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The Rationalities of Public Values
Conflicting values and conflicting rationalities

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The never-ending story

Core concepts (power, society, state, gender) are usually troublesome, and this also applies to public values. What are values? What specifically are public values? How do values combine (or not)? Can we rationally decide on values? These questions remain open to debate in the ongoing discourse on the nature of values in the social sciences, and on public values in the political sciences and the study of public administration. This article is not intended to repeat these discussions, but focusses on two specific issues: how do values relate to each other, and how do they relate to rationality? These general issues concerning values do have a bearing on the subcategory of public values. The aim is to better understand why it is so difficult to establish how public values are used and relate to each other, both in research and in practice.

In the discourse on public values an avalanche of different values can be found. Either in attempts to identify what are relevant values for citizens, public managers, civil servants, NGO's, private organizations, or whichever actor is or should be participating in the public sphere. The possible sources and means to identify public values are a core concern, and approaches may vary considerably. Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg (2014) present an overview, and in line with for instance Stoker (2006) regard the public values discourse as The successor of a 'traditional' and a 'new public management' approaches in the field. Within the approaches to public value different schools, too, can be distinguished (Beck Jørgensen & Rutgers , 2015): the study of administrative ethics, 'public value management' (inspired by Mark Moore's idea of creating public value), and a more eclectic 'public value perspective.' This chapter reflects the last school because it does not focus on ethics or management of public values, but on the more conceptual question how public values (justice, freedom, equality, health) may be related to each other.

Resolving value conflicts and dilemmas is aserious and problematic issue in public administration. In ethics and in value theory it is common to distinguish between two general philosophical positions on this matter: value 'monists', who argue that value conflicts can be rationally resolved, and value 'pluralists', who argue that they cannot because we sometimes

lack a measure for comparison. These abstract debates do surface in the study of public administration, as shown by the debate raised by Overeem and Verhoef's (2010) rejection of the claim by some authors that value pluralism has normative consequences for the field.

Although much has already been published on the nature of public values, some preliminary observations should be made. Public values research is confronted with the difficulty of focusing on a complex concept, uniting two concepts that themselves are contested: value and public. Both are notoriously tricky and widely discussed.

To start with: there are many definitions of values, such as Kluckhohn's "a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action" (1962: 395). The crux of Kluckhohn's and many other definitions is that values express something desirable, or as Rokeach (1973) states, something "personally or socially preferable" (1973). More broadly, as I myself phrased it before: "Values are concepts we use to give meaning and significance to reality: We judge or qualify something as (amongst others) beautiful, courageous, honest, or holy, or on the contrary as ugly, cowardly, deceitful, or devilish" (Rutgers, 2015).[1] Thus, values are a specific kind of concepts, not used to capture or describe (conceptualize) 'what is', but to prescribe or evaluate, i.e., to give a qualitative assessment. Values share the notorious difficulty of all concepts in that there is an uncertain relationship between terms and values: the same term can be used for different values (ranging from slightly different characteristics to completely different concepts). Sometimes this is obvious, sometimes it remains unclear and unnoticed. Just as we may regard some terms as denoting the same concepts ('human being' and 'homo sapiens'), we may also regard them as essentially different when they apply to very different contexts. Sometimes we do not realize that we are using the same term, but not the same concepts. For instance, 'an efficient procedure' and 'an efficient person' do not seem to fit the definition of 'efficient' (cf. Rutgers & Van der Meer 2010). It implies that we have to take into consideration in what context a term is used: something has a value and so acquires a positive or negative meaning in a specific perspective.

Another concern is whether or not values are to be regarded as subjective or objective. They are subjective in the common understanding that individuals vary in their attribution and ranking of values. The values at our disposal are social constructs and not individuals' choices as such. In this sense they are no private values, and are objectively given to an individual within a socio-cultural setting: one cannot value something as *gezellig* if the concept does not have a meaning for the people to whom this (subjective) evaluation is conveyed. This brings us to another aspect of the social nature of values. Most authors distinguish between, on the one hand, 'liking, preferring, or desiring' and, on the other, 'valuing' as a human phenomenon: valuing then refers to an explicit judgment about something being good (beautiful, important, abject, and so on). Thus, values are concepts used in an argument; animals do have 'desires', 'wants', or 'preferences', but do not make arguments. According to

[1] Cf. "The term ['value'] can be limited to what might be said to be on the plus side of the zero line; then what is on the minus side (bad, wrong, and so forth) is called disvalue." Or, ".. what is on the plus side is then called positive value and what on the minus side, negative value." (Macquarrie, 1972: 229)

Nicholas Rescher, values are to be understood as used in the rational legitimization of action: "a value represents a slogan capable of providing for the rationalization of action…" (Rescher, 1982: 9). This shows why values are so important: they can be regarded as "any concept that expresses a positive or negative qualitative (or evaluative) statement and has a 'motivating force, that is, it gives direction to people's thoughts and actions" (Rutgers, 2014). They function as rational legitimations and explanations: "To have a value is to be able to give reasons for motivating goal-oriented behaviour in terms of benefits and costs, bringing to bear explicitly a *conception* of what is in a man's interest and what goes against his interest: to operate within reason-giving contexts with reference to a 'vision of the good life'" (Rescher, 1982: 10). For Rescher this implies that values are always "a part in a long story" (1982: 26). When focussing on *public* values, this 'long story' becomes even longer if public values are not just regarded as an individual's values *about* what is public (i.e., in the general interest or so), but when we look for values held *by* a public. In the latter case we do find authors struggling to construct such a public foundation of public values in terms of some legitimizing mechanism (consensus, majority, elite, etc.) for a relevant group or constituency (citizens, taxpayers, local community, policy recipients, or the like) (cf. Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg, 2014). Definitions of public values therefore tend to be either minimalist ('what the public desires') or complex, such as Bozeman's (2007) often cited definition. In either case the very construction of 'the public' is an issue: "Is it a matter of majority preference, consensus, or does it not have an empirical grounding, but rather a philosophical one?" (Beck Jørgensen & Rutgers 2015: 3).

Without going into the empirical (or practical) matter of constructing a public with shared values, a few conceptual observations can be made. The meaning of 'public' is primarily established in opposition to what is private -- what Weintraub (1997) calls the 'grand dichotomy.' Arendt, for instance (1958, 50-2 & 72/3), points to five distinct oppositions implied in the public/private dichotomy. Geuss, while rejecting the identifications with collective versus individual, and altruistic versus egoistic, concludes that no single substantive distinction can be found (2001, p.106). Finally, Weintraub sees at least two fundamental and analytically distinct criteria: visibility and collectivity in play. On the basis of the interpretations selected, authors may arrive at different theories that result in different meanings of 'public'. Weintraub, for instance, discusses four broad 'models', such as the ´liberal-economic model´ and the ´republican virtue model´. There are shared starting points, but also substantial internal diversity and even disagreement. The variety is so overwhelming that Geuss regards the public/private distinction not as a starting point but rather as a distinction attributed *post hoc*. He argues we should not look for the implication of the distinction, but "Rather, first we must ask what this purported distinction is for, that is, why we want to make it at all" (Geuss 2001, 107). This inderterminate nature is reflected in the attempts to identify what is public in public administration by looking at legal statutes, 'what people value', etc. It should be noted that almost without exception the public value discourse focusses on establishing how 'a public' endorses specific 'public values' and not just agrees on private values. This is the ongoing discussion in the discourse on public values among authors such as Moore, Bozeman, Benington, Meynhardt, Beck Jørgensen, and more (cf. Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg, 2014).

In the following I will take a much more limited approach by focussing only on the relation between public values as providing different directions for action. After an analytic overview of possible relations, and a discussion of the specific relevance of incommensurability of values, the second part of this paper deals with the question how public values can be part of rational argumentation. In the conclusion I argue that the combination of these two puzzles highlights the complexity of the concept for empirical research on public values, because the meaning of public values (and hence their interaction) is very contextual.

I. The complex story

According to De Graaf and Van der Wal, "Managing tensions between public values" (2010: 625) is a core topic in our field. This reflects an ongoing interest in value conflicts, albeit in terms of values that are regarded as opposing, incompatible, dilemmatic, incomparable, or incommensurable. Clearly, different values can be [equally] important, and their realizations may conflict. Especially in ethics, the issue of an 'ethical dilemma' can be an unresolvable opposition whereby both values pose a moral demand on what to do, but cannot both be achieved because realizing one makes realizing the other impossible. The well-known ultimate consequence is perhaps the problem of the dirty hands: to do right, one has to do wrong (Walzer 1973). The dilemma is that no overarching moral argument can be found that can provide a way out. It is often assumed that this is because there are fundamentally different moral systems involved (cf. Berlin 1998, Hampshire 1989). The traditional moral dilemmas in literature concern the dilemma of the police officer on whether or not to use torture in order to establish where a terrorist hid a bomb. A suggested way out is that the police officer should do the morally wrong thing (i.e., torture) in order to do the morally right thing (i.e., save innocent people), yet should feel absolutely tormented about having done so. Put differently, in everyday reality we need to act. Not acting is usually wrong, i.e., part of the dilemma -- making it actually a trilemma.

There is much interest in the way value conflicts are resolved in administrative practice. Oldenhof, Postma and Putters (2014) studied how conflicting values such as efficiency and equity, efficiency and democratic legitimacy, and equity and liberty (p. 52) are dealt with in administrative practice. However, the interest in clashing values too easily obstructs interest in the equally important matter of values as mutually reinforcing or supporting the realization of other values. This can perhaps be constructed in terms of an instrumental relation between values, i.e., the one presupposing the other ('heroism requires bravery'; 'integrity presupposes honesty'), but also in terms of an 'added value' or juxtaposition of values ('a good and honest citizen', 'a loyal and dutiful servant'). The focus is often limited to incompatible or conflicting values; in everyday life and administration we have to deal with more intricate interactions and trade-offs.

To gain insight it can be helpful to analytically distinguish the possible relations between values. In practice, however, identifying the actual relations, let alone their strengths, is a

different matter. The [list of] six relations outlined here should primarily be understood as a heuristic device to highlight the complexity of the matter at hand:

a. Complementary: values point in the same direction and go together; they support and/or strengthen each other. ‘Equality’ and ‘justice’ are possible examples here.
b. Instrumental: a value presupposes some other value(s): so called ‘ultimate values’ are the clearest examples: ‘justice’, ‘the good life’ etc. all require a vast number of other values if they are to be achieved or realized, or to achieve freedom other values have to be realized.
c. Diverting: values points in different directions for action, and as a result infl;uencing the the options for achieving them. For instance, in order to achieve equality, we have to limit freedom; efficiency and legality can support or hamper each other. Thus, the effect can be positive or negative. A basic negative effect is that the energy and time spent on realizing that one value will diminish the possibility of realizing another. Strengthening democracy can, for instance, also promote social equity. In other words, a host of intermediate positions is possible, ranging from a value that only slightly points in a different direction but still strengthens or reinforces the other value, to working against it and distracting, diverting, or disturbing the realization of a value.
d. Opposing: a value is in opposition to another value, i.e., they are in outright conflict, the one negating the possibility of the other. The simplest examples are the opposites of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’, but also ‘loyalty’ in as far as it negates ‘honesty’ and/or ‘fairness’. In case of a dilemma we are faced with an unresolvable opposition (unless another value is used to sidestep the opposition).
e. Unrelated: there may be no immediate or obvious relation between values: ‘an honest and eloquent person’; ‘an efficient and aesthetically pleasing solution’. If the co-existence of values adds to a more positive (or negative) appreciation it concerns one of the previous relations. ‘Unrelated’ seems likely to apply when values from very different contexts or value systems are in play but simply have no bearing upon each other.
f. Incommensurable: whereas the previous types are generally accepted, the possibility of this nonrelation, which precludes co-existence, is contested. Its supporters stipulate that some values are rationally incomparable and untranslatable because they are part of completely different ‘worldviews’ or ‘ethical spheres’. Interestingly, they can have a profound impact on each other, because they provide arguments for different kinds of action, i.e., they relate to the same object or part of reality, even though they construct (i.e., value) it utterly differently. For instance, we may have to weigh ‘the sanctity of human life’ versus ‘the running costs of a hospital’. The values indicate different courses of action, but incommensurability points to a situation where a rational comparison, and hence a choice between alternatives, is impossible. In the next section the relevance of this relation will be further discussed.

This abstract presentation of six relations obviously defies everyday complexity: the relative strengths or weights of values may differ, and undoubtedly many more values interact simultaneously. The overwiew stresses that the nature of the relations between public values (as between public and private values) can be highly contextual. Thus it is likely that in some

cases (conceptual interpretations and empirical contexts) 'democracy' and 'equality' support, in others hinder each other. The perspectives of different persons and groups on what public values mean, and what is actually valued, demand careful attention. The complexities increase in the case of cross-cultural debates and comparisons. In other words, we have to realize that the meaning of a specific value depends on its relations with other values, and that what at first sight seem similar or dissimilar terms may be hiding similarities and differences in fot instance empirical studies on values in the public sector.

The Gordian knot

Of the possible relations, incommensurability is the most tricky and disputed; it is a concept linked to philosophical and theoretical concerns. Yet it seems to become more and more popular in 'everyday' studies in public administration, as if it was an everyday phenomenon. It suggests that we are or should be able to distinguish clearly between 'merely' conflicting values (however difficult to deal with), and others that defy any rational resolution. Is it really an important concept, dealing with a phenomenon fundamental to the study of public administration? I will argue that it is when we reflect on the very foundations of public values, but hardly when we deal with value conflicts in practice. In the latter case decisions have to be made. Just as in ethics, there are different ethical systems that at a fundamental level oppose each other, but all can also inform a practical ethical decision (Svara, 2007: 68). It should be noted in advance that this topic is closely intertwined with discussions on value pluralism and conceptual relativism. Value pluralism posits a specific ontological theory on the nature of values. It amount to conceptual relativism, i.e., a theory that regards specific systems of concepts (and values) as totally incomparable: 'not intertranslatable' (Davidson, 1974/2001: 190).[2]

The theory of incommensurability originates from Thomas Kuhn's theory on the rationality of the sciences (Kuhn, 1970): only in the context of a scientific paradigm with its accepted ontology and epistemology are rational arguments possible. The choice between paradigms is not rational, because it lacks a shared context of assumptions. Paradigms can be fundamentally different and incomparable: incommensurable. Paul Feyerabend even made incommensurability a core concept in his 'radical methodology', but he explicitly regards it as a theoretical phenomenon: rare, and not relevant to the everyday scientist (Feyerabend, 1975: 114). Others have argued that it is a more common concern, possibly even *within* a conceptual framework (cf. Hintikka, 1988), and also relevant outside academia, such as in debates on public values. Translated to public values, such fundamental differences can for instance result from values embedded in specific ideological and/or religious word views, in particular in relation to topics concerning life and death (abortion, euthanasia).

[2] In a similar way it has long been popular to use the term 'paradigm', often suggesting a link with Thomas Kuhn's theory, but usually simply meaning 'example' and including observation that are not in line with Kuhn's theory.

Opponents often rely on Donald Davidson's broadly accepted rejection of the very notion of a conceptual framework, because it is based on a duality between language or conceptual scheme and reality to begin with. The argument results in the conclusion that "…we could not be in a position to judge that others had concepts or beliefs radically different from our own " (Davidson 1974/2001: 197). Putnam (2004), on the other hand, defends conceptual relativism (2004: 39). He points to the *possibility* of languages that are not just contradictory, but incompatible.

We are dealing with an ongoing, highly philosophical debate (cf. Wang, 2007), but nevertheless incommensurability is posed in the discourse on public values in our own field. De Graaf and Paanakker (2014), for instance, state: "Incommensurability, particularly between procedural and performance values, seems inherent to value conflict in public governance" (p. 4). This implies that we should at least be able to attribute a specific value to either kind, before establishing whether or not they are also incommensurable. But can we? Roughly speaking, process or procedural values concern 'the rule of the game', i.e., how we are supposed to act; performance values concern 'what is achieved.' But are values such as honesty, integrity, lawfulness always to be regarded as procedural, or are effectiveness, justice, and efficiency always performance values, as authors claim? Take 'efficiency': this value is particularly interesting: Waldo (1984), for instance, has argued that efficiency is always a 'second-order value': one can only be efficient while striving to achieve some other value. What is more, the term 'efficiency' seems to be used in two very different contexts (cf. Rutgers & Van der Meer). From an Aristotelian perspective it refers to 'efficient cause', indicating an ability: the efficient administrator is a capable person, irrespective of specific achievements. From the (relatively recent) economic perspective, efficiency refers to a relation between input and output, giving the expression 'an efficient administrator' a rather different, silly meaning. The point here is that it efficiency can be *both* a performance and a procedural value. This brings us to the question how values are used in different ways as arguments, a topic we will discuss in the next section.

The earlier example of comparing the value ('sanctity') of a human life to the economic value or costs of providing medical treatment seems a likely candidate for the label 'incommensurable': 'sanctity' is not a value fitting economic discourse, nor do 'costs' seem to fit the discourse on human dignity. There can be no clash in the ordinary sense between incommensurable values, as we lack a context in which both values can be adequately compared. Yet, striving for the one value will exclude or hinder realization of the other; otherwise the values would be simply unrelated. Perhaps the clearest illustrations are values arising from different religions, such as miracles, sacrifices, rituals, which are meaningless to others. However, in a meta-perspective we may regard them both as meaningful in terms of their function in society. Yet this meta-perspective does not provide a yardstick to choose between the two values as such, even though it is possible to argue that one ritual is functionally better than the other at providing social stability, cohesion, or the like. Neither does invoking the notion of 'the general or common interest' provide an easy way out, because this relies on a particular world view to begin with. The main question [then] becomes: what is a valid comparison? We are told not to compare apples and pears, but both

are fruit and can be compared as such -- perhaps not regarding their taste (as either apples or pears), but their sweetness, nutritious value etc. can without doubt be objectively compared once these aspects have been accepted as a yardstick. It suggests that incommensurability is a 'level' issue: on their own terms or within their own systems, values may defy comparison, but not from another perspective. The question thus becomes whether we can validly agree on a useful other approach, or meta-approach, if we are to compare and decide? In the example of 'human dignity' versus 'economics' in health care, selecting 'fairness' or 'equality' as a pivot may help to balance the two 'incommensurable' values. The most common way out in public administration is probably to apply a *procedural approach* to making a choice: i.e., not comparing the values in question as such, but by using 'neutral' or different means to choose a course of action. Here we enter the discussions on 'how to arrive at public value?' as mentioned before: the study of public administration exists on the interstices of creating and managing public values in society as a core political and administrative topic.

To conclude this brief outline of the viability of the concept of incommensurability for the study of public values: it is a theoretical issue. Without delving into the debate between value monists and pluralists mentioned earlier (of which this is part), we should note that even if 'unification' is theoretically possible, it is by no means evident that in administrative practice this will be helpful in resolving clashes between posed public values. As Overeem and Verhoef (2010: 1105) indicate, value pluralism does not help to solve dilemmas we are faced with. In practice we do have to deal with conflicting values, and it is usually unlikely that we have the time or expertise to make a thorough philosophical and/or empirical study. For instance, Dworkin argues for monism in terms of 'human dignity' as a touchstone for resolving value conflicts. This implies that there are no real conflicts between citizens' claims (cf. Van Donselaar, 2011), but it can be doubted whether this is very helpful in administrative practice (although then it should be noted that this empirical argument is irrelevant in a conceptual discussion). Thus, Wagenaar's research indicates that in everyday administrative practices value conflict is indeed "dealt with" rather than resolved (1999: 447; cf. Wright, 2010: 312). He does not need, nor has he any useful interpretation of, the concept of incommensurability (or value pluralism), as will be the case for most studies in public administration. Talisse also argues that value pluralism "entails nothing about what one should do." (2010: 071). Most authors seem to agree on this issue, albeit for different reasons (i.e., theoretical versus empirical). However, Spicer (2010) may still have a point when he says that there is a normative argument to be derived from the incommensurability of values: it is a waste of time to try to rationally resolve conflicting values if they are incommensurable.

Whether or not values are [merely] extremely difficult to reconcile or are [outright] incommensurable, in practice we are sometimes simply unable to resolve a problem involving such values quickly enough. Nevertheless, a decision can be rationally agreed upon in either case by sidestepping this issue: we can take either another value to balance or decide, or take a formal or procedural approach, i.e., agree upon 'flipping a coin' to decide fairly, or construct a legitimate political and legal system in which decisions can be made authoritatively. Thus, history tells us about the Gordian knot that the Phrygians had in their city and was impossible to untie. Alexander the Great, however, "when he could not find the

end to the knot to unbind it, he sliced it in half with a stroke of his sword, producing the required ends."[3] So, it seems that if different values are irreconcilable, we may need to 'cut the knot': whether or not one or the other is better, not acting is often not an option even though we may regret or even feel remorse about choosing the one value over the other. Neither value pluralism nor incommensurability change this reality.

This brings us to the second main topic of consideration we touched upon earlier: the way public values are part of an argument.

Values in rational argumentation

Values are at the heart of public administration, and so is rationality. Hodgkinson regarded public administration as "philosophy in action" and a matter of 'value-awareness' (1982: 3), and Robbins (1980: 26) argues that administrators and philosophers engage in similar endeavours: the evaluation and interpretation of what is important in life. Nevertheless, in public administration the focus is often not so much on values as on instrumental rationality, and in its wake efficiency – something that has been criticized particularly in post-modern theory. It is Weber not that not only provided our field with the concept of bureaucracy, but also with its prime theory of rationality (Schreurs, 2000: 76). Central to Weber's theory is the distinction between purpose and value rationality (*Wertrational* and *Zweckrational*)[4]. The issue in the previous section was that value pluralism and the theory of incommensurability argue that in some cases rationality breaks down. Here the focus is on the very nature of rational argumentation in relation to values. It will be argued that there are two different kinds of argumentation in which values are used, and that this also applies to the use of public values.

Weber distinguished between purpose rationality and value rationality as two fundamentally different ways people relate to action. People act in a value-rational way when they are guided by their convictions, i.e., on the basis of duty, dignity, beauty, religious instruction, reverence, or whatever the importance of a 'case' appears to demand. The action is based on precepts or demands, and its consequences are not relevant. Examples would be public values, such as 'justice', ''freedom,' and 'democracy'. Weber limits value rationality to 'value spheres' that are associated with ultimate values such as religion, politics, erotic love, science and the like (Friedland, 2014: 222): "A value-rational action is characterized by the conscious belief in the ethical, esthetical, religious or however else to identify unconditional intrinsic value (*Eigenwert*) of a specific way of acting (*Sichverhaltens*) purely as such independent of the effects?" (Weber, 1972: 13; translation author). The opposite applies to a purpose-rational action, which is concerned with the most favourable, efficient means to attain a given end (cf. Denhardt, 1981: 630). For Weber purpose or instrumental rational orientation is the ideal-

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gordian_Knot. Visited 11/05/2014

[4] "In this context *Wert* and *Zweck* are often translated by *value* and *instrumental*, or *value* and *means-ends*. However, Schreurs calls this translation 'puzzling' as *Zweck* refers to a purpose rather than an an instrument or means (2000, p. 51).

typical kind of social action (Schöllgen, 1984: 91), as it "involves an orientation toward the constraints of an external objective world that conditions one's success in obtaining an actor's own [pursued ends]" (Friedland, 2014: 221). Here we can point to public values such as 'efficiency', 'safe roads', 'drinking water,'or 'housing.'

Petra Scheurs's close reading of Weber (2000) has revealed several specific differences between value and purpose rationality. The difference most acknowledged, as we have seen, is whether the meaning of an action is located in either the consequences or results (i.e., purpose-rational), or in the intrinsic value of acting (i.e., value-rational). Thus it is either the outcome (*Erfolg*) or the acting as such (irrespective of what it may further achieve) that constitutes the meaning of a social action, and may figure in a description or explanation of this action. 'Values' appear as internally, 'purposes' as externally binding. Both value and purpose are values in a more generic sense. In other words, in case of an intrinsic value Weber uses the term *values*, and in case of extrinsic value, the term *purposes* (cf. Rutgers & Schreurs, 2003). But how do the two interact or are they related? Authors have wrestled with the questions whether or not it is possible to rationally assess opposing values, and how values and goals or purposes are related. Can values (in Weber's sense), for instance, become purposes, or are purposes or goals simply values in the end?

To avoid confusion, I will use the term Values (with a capital) as the more encompassing and transcending concept. What is more – and here we deviate from Weber's scheme - Values or ends denote the more 'ultimate' aims, objects, goals or ends to which social action is oriented: other values (and purposes) relate to them as supportive, instrumental, possibly necessary, or sufficient preconditions. This is in line with Friedland's observation that purpose rationality "always contains and conceals a value rationality" (2014: 249), and Diekmann's remark that for Weber the orientation on values is a means to arrive at rational knowledge (1961: 18). Therefore we have to pose the 'ultimate' Value as preceding value and purpose rationality.

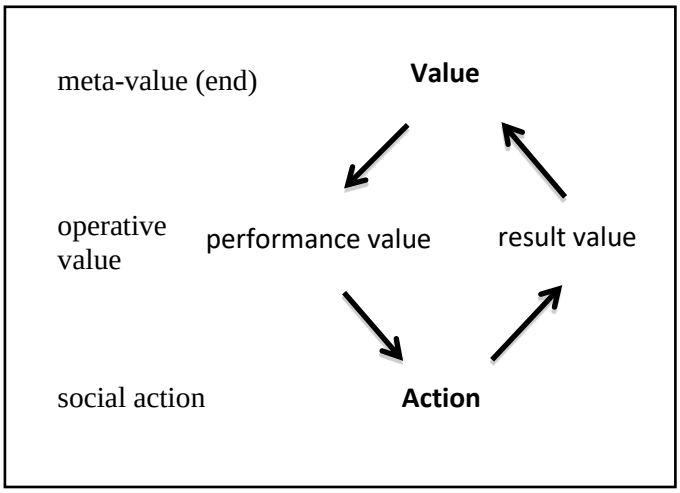

Figure 1: relation of Value and Action (based on Rutgers & Schreurs, 2003)

All action is Value (or end) oriented, but in two distinct ways, as we have seen: an action can be understood as trying to realize an end either in terms of the acting (or performing) itself, 'irrespective of the outcome', or in reference to the result or outcome of that action, 'irrespective of the process'. What we have arrived at is a result or outcome value, as well as the possibility of a performance or action value; both can be the legitimation or basis for evaluation of an action in relation to the end to be achieved. As a result value, an end (Value) applies to the outcome of the action only, such as 'winning the game." However, an action can also be valued in the light of the desired action or desired as such, whereby: "The end result has no bearing on the meaning of the action" (Rutgers & Schreurs, 2003). In the latter case it is 'taking part in the game' that is the value, not winning.

The core question is how a Value relates to an action as a performance and/or the result of that action. For instance, acting efficiently, justly, or democratically does not automatically result in efficient, just, or democratic results. Conversely, acting democratically, efficiently, or justly may result in undemocratic, inefficient, or unjust outcomes. It can make sense to 'efficiently carry water to the ocean', if understood as a performance value. This may be what is perceived as 'wrong' in cases where 'performance indicators' take preference over an orientation on results.[5]

In case a Value is understood or operationalized as a performance value (i.e., *acting*), it concerns a *value-rational* argumentation. If interpreted in terms of a result or outcome it is *purpose-rational*. Thus, argumentation or reasoning can take two directions: reasoning from an end to decide what action is to be undertaken: rational deliberations what to do. Or looking at the result of an action in *rational evaluation* (what has been achieved).

[5] Although we should be aware that performance indicators may actually not constitute performance values at all, but refer to results to be achieved.

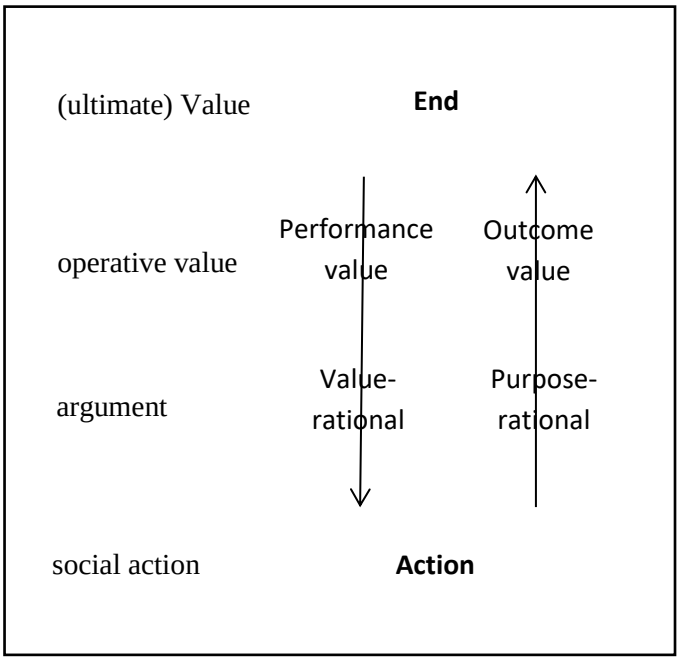

Figure 2: The End/Action model (as adapted from Rutgers & Schreurs, 2003)

There is no longer anything special or mysterious about trying to realize 'honor' or 'beauty' as a result value, and trying to evaluate the actions in question as purpose-rational. It fits the criticism of this approach as having a focus on instrumental rationality: "This is what the criticism of the dominance of purpose- or technical rationality amounts to, whilst the fixation on the outcome makes us unaware of the way we are acting and what this implies", and what is more, the danger of a limited perspective, "not only applies to purpose rationality, but can also be directed to value rationality" (Rutgers & Schreurs, 2003).

In the discussions in public administration this implies that references to public values can also concern their use as either performance or outcome values. The difficulty noted earlier, of pinpointing a specific public value as either a procedural or performance value, in a sense evaporates; it can be both, depending on the argument in which that value figures.

Some concluding observations

The debates about the importance of concepts such as incommensurability, value pluralism, or conceptual relativism should be assessed for what they are: important philosophical and conceptual matters of dispute that may help us to better grasp the very nature of values, and hence public values. It seems unlikely they will have any direct practical consequences in public administration, especially because we lack the very means to establish empirically when or if for instance incommensurability occurs. The practical problem of having to resolve the tension between values remains. What is more, in empirical reality the relations between values are intricate and contextual. The previous discussion implies that for empirical research

we can in any case bracket ‘incommensurability’ and/or equate it with (factual) opposition or deviation, as far as it concerns the desired course of action from the perspective of another value. This does not result in a solution, but neither does adhering to incommensurability.

The complexity of understanding what kind of value we are dealing with increases: values are to be understood as part of a ‘long story’, in this case of a particular argument. This is all the more so in case a value is, or is stipulated to be, a *public* value -- maybe simply because its ‘public’ status requires further argumentation, but also because it suggests a higher status than ‘merely’ a private value. It can for instance help to understand why a distinction between procedural and performance values is so unclear. What category it might fit is not inherent in a value as such, but in the use of a public value in argumentation. That is, a specific value may itself provide different directions for action, depending on the context in which it is used: democracy can be interpreted as posing demands for performances as well as results, and these can in principle be at odds. Again this implies that public value research should include a multitude of aspects and not take a value at face value, so to speak. The problem with studying public values doubles if we confound the two lines of study: all too easily values are regarded as fitting one possible kind of rational argumentation and provide just one direction for action, and may therefore have different relations to other values depending on their specific use in argumentation. This all adds to the well-known difficulty in empirical research to establish whether all individuals concerned are using the same terms and values to begin with. As in everyday practice, it is not to be expected that everyone is aware of how they are actually interpreting or using a value in a specific context; it is *not* safe to rely on respondents’ own observations in such cases. Simply having respondents fill in a questionnaire as if the terms denoting values that are used are similar is more problematic in this context, and even more so in cross-cultural research (cf. Yang, 2016). There, we not only have to wrestle with the relations between public values, and between values and terms, but what is more, we have to actually translate and decide to what extent it makes sense to regard terms and concepts as cognitively equivalent across times and places.

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