the ecological discourse coalition and the economic discourse coalition into a common frame of sustainable production and consumption. In the controversy on forced migration, the reframing of human rights and national interests seems still very far away. But a key question for a strategist relying on PVT would be how the political discourse that defines and helps to create public value in this issue could be carried out more fruitfully?

### Complexities in the institutional/political dimension

So far we have considered the complexities of wicked problems ‘in themselves’. But their difficulty in solution emerges from the institutional and political contexts within which and through which we seek to manage them. Table 3 presents an abstract, overly simplified picture of the institutional platforms that a public leader could be standing on in considering some important social problem. The social conditions of concern – given here as examples – include economic prosperity, social and cultural relations, and justice and security. The institutional structures and processes are divided both by sectors (markets and private corporations; volunteerism, philanthropy and civil society; politics and markets) and by levels (international, national, state, local, or grass roots). It is not just that the problems are large, not amenable to known solutions, and rooted in human culture rather than simply material conditions; *it is also that the social location of effective deliberation, decision, and action is distributed across this whole matrix* – up and down levels and across sectors – rather than narrowly held within one cell. It is not just that action can be discussed and

**Table 3.** Institutional platforms and spheres of action in solving social problems

Institutional platforms	Spheres of action	International sphere	National sphere	State sphere	Local government sphere	Grass roots sphere	Social problems to be solved	
							Good society	Just society
Government								
Non-profit/civil society platforms								
For-profit commercial platforms								

Source: Adapted from Keohane & Nye (2000).



deliberated across different levels and sectors, but also that at some levels, *there is no government that can use its authority to convene a collective to deliberate, decide and act*. There is no sovereign at the international level – only a mix of multilateral agencies and multilateral and bilateral treaties and agreements. Similarly, the grass roots level, sometimes goes beyond the reach of government, and becomes much more dependent on the business and social sectors to organize action.

While this image of problem solving capacity seems hopeful in the sense that it reminds us of all the social assets that could, in principle, be mobilized to deal with important social problems; it also reveals the problem in organizing co-ordinated action. Four particular features of the institutional landscape of social problem solving should be highlighted as elements that compound the substantive problems we face in framing the problem for rational analysis and intelligent action.

- (1) At any given point in time, each organization, level and sector in this matrix has its own logic and practices that it uses to size up social conditions and make choices about what problems it will handle, and in what ways. Institutional inertia and path dependence may create a certain kind of stability in the system as a whole, but there is no guarantee that this stability is an optimum – whether viewed from organizational or system level. Organizational level efforts to change their particular strategy alter not only what that organization produces, but also what other organizations in the system decide to do, with better or worse effects on performance (Kiser and Ostrom 1982; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). That is why high levels of ‘strategic uncertainty’ and ‘institutional insecurity’ characterize these issues (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004) as much as power inequalities do.
- (2) There is no central authority or governance system that can effectively coordinate action among actors distributed across this matrix. Governments exist at some levels of the system (national, state, and local), but at particular levels – the global at the top, and the grass roots at the bottom – no government exists. At those levels, what governing capacity lies in more or less formal agreements made among independent organizations that recognize their interdependence. Governance is through networks rather than hierarchies. One could call this an ‘institutional void’ (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003, 9): ‘there are no pre given rules that determine who is responsible, who has authority over whom, what sort of accountability is to be expected’.
- (3) Often, those who are supposed to solve the problem are the same actors who caused the problem in the first place. Other actors will drag their heels in taking effective, co-ordinated action because they will have to absorb immediate costs, and any benefits to them will come in the (uncertain) future. (Levin et al. 2012, 127–128).
- (4) The important strategic issues at stake are debated under the hot glow of media attention, which seems to increase the rivalry among those who seek to frame and define the problem in a competition way (who is to blame, what are the single most important values at stake in efforts to deal with the problem<sup>1</sup> .

## Who nominates issues and defines the values to be pursued?

As soon as we include the institutional or political context in the story, we encounter the familiar truism: different individuals and groups in society hold different views about which conditions in their societies should be viewed as public problems to be solved by government action, and what particular actions should be taken by the government to address the problems. This naturally leads to a discourse within governmental jurisdictions about what should be done. The discourse is often a contentious one that is full of heat but not always much light.

The conventional account of this phenomenon is that the conflict results from differences among (groups of) citizens about the definition of public value. As Benington (2011) proposed: public value is, on one hand, what the public values, and, on the other, what adds value to the public. But this apparently simple statement conceals a more subtle and important distinction. The first part of this definition – what the public values – focuses on the individually held values of members of the public. (For the moment, we will call such individuals ‘citizens’). The second part – what adds value to the public – seems to imagine a more collectively shared view of a good and just society which is more than a simple aggregation of the individually held views of individual citizens.

In many ways, the problem of integrating the values and preferences of individual ‘I’s’ with those of the ‘we’ represents the fundamental challenge of democratic governance, and trouble lies in both directions. A government unresponsive to ‘I’s’ and ‘we’s’, insisting on some values not widely supported in the population, risks alienating a portion of that population. On the other hand a government too responsive to particular individual ‘I’s’ might give them licence to oppress others in the society. The risk is that both individual rights and tolerant social relations will be eroded.

But who is to determine what is valuable in a given situation? In recent work, Moore (2014) offers a distinction to help understand (and perhaps resolve) this fundamental tension in democratic theory see Table 4). He delineates what he calls the ‘social arbiter of value’ on one hand from the ‘object of valuation’ on the other.

In this figure, three different arbiters of ‘social’ or ‘public’ value are distinguished: individuals; individuals who have voluntarily aligned themselves with other individuals who share their values in what could be described as voluntary collectives; and a ‘public’ that consists of citizens living in, subject to the law of, and sharing in the governance of a given political jurisdiction.

Similarly, four different substantive values are defined as valued conditions in the society. The first focuses on the material well-being of the valuer: the degree to which they are protected from the hazards of nature through personal income and wealth, food, shelter, healthy environments, health care and so on. The second focuses on the

**Table 4.** Arbiters and objects of social and public value (adapted from Moore 2014, 468).

Arbiter of value		Objects of valuation		
Individual arbiters of value	Own material well-being	Well-being of others	Moral and legal duties to others	Ideas of a good and just society
Private collective arbiters of value	Material well-being of group	Well-being of others	Moral and legal duties to others	Ideas of a good and just society
Public arbiters of value	Economic development	Satisfy needs of others	Vindicate rights Impose duties	Achieve a good and just society

material well-being of others in the society – the altruistic desire to ensure that other individuals have access to the material necessities of life. The third focuses on the desires of individuals and groups to live up to their social duties to one another.<sup>2</sup> The fourth value is what defines the valuer's (whether individual, voluntary collective, or public) ideals of the aggregate characteristics of a good and just society. One could describe these as social or political views which are expressed in both private and public action directed towards bringing about the ideal states.

Of course, no individual falls purely into one of these categories, but most people, at different times and places in different social conditions and public discourses, can be guided by all of these different values.

How can Moore's distinction, which was developed for local and national levels, be applied to wicked issues that cross national boundaries or seep into grass roots communities? With this matrix, we can see that the issue of Syrian refugees engages individuals, voluntary associations, and democratic governments in many different complex combinations. On one hand, there are the refugees concerned about their own safety, material and social conditions, and seeking help from voluntary associations or governments. There are the citizens of the receiving countries who, as individuals and as members of voluntary associations, might feel more or less altruistic and dutiful to the refugees, and more or less protective of their human rights – even if those rights have not yet been extended to the refugees by the receiving country. There is the wider international community that, on one hand, wants to press for human rights to be honoured by states, but on the other wants to protect the sovereignty of individual states, and has few forums within which all those who are interested can help deal with the problem.

A crucial issue then is: who is the public, and how could it be called into existence and become articulate about the important public values? Moore and Fung (2012, 475) suggest that the process by which the public is formed is crucial. The legitimacy of any public value proposition increases when the process surrounding public deliberations is 'appropriately inclusive, deliberative, imaginative and accurate in predicting the consequences of proposed actions'. Thus, PVT is radically democratic. Taking this as our starting point, then, we need to understand how society acting through a complex social structure can become a 'public' that can understand and act on its own interests, and in doing so, create the legitimacy and support that is required for effective government action.

Goodin (2007) (and 40 years before him Robert Dahl in a similar vein) suggests involving, and giving voice to 'all affected interests', that is, individuals should be able to influence the decisions that affect their interests, both sentimental and material. As Dahl 1990 [1970], 64) put it: 'everyone who is affected by the decisions of a government should have the right to participate in that government.' One could nuance this in proportion to the degree to which their interests are affected (Goodin 2007, 51), or to how regularly one is affected, or to the importance of the interests involved, or in exactly which way the influence would materialize (from deliberation to deciding on laws) (Fung 2013). Goodin (2007) suggests that, whatever one thinks of the nuances, the consequence of accepting this principle would be that the 'demos' would need to be expanded dramatically.<sup>3</sup> The principle was initially part of a normative ideal of democratic governance. It took for granted the idea that a state existed, and that the relevant 'affected interests' lay within, or could be represented adequately by actors who were not just residents, but also citizens of that democratic state. PVT also took

a democratic state for granted, and imagined that the affected interests would either be citizens of that democratic state, or be represented by citizens of the democratic state. Indeed, it saw the idea of citizens as arbiters of public value rather than ‘clients’ or ‘customers’ of government services as fundamental, and a great deal of effort was made to distinguish the two and assign priority in the arbitration of public value to citizens, as they participated in the process of democratic government as opposed to clients (who had particular interests) or even taxpayers (who also had particular interests in government policy decisions). Consequently, it was natural that PVT focused on structures and processes located within democratic states and polities; the particular ‘authorizing environment’ for government action (see e.g. Moore 2014, 466; Moore and Fung 2012; Benington 2011). However, as we showed at the start of this essay, wicked issues like forced migration are by definition multilevel and multisectoral at the same time. So we need a more expansive way of thinking about who the public is that embraces these other levels and sectors.

For a start, refugees are clearly an affected interest, but they are not citizens in the states through which they are travelling or in which they would like to make their future. As ‘stateless’ persons, they do not have rights specifically granted to them by existing nation states; they only have the human rights set out in international agreements, which may or may not be honoured by the sovereign nations whose borders they cross, and within which they would like to live. This creates burdens on the refugees in issues of access as well as integration. The clearest example would be visa requirements: (European) states require that all entrants have visas. States impose fines on carriers (such as airlines) when they bring people into a country without visa. Refugees are exempted from this rule. However, carriers are not able and willing to define who is or who is not a refugee. Therefore, their practice is to not accept any travellers without visas. Instead refugees have to take boats to cross the Mediterranean Sea, even though this is much more dangerous and expensive than aeroplanes.

This clearly shows that refugees’ fundamental interests are affected by decisions of states and organizations of which they are not members and in which they do not have a say. This presents a huge challenge for PVT, and in particular its radically democratic core. In almost any local or national wicked issue interests can be signalled through the democratic process, however flawed that sometimes may be. But refugees are by definition not members of a state and therefore excluded from any democratic process. They have been forced to leave their home country, which typically could or would not protect them from human rights abuses. They cannot express their needs and wants by way of elections in their host country for they have no citizens’ rights in that state. And no state or organization represents refugees.<sup>4</sup> They are the object of policies and actions, not the subject. Their interests are marginalized to the highest level. They can only vote with their feet.

If we accept that PVT is radically democratic and therefore accepts the principle of including all affected interests, then it seems that the institutional design of decision making on trade-offs in forced migration issues would have to be adjusted so as to include refugees. As Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2015, 396) say: ‘... changing the institutional design means privileging attention to some values and not others. New conceptions of public value can be put forward to challenge the old. And interpretations of public value that were neglected because of the weakness of the political process can be put forward’.

So then the question would become: How can we move beyond focusing only on local and national processes of creating public value, to include the affected interests at the international and global level, in government decisions as well as in those of business and civil society organizations? How can we focus on who gains (who enjoys the benefits), who loses (who suffers the costs), whose needs count, who speaks for whom, whose voice is heard, and who co-decides at all levels, sectors, issues, and moments in time when public value gets created for some and destroyed for others? In short, how can we change governance arrangements to include all affected interests? This would amount to stimulating a global public sphere, with local as well as global platforms in which problems would get nominated for public attention and collective action, and the best means for dealing with the problems debated and enacted. It is here that the important question is post who constitutes the relevant public to define public value, and also where the process through which the issue is discussed and actions agreed upon and taken becomes critically important.

### **Talking and doing in the local, national, and global public sphere**

The principle of affected interests provides important guidance to public value creators as to which particular social actors should, as a normative matter, be included in collective discussions, decision-making, and action to deal with a particular social problem. This principle also aligns very closely with the more practical stakeholder theory which advises strategists seeking to pursue a large collective purpose to consult widely with stakeholders lest a failure to consult result in unnecessary resistance to the change. But neither of these theories gives any particular guidance as to how such discussions and consultations should be organized, and what one should expect as a result of such work.

How do 'all affected interests' determine the important dimensions of public value as they consider taking collective action to solve a problem. How do they move from conflict over ends and means, to agreement about what to try next, and how to evaluate it? This is the essence of strategic decision-making guided by the strategic triangle since the group of affected interests have to find ways to reach agreement in defining public value, in widely legitimising that idea, and in developing the operational capacity required. But in this case, they do it without the benefit of a single, centralized government, to authoritatively garner and allocate permission, resources, and co-productive effort.

One answer to this question is that almost certainly all the affected interests will not solve the problem all at once in a co-ordinated way. The process is more fragmented than that, probably akin to what Lindblom (1959) describes as 'muddling through'. The approach will be fragmented, with deliberation and action distributed across platforms and forums in which actors, sectors, levels, 'keep the conversation going' to at least avoid cruelty (Rorty 1989). While the action is fragmented, it is nonetheless potentially vigorous, and, ideally, capable of learning. The energy comes from connecting people and actions, even when they are fighting, arguing and competing. The learning comes from constant experimentation with initiatives launched from different platforms and arenas, with more or less support for each innovation. Sørensen and Torfing (2012) have called this process collaborative innovation (Crosby, 't Hart & Torfing in this issue elaborate on this concept). This

happens with both operational experiments and public deliberations carried on at local (and national) as well as on the global (and transnational) levels.

- (1) *Local experimentation.* At the local level problems are experienced daily. That is why sometimes at the local level pragmatic solutions can be developed that conflicting value debates inhibit at the national level. Many new ideas and initiatives are thought up at the local, urban level. An example is the *Grandhotel Cosmopolis* in Augsburg (Germany), an official reception centre for refugees. The building is owned by a protestant church. It is a former home for elderly, which was left empty. Now it has beds for fifty-six asylum seekers and forty-four tourists, and it has thirteen artists' studios. The concept is to facilitate encounters between 'guests with and without asylum'.<sup>5</sup> This could be labelled 'collaborative innovation', with government, business and civil society, starting at the grass roots. It is modest and pragmatic accumulation of small steps: if it works, it could be taken further.
- (2) *Local democracy.* Well discussed examples are mini-publics: empowered participatory governance and co-production by citizens. They may take fear and indifference away. Thinking and acting on the local and national level is of course crucially important in creating public value. For the local level Habermas labelled this the public sphere: a space for communication which ideally would be free and open to all.

But experimenting and deliberating at the local (and national) level is not in itself sufficient to create public value in wicked issues in any effective, legitimate way. That would also require 'thinking and acting globally'. This would amount to a global public sphere developing. There are some first signs of this happening. New social media are instrumental, as are global media like Al Jazeera and CNN (Volkmer 2014). But we also see some global advocacy networks growing stronger. 'Nongovernmental actors become the advocates of the needs, interests, and values of people at large, thus further undermining the role of governments in response to challenges posed by globalization and structural transformation' (Castells 2008, 83). This is the 'global civil society' which functions in a global public sphere. This is not attached to national states because political issues like forced migration are multilevel. In the global public sphere we encounter some experimentation and deliberation similar to the local public sphere.

- (3) *Global experimentation:* We find some examples of collaborative innovation by arrangements between global business and global civil society, for instance after Greenpeace pressured Timberland the company instead engaged with the activist group and Timberland's Brazilian supplier in making a positive difference for the Amazon rainforest (Swartz 2010). In refugee issues we found the example of a new app with maps which indicated available and closed Balkan-routes for refugees.
- (4) *Global democracy.* International organizations, multinational companies, global civil society (ingo's but also grassroots groups) already form multilayered, multi-actor network structures. Also platforms like Open Democracy can be perceived as places in which the global public sphere gets enabled. And Dryzek,

Bächtiger, and Milewicz (2011) suggest the organization of so called ‘deliberate global citizen’s assemblies’ (DGCA). But global deliberation is also done in virtual communities which are created (temporarily) by vloggers, bloggers, artists, transnational diasporas (refugees’ voices), through social media, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram. However, we should not be overly optimistic. Undeniably there are huge power inequalities at the global level, even within global civil society. It may partly be open and equal, but also partly dominated by large ngo’s with elitist constituencies and little formal accountability. One could criticize NGOs’ limited accountability, however, according to the Edelman TRUST BAROMETER the public trust in NGOs is higher than in other institutions (<http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2016-edelman-trust-barometer/global-results/>).

- (5) *Interconnections*. Local experimentation and deliberation on the forced migration issue is interesting in itself, as is global experimentation and deliberation. But most interesting would be to stimulate institutional settings on wicked global issues that focus on *connecting local collaborative innovations to each other at the global level*. Pragmatic solutions to wicked problems are being developed and applied at local levels, as described above. But local experiments cannot be solutions to global problems. Local initiatives need to become connected to each other in order to be able to help solve wicked problems like forced migration. This kind of co-operation might be developed much further and also be integrated with other actors. One example of more developed co-operation in global (or transnational) networks has been demonstrated by mayors (see Barber 2013). In April 2016 the mayors of all capital cities of EU countries attended a conference in which they discussed how to deal with the refugee crisis in a pragmatic way. This resulted in more understanding of the different local situations, in learning from each other, and in signing the Declaration by the Mayors of the EU Capital Cities on the EU Urban Agenda and Refugee Crisis. Another example would be local social enterprises for and with refugees connecting through the European Social Business Forum.<sup>6</sup> If ‘all affected interests’ need to be able to deliberate on the public value they create this can only be done in the public sphere, locally as well as globally. We might think of platforms that stimulate ‘*rooted cosmopolitanism*’ (Tarrow 2005, xiii): transnational perspectives and activities by people who remain closely linked to domestic networks and opportunities.

Not only civil society organizations, businesses and local governments develop interesting collaborative experiments and feed them into the global public sphere. Also refugees themselves develop initiatives and take more agency. Think of those who fled the Middle East, through Greece and the Balkans towards Western Europe in summer 2015. They used their smart phones and the Internet to get where they wanted to be. They began to insist on answers. This seems to be a completely new way that refugees make it clear that they no longer accept that their ‘affected interests’ not being heard. In this way they almost force states to take their needs into account.

The same taking of agency seems to be developed by rejected refugees in the Netherlands grouped into ‘We are here’. They are in the process of developing a strategy together and with Dutch volunteers on how to survive without documents.

They negotiate with the city government of Amsterdam about which places they are allowed to live in, which health care they receive etc. These refugees are not only (individually) affected, but they are also connected: to each other and to Dutch civil society and local government. This seems to show a new form of power developed by the powerless, through collaboration.

The public sphere in globalizing times is a global public sphere which operates through global social media and the Internet (Volkmer 2014). Through experimentation and deliberation in the global public sphere political participation by all affected interests is possible. This does not mean that every single individual needs to participate actively. Dryzek (2012) has called for the representation of all relevant discourses, instead of all actors. Fung (2013) and also Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2015) think that shifting the institutional setting is crucial to make all perspectives count and exert influence. One can envision this at the local level: experimentation and deliberation in the public sphere influence political decision makers, not only to take democratic decisions, but also to shift the setting in such a way that democracy gets deepened by taking all perspectives on board.

### **Muddling through to create public value in an institutional void**

How do all affected interests become influential in nominating problems and their solutions in order to create public value? This is a crucial aspect of PVT: what is the authorizing environment in which important public values are identified, discussed, perhaps prioritized, within which diverse independent social actors can be called to account, and which would allow sustained social learning about what is both desirable and feasible to produce?

At the local (and national) level collaborative innovation by public organizations, business, social enterprises and citizen initiatives influences local (and national) politicians and policymakers to nominate problems and solutions for attention. Ultimately these actors can support or veto collaborative innovation by providing funding and by making rules and regulations. They can also assist scaling collaborative solutions.

But at the transnational and global level there are no government or policymakers. There are only national states (which sometimes to a greater or lesser extent share sovereignty: the European Union) and international governmental organizations built by national states (like the United Nations, UNHRC the UN organization on refugee issues, the World Bank and the NATO), and non-governmental organizations and transnational companies. There is only limited global leadership. As we said before, it seems an 'institutional void'. Can a supportive authorizing environment for public value at the global level be envisioned? Governance at the global level seems much more harsh and power driven than at the local level. However, Edwards (2014, 106) suggests some options for aggregating civil society voices. Among those are the 'Arias Formula' which allows civil society groups to provide input in their area of expertise to the UN Security Council deliberations. Perhaps the most affected could be given a seat on the governing body of international institutions such as the UNHCR, as is done with the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS.

It is hard to envision an authorizing environment at the global level that – like government at the local and national level – can and will facilitate all affected interests having a more or less equal opportunity to voice their needs through experimentation and deliberation. There is no global authorizing environment which governs money



and authority to address those needs in an equal way in any foreseeable future. Global problems of refugees are managed at the national level and take *realpolitik* as their starting point. Thus, in the absence of measures to the contrary, what counts as public value has tended to be only ‘what the local and national public values’, not what is of value to all affected interests, including those at the grass-roots and global level. It would seem that way because the global authorizing environment is not structured to guarantee the democratic quality of the process and help it focus on the results being just for all. However, global civil society – even with its flaws – does voice issues on human rights and refugee rights, as do local civil society organizations and refugees themselves. Although imperfect, this may be the best way to influence national states and international organizations to take all affected interests into account.

## Conclusion

PVT, brought to bear on solving practical problems facing national, state, and local governments that can be solved through executive action supported by established political agreements, has proven useful to many public leaders and managers. This essay has sought to explore in which way PVT would also be useful in guiding analysis and action with respect to global wicked issues like forced migration. We found that (1) PVT enables envisioning global, collective, *public* value as well as value for individuals, communities and states by including voices of ‘all affected interests’ even when discourses prove to be extremely conflicting; (2) PVT enables acknowledging collaborative innovation as a possible means of facilitating cross-sectoral and local – global transnational connections which might help reframing wicked global issues and delivering results; (3) When PVT is applied to global wicked issues it offers an opportunity to explore which kind of institutional innovation is required to convene an appropriate authorizing structure in the ‘institutional void’ at the transnational level.

This means that all three aspects of the strategic triangle are applicable, but more complicated than in ‘regular’ public issues. We identify requisite adjustments to each of them:

- The *public value* aspect would need to be more amenable to dimensions of value that were not only focused on the well-being of individuals, but also on the vindication of their rights, and fair enforcement of their duties. It would also have to focus on the effects at the aggregate social level of the costs on one hand, and the achievement of desired social conditions such as ensuring the achievement of collectively defined social outcomes, and the advancement of a collective concept of a just society at multiple levels.
- The *operational capacity* would have to be built from the lattice work of organizations distributed across levels of government, and across sectors, and linked to one another (at least) through awareness of their interdependence in shaping social conditions for good or for ill, and (more ambitiously) through the development of explicit structures and governance not only to support effective deliberation about social action, but also to perform executive functions in delivering actual results.
- Working within an *authorizing environment* to build legitimacy and support public leaders would have to find some way of creating forums or channels through which all affected interests could have a voice, and a public could be

called into existence that could become articulate about the important values to be protected and advanced in the contemplated social action. Public leaders seeking to act effectively on such issues have to imagine, and find ways to create, forums that can engage all affected interests, and forge them into a public that can produce a more or less articulate and precise description of the public value they would like to create through their combined efforts. Calling a public into existence that can legitimise public action to deal with problems *without having a government to help define and convene the relevant public* is challenging. In the absence of structures of international government, much is left to agreements that can be made among governments, commercial and social enterprises, and civil society organizations to take and share the responsibility for effective action. In this world, these organizations are apt to play important roles: many of them move across national boundaries and create internationally important communities and constituencies. Learning how to engage (local and national) governments with (local and transnational) NGOs and (local and global) business activities may be a necessary part of building a capacity for governance that can use PVT to deal effectively with global, wicked problems.

## Notes

1. Such political struggles over the definition of problems and their solutions can be usefully described as ‘framing contests’.
2. As a behavioural matter, this desire to meet one’s obligations operates similarly to the value of altruism, but its emotional sources and content come from something different than love and fellow feeling. The desire comes, instead, from a desire to live in right relationships to others, where the right relationships are prescribed by norms of good conduct that can be rooted in moral, religious, or legal codes.
3. The other option would be to only allow a government to make decisions that affect those who do have a say. In global issues that would mean that national governments would not be able to decide anything at all.
4. UNHCR, the UN organization for the protection of refugees would not count as such since it is fully dependent on national states and their (financial) contributions.
5. <http://grandhotel-cosmopolis.org/de/>
6. [www.esfb2016.com](http://www.esfb2016.com) and <http://www.grameencreativelab.com/sites/default/files/ocd/tgsbrat-v2-mm-tb.pdf>

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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