

## 3

# RECONNECTING STATE AND SOCIETY THROUGH PUBLIC VALUE AND CIVICNESS

### 3.1 THE STATE AND THE PUBLIC VALUE SOCIETY

If we observe the landscape of contemporary governance, here intended as ‘fundamentally about steering the economy and society through some means of collective choice’ (Peters, 2016, p. 9), we can easily notice that the greater demand of ‘public value’ to deal with increasingly complex and wicked societal challenges has been addressed by several actors alongside the State, such as social entrepreneurs, third sector organizations, citizens, volunteers and from the development of new models of business in society oriented towards the creation of shared value (e.g. Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Fisher, 2014; Porter & Kramer, 2019; Salvioni & Almici, 2020; Salvioni et al., 2018).

In other words, the widening of the public needs has been shaped by:

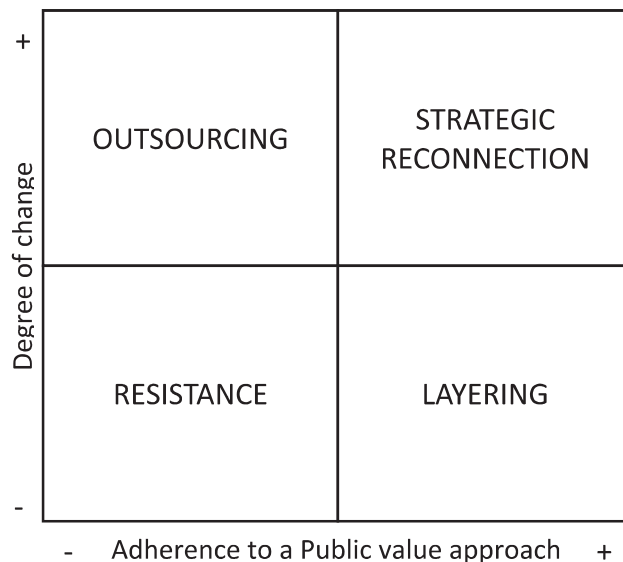
- The emergence of a bigger society interested in the self-creation/peer production of public value (Pestoff, 2012, p. 1104);
- The co-production with the public sector of public value through inter-organizational collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 2004; Vangen & Huxham, 2003) or through the engagement of individuals and communities of individuals (Bovaird, 2007; Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006).

What is happening can be considered a structural change in the relationship between State and society (e.g. Tucci, 2014), leading to the resurgence of a ‘public value society’. With the term ‘public value society’, it is intended the association of all the actors (e.g. individuals, organizations and networks of organizations) that contribute to the creation of public value(s) without being

formally part of the public sector institutionally considered. This does not mean that capitalism has faded or that there is not a society interested in pursuing the private value. Contrariwise, this means recognizing that beyond the State there are many other actors that are contributing to the co-creation of public value nowadays as well as recognizing that there are different types of economies beyond the capitalistic one just oriented to profit maximization (Zanoni et al., 2017). As pointed out by Benington and Hartley (2015) and Meynhardt (2015), even though the State and public managers are fundamental elements for the public value creation, public value can also be created by other actors, such as elected politicians, community activists, private actors and so on.

In this regard, Morse (2010) defined ‘integrative’ public leadership as a process in which multiple actors from different spheres work together to create public value, while Wallis and Gregory (2009) discussed the importance of the public value-seeking leadership where ‘managers must take responsibility for mobilizing networks in pursuit of it’ (Wallis & Gregory, 2009, p. 258), claiming that ‘the failure to exercise leadership in a situation [...] is a failure to explore and realize possibilities that are implicit in formally delegated authority’ (Wallis & Gregory, 2009, p. 255).

This book identifies four main alternatives for the State for dealing with the ‘public value society’ (see Fig. 3.1). They may be seen as a  $2 \times 2$  matrix,



Source: Own elaboration.

**Fig. 3.1. Four Alternatives for the ‘Public Value Society’.**

according to which the two dimensions are the degree of change granted and the degree to which the solution adopts a public value approach, resulting in four options:

- Resistance (no change), which means that public sector organizations continue to operate in the same way, without considering nor interacting with the ‘public value society’. This solution provides a very limited degree (or the absence of) of change and it is far from recognizing the public value approach.
- Outsourcing, which means externalizing tasks and services to the ‘public value society’ by retrenching the role of the public sector. In this context, public sector organizations generate some degree of change because they let the ‘public value society’ achieve major tasks and services. However, the adherence of a public value approach is limited, as public organizations do not engage in the generation of the public value on their own, but rather let other actors take charge of it.
- Layering, which means including the opportunities deriving from the ‘public value society’ into public sector organizations (for example using volunteers when needed) without breaking old systems and structures typical of traditional public administration and new public management paradigms. Public sector organizations recognize the importance of the public value approach but do not generate a real change, as they are not willing to change routines, procedures and operating systems. In other words, by layering, public sector organizations will not change the ‘public management arrangements’. Schedler and Proeller (2007, p. 186) defined public management arrangements as ‘a connection between the culture of a nation or region and the way management in public administration is structured and working’.
- Strategic Reconnection, which means recognizing the presence of the ‘public value society’ and strategically repositioning the role of public sector organizations by maximizing the co-creation of public value. Whitaker (1980) defined this process as mutual adjustments in describing patterns of co-production occurring between citizens and public services providers. Accordingly, the Strategic Reconnection alternative will provide both a higher degree of change and the adherence to the public value approach.

The first three alternatives (Resistance, Outsourcing and Layering) yield a higher level of comfort for public sector organizations, but they do not allow to exploit a ‘public management opportunity’ that requires ‘not just minor

adjustments in thinking and action, but a major paradigm shift: a Copernican revolution, which first de-centres and then re-frames our mind-sets and practices' (Benington, 2012).

### 3.2 PUBLIC MANAGERS AND A STRATEGIC RECONNECTION BETWEEN STATE AND SOCIETY

Recognizing the need to reconnect State and society for the co-creation of public value has significant consequences for public managers and for the organizational culture of public sector organizations. In contemporary public services, and more broadly in policy implementation, public value is inherently co-created (e.g. Crosby et al., 2017; Osborne et al., 2016). Public outcomes can be best achieved through a coherent movement towards the desired outcome from all the actors that are part of the outcome system (Alford & Yates, 2014). Accordingly, public managers responsible for a given public outcome should take care – through different public management logics (e.g. collaboration, regulation, inspection, etc.) – of a larger ecosystem of actors that may add or detract public value (Osborne et al., 2022). This has huge implications for the role and contents of the work of public managers.

From the public managers' point of view, their focus of analysis shifts from the single organization towards the social ecosystems in which a public sector organization is embedded. The New Public Governance literature has already stressed the importance of networks and cross sector partnerships as discussed in chapter 2 (e.g. Agranoff, 2007; Bryson et al., 2014; Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Paletta, 2012; Selsky & Parker, 2005) by repositioning the role of public managers as actors in charge of the social systems existing around the considered public outcomes. However, to avoid an idealistic and uncritical view of value co-creation which neglects possibilities of value destruction and detraction (e.g. Dudau et al., 2019; Hartley & Benington, 2021), co-creating public value requires both a complex network and ecosystem of actors and positive relations between them. Osborne et al. (2016) framed co-creation as the co-creation of value through the transformation of service components at the point of co-production. Thus, value may be co-created through co-production just as much, symmetrically, co-destruction of value may happen during co-production. In this respect, Morse (2010) underlined the need for discovering the latent potential of integration among the actors as a fundamental role of public managers to act as catalysts between different parts to generate positive and value adding relationships. Accordingly, the

integrative role of public managers may help both the reconnection between State and society and the development of the public value society. Indeed, 'integrative leaders are entrepreneurs who create public value. [...] They are public (or social, or civic) entrepreneurs and as such define success in terms of public value created' (Morse, 2010, p. 243).

However, when advocating for this integrative role for public managers, we have to keep in mind that the type of organizational culture existing within public sector organizations has a relevant role in guiding the behaviour of public managers. In particular, 'the organization's culture develops in large part from its leadership while the culture of an organization can also affect the development of its leadership' (Bass & Avolio, 1993, p. 112). The reconnection between State and society for the co-creation of public value can be fully developed only within an organizational culture that does create a positive, outcome-oriented and generative environments. In other words, if public organizations do not have an organizational culture that allows for collaboration, dialogue, learning and deliberation, the Strategic Reconnection alternative will be almost impossible to achieve.

Let's now try to explain in four logical steps what we do mean with the term Strategic Reconnection by drawing from some findings from the work of Elinor Ostrom and from building upon the concept of public value (Moore, 1995, 2013). First step: let's identify some foundational assumptions: (1) creating public value, intended as the impact on society, and warranting public values (Bozeman, 2007) are the missions of the State. (2) There might be different and competing objectives and trade-offs (dilemmas) of public value. (3) Objectives and trade-offs of public value in terms of societal aspirations and challenges are (should be) determined through democratic processes. (4) For their nature, processes of public value creation rely on the contribution of all the actors (public, private and non-profit) that are part of the public value system.

Second step: some of the key findings in the work of Elinor Ostrom (1990, 1996, 2009, 2010) demonstrated that: (1) experiences of self-governance are better performing in managing the commons compared to experiences led by public or private sector; (2) proximity to the local context matters: the less the distance between institutions and users of services provided by that institution, the better it is; (3) public institutions, intended as a consolidated system of rules and practices accepted by the people, may be built up from the bottom by the people involved in the self-governance of the commons.

Third step: Combining the first and the second step we can conclude the following: (1) public sector organizations, as the operative tools of the State, should pursue public value (warranting public values) in terms of impacts on

society (e.g. outcomes) that are democratically defined as relevant; (2) public sector organizations should recognize that public value – for its nature – is co-created by the State and by the public value society and that the proximity of public institutions with the public value society is positively related with the performance of the processes of co-creation of public value; given what said before, (3) public managers are in charge of implementing processes of co-creation of public value (outcome) optimizing the inputs provided by the State and the public value society: this is what we intend for reconnecting State and society through the public value.

Let's illustrate the above by taking the example of safety. The achievement of a certain level of safety in a given area is the result of several processes, goods, services and behaviours provided by all the actors operating in the considered area and relevant for the function of safety. For example, the State may provide the presence of police officers, and the civil society may exercise a social control to prevent or detect crimes or can even provide some forms of community led policing, thus increasing the overall level of inputs put in place for achieving higher level of safety. New good restaurants (business) in the area might contribute to enhance the sense of safety by avoiding empty streets. The final effect on the level of safety will result from the sum of the combinations of the value produced by the State and the 'public value society'. Describing co-production of public functions, Parks et al. (1981) refers to this output as the mix provided by regular (public service professionals) and consumer providers (citizens or other actors part of the so called 'public value society'). Even if more than 30 years have passed since their considerations, Parks et al. offered some relevant views about the opportunity (and in some way the necessity) of recombining inputs from the State and from the society for the co-production of public value:

*We anticipate increased attention to and reliance upon coproductive arrangements in public service delivery. Budget constraints, together with a rising consumer awareness of the importance of their own efforts, suggest that a shift in the input mix toward consumer producers may be inevitable. As this occurs, coproduction may come to be recognized as an efficient alternative to increased reliance on regular producers in meeting rising service demands.*

*(Parks et al., 1981, pp. 1009–1010)*

However, they also argued that this should not result in the substitution of State through society (as in the outsourcing case), but rather in relying over the comparative advantage of each side as in the Strategic Reconnection case.

### 3.3 STRATEGICALLY COLLABORATIVE PUBLIC VALUE GENERATION THROUGH CO-CREATION

This section considers how strategic management approaches can enable public value co-creation by looking at the potential contribution that several strategic management schools can offer to this endeavour (see on this Ferlie & Ongaro, 2015). In this respect, it is important to recognize the new levels and loci where value co-creation is taking place nowadays and the evolving nature of what has value in the current changing societal, cultural and economic patterns in which the public sector is embedded (Kattel et al., 2018). The concepts of platforms, eco-systems and arenas can serve our purpose here. In the modern era of collaborative and digitally enhanced governance (Meijer, 2018; Sancino & Hudson, 2020), they provide indeed the condition for collaboration and for facilitating the formation of formal and informal configurations of actors (e.g. see Badia et al., 2014).

According to Ansell and Gash (2018, p. 29), platforms refer to a ‘relatively stable organizational framework upon which multiple shorter-term or more specialized projects or networks can be built. These collaborative platforms help to facilitate “many-to-many” (multilateral) collaborative relationships’. To provide a concrete example, the foundation Golden is an example of an

*...an innovative co-lab where a global community of executives and experts from Business, Academia, Social Enterprises and Institutions co-create and experiment with alternative models of enterprise for joint economic and human value creation.*

*(<http://foundationgolden.org/>)*

Other examples of well-known business platform organizations are social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter as well as other companies like Amazon or eBay.

The second key concept is that of entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is a community of agents, social structures, institutions and cultural values that produce entrepreneurial activity (Roundy et al., 2017). A value approach in public services require to take an ecosystemic perspective: both Osborne (2018) and Alford and Yates (2014) have explained with two different examples the importance of considering ecosystems in and for public services. Osborne (2018) elaborated on how the social care and welfare of elderly

depends on many actors and processes, including public services professionals, volunteers, and also, for example family relatives and/or neighbours. Alford and Yates (2014) mapped out all the public value processes relevant to prevent fires and highlighted how vast and diverse was the ecosystem where value may or may not be co-created and co-produced by a vast range of actors. Ecosystems may thus provide the raw material in terms of different multi-actor nodes that platforms may help to bring together in collaborative arenas (co) designed for public value co-creation. Kinder et al. (2021, pp. 1619–1620) clarified the main differences between networks and ecosystems. If networks focus on central control, rationalistic interpretation of events and of success, centrally allocated functions and processes, and centralized agent learning, ecosystems' features are self-organizing, combining subjective and objective decentralized responses, autonomous agent self-direction in ecosystem's interests, and autonomous agent learning. Since local public services face volatile environment, they demand 'a high rate of learning and innovation for which ecosystems are increasingly proving a preferable form of organizing' (Kinder et al., 2021, p. 1620).

The third concept is that of arenas, which are defined by Hartley and Benington (2011, p. 210) as 'both ideological spaces of ideas, theories, and discourses but also material spaces of particular institutional forms, cultures, and practices'. Crosby and Bryson (2005, p. 416) proposed another definition for arenas as 'participation by actors in a delimited domain of activity as part of the process of policy-making and implementation'. The concept of arenas and both definitions are particularly useful and important to emphasize that – within platforms, networks, and ecosystems – only through ideological and material arenas that actors can (or cannot) generate public value co-creation across all the governance cycle.

Accordingly, collaborating strategically to co-create public value requires the strategy planning and implementation exercises to consider public services as complex adaptive systems (e.g. Budd et al., 2017); to this purpose, the concepts of platforms, ecosystems and arenas help to concretely identify the operating features of these complex adaptive systems where interactions might be strategically designed and managed to enable forms of value co-creation. In the Table 3.1 below, we provide several practical examples of platforms, ecosystems and arenas as key drivers/enablers for public value co-creation and for each example we build a link with the strategic management schools presented in Ferlie and Ongaro (2015). The empirical case examples included and the list of key managerial issues are illustrative and non-exhaustive.

The public value school offers an important perspective to bring in the democratic purpose into practices of co-creation of public value (Hartley et al.,



**Table 3.1. Strategic Management Schools and Public Value Co-creation.**

School of Thought in Strategic Management	Drivers/Enablers – Platforms, Ecosystems, Arenas	Key Managerial Issues	Empirical Case Examples
Public Value	Public Value challenges as democratic frameworks for <i>platform</i> organizing	Engage citizens and stakeholders to co-identify missions Design cross-sectoral partnerships Track the contribution to public value provided by each organization participating to the platform	<i>Governing Research and Innovation missions in the European Union</i> Inspired by the Apollo 11 mission to put a man on the moon, the European R&I missions aim to deliver solutions to some of the greatest challenges facing our world, such as cancer, climate change, healthy oceans, climate-neutral cities and healthy soil and food. <i>Source: European Commission (2019)</i>
Design and Planning	Digital forums as new <i>arenas</i> for public services	Design access, interaction and after-interaction rules	<i>Public services as digital forums</i> Meijer (2011) has provided examples how virtual communities may shift public services from a government-centric to a community approach. According to this author ‘digital communities form an important addition to the government-centric form of public service provision since they foster both an exchange of experiential information and social-emotional support’ (Meijer, 2011, p. 598).
Positioning	Place-based <i>ecosystems</i>	Creative thinking in reconfiguring and generating new relationships in	<i>Collaboration between Bocconi and Politecnico University (both based in Milan)</i>

**Table 3.1.** (Continued)

School of Thought in Strategic Management	Drivers/Enablers – Platforms, Ecosystems, Arenas	Key Managerial Issues	Empirical Case Examples
		ecosystems Identify win-win solutions	Bocconi University and Politecnico of Milano, two of the top-rated universities in the world, both based in Milan have launched a joint-master degree in ‘Cyber Risk strategy and Governance’ relying on both their strengths and resources in these areas. <i>Source: Todesco (2019).</i>
Cultural School	Organizations with ideological <i>arenas</i> with a culture of openness, participation and social justice	Promote storytelling aligned with organizational values	<i>Welsh Water non-profit company specialist in water and sewerage</i> Welsh Water visit local groups and organizations, as well as individual local customers, to hear how services could be improved. This could mean emergency water supplies to customers who require water urgently to take daily medication in the event of a water shortage. The organization is also encouraging customers who are struggling to pay their water bills to sign up to a social tariff, easing their financial burden. <i>Source: see more in Ongaro et al. (2021).</i> <i>Gentofte municipality (Denmark)</i>
	Institutional <i>arenas</i> for participation and	Exploit opportunities	

**Table 3.1.** (Continued)

<b>School of Thought in Strategic Management</b>	<b>Drivers/Enablers – Platforms, Ecosystems, Arenas</b>	<b>Key Managerial Issues</b>	<b>Empirical Case Examples</b>
Corporate governance school	value co-creation within existing organizational structures and processes	stemming from institutional embeddedness	The Gentofte municipality in Denmark has introduced a new type of ad hoc political task committee that assigns a small group of politicians and citizens to develop a policy proposal on a specific topic and within a given timeframe. <i>Source: Sørensen and Bentzen (2020).</i>
Emergent and learning	Platforms, ecosystems and/or arenas purposely designed for problem-solving and learning (e.g. urban Living labs)	Promote a co-evolution attitude Promote the use of models of systems dynamics	<i>The Darwin Living Lab (Australia)</i> The Darwin Living Lab creates a place where researchers, industry, government, regulators, developers, businesses and the community can work together to address some of the environmental, social, economic and technological challenges facing Darwin. It tests the effectiveness of heat mitigation measures delivered as part of the City Deal and develop evidence-based approaches to inform tropical urban design and future development in Darwin. <i>Source: CSIRO (undated).</i>
Strategy as practice	Interactive practices aimed at value co-creation within platforms, eco-	Change ethos in public managers and professionals Explore menu of	<i>The One City Approach in Bristol</i> Marvin Rees – directly elected Mayor of Bristol in

**Table 3.1.** (Continued)

School of Thought in Strategic Management	Drivers/Enablers – Platforms, Ecosystems, Arenas	Key Managerial Issues	Empirical Case Examples
	systems and arenas (e.g. devolving responsibilities and distributing power)	opportunities for co-creation	2016 – has developed the ‘City Office’ for Bristol, bringing together the organisations and groups with the largest footprint in the city to better work together and coordinate solutions to the problems facing the city as a whole. This is both a physical space within the Town Hall open to the public for city gatherings and co-creation of innovative solutions for public services and city governance. <i>Source: Hambleton (2019).</i>
Public and social entrepreneurial	Diffused and connected entrepreneurial ecosystems (e.g. physical incubators digitally connected)	Promote and sustain diffused entrepreneurship in the ecosystem	<i>China science parks and technology business incubators</i> Research by Yu & Nijkamp (2009) examines China’s approach to developing its own science parks and technology business incubators demonstrating the high-level involvement of the central government of China, compared to private involvement in western countries.
Resource based view and dynamic capabilities	Open Data platforms and platforms for crowdsourcing	Ensure data ownership for citizens and public organizations Promote data	<i>Barcelona Smart city</i> The project DECODE in Barcelona smart city aims to develop and test an open source, distributed

**Table 3.1.** (Continued)

School of Thought in Strategic Management	Drivers/Enablers – Platforms, Ecosystems, Arenas	Key Managerial Issues	Empirical Case Examples
		usability for value co-creation	and privacy-aware technology architecture for decentralized data governance and identity management. <i>Source: Graham (2018)</i>
Governmentality	<i>Ideological arenas such as policy discourses and policy narratives</i>	Create political acceptance of public value creation goals Reframe a discourse Ensure media reception and coverage	<i>Big Society, climate change and sustainable development goals</i> are examples of discourses with policy (and business) implications. The first is UK-based, while the other two are international. <i>Source: own elaboration; see also Lai et al. (2019).</i>

*Source: Own elaboration.*

2017; Liddle, 2018). A democratic purpose means recognizing, as Meynhardt (2015) and Benington (2011) pointed out in their approach to public value, that there is the necessity to consider not only the ‘objective value in use’ of a given public service but also what is valued by different publics and the perception of the publics about the public value purpose of a given public service (Sancino et al., 2021). The concept of purpose is indeed intimately connected with that of value and with mission-based organizations and organizing (Mazzucato, 2014) that – given the complexity of contemporary societal challenges and wicked issues – increasingly require partnerships and collaborations to co-create public value (Bryson et al., 2006).

Design and planning schools can bring important strategic insights by identifying and designing collaborative spaces that enable co-creation, such as digital forums (e.g. Meijer, 2011), physical spaces such as, for example, neighbours, public parks and community events (e.g. cultural and sport events), and boundary objects such as plans (e.g. planning documents, maps,

drawings etc.). The positioning approach to public value co-creation would see actors in the external environment not only as competitors but potentially as collaborators to generate new value. The example provided in the Table 3.1 of Bocconi and Politecnico collaborating on a master programme is quite tellingly because those two universities have mainly thought of themselves as competitors before more recently repositioning themselves also as collaborators to generate new co-created public value. Creative thinking may thus be an important strategic mindset to reconfigure the nature of interactions among actors and enable value co-creation.

The cultural school reminds us as that to be a real and embedded practice, co-creation needs to be interiorized in the organizational culture of public organizations. Values, symbols, manifestos, images and slogans may thus become enablers of a strategic storytelling that can foster participation to co-creation of value from different stakeholders. Van der Wal (2017) has pointed out how storytelling is a key strategic capability for 21st century public managers. Corporate governance school is a perspective that is consonant with the idea that co-creation of innovative public services solutions may indeed be initiated and supported by the strategic reorientation of public organizations towards new combinations of distributed, collegial and integrative forms of collaborative governance (Vangen et al., 2015), a requisite for interactive governance which has been also referred by Edelenbos (2005) as institutional embeddedness and which is well manifested in the case of the municipality of Gentofte (Denmark).

The emergent and learning perspective highlights the interactive nature of value co-creation which nowadays – given the increasing digital opportunities – may be fostered, for example through living labs. Key managerial tools in this respect could be for example models of system dynamics (Bianchi & Montemaggiore, 2008; Bianchi et al., 2021). The strategy as practice approach for public value co-creation puts at the centre the social practices through which co-creation get enacted. In this respect, infusing co-creation as a mode of operating rather than as an ad hoc exercise challenges public managers and professionals to embrace a new ethos as argued by Bovaird (2007).

The public and entrepreneurial school of strategic management consider the role of individuals in promoting innovation in the public domain, while enabling to shift the focus from the single heroic entrepreneur towards the systems – such as, for example incubators – that can enable and promote diffused ecosystems of entrepreneurship. As regards the resource-based view

and dynamic capabilities school, examples related to the role of data in today's processes of strategic management for public services can be provided (as in the example reported in the table about the project DECODE in Barcelona smart city). In our increasingly data-driven economy, the main resource to strategically design and manage interactions among multiple actors has become the data that can predict and track behaviours. This issue has huge democratic and ethical implications (one may think for example of the practice of the social credit score which is ongoing in China) and requires to consider elements about data ownership and data usability, the latter being inevitably a process which needs some kind of technical abilities. As Meijer (2018) pointed out, the games around the data are the main governance games that are played in smart cities.

Finally, the governmentality approach to strategic management is particularly important to consider the role of discourses and narratives which can orient the behaviours of actors in complex adaptive systems through sense-making and sense-giving. The role of leadership dynamics (Hartley et al., 2019) and of media (Peters, 2016) are particularly important in this respect. Ospina and Foldy (2010) have highlighted how 'reframing a discourse' is a key ability to activate (social) change and to modify behaviours to co-create more value (for example by encouraging a more effective waste recycling).

### 3.4 THE POWER OF CIVICNESS FOR A POST-COVID-19 WORLD

All over the world, local communities and social purpose organizations have been making a fundamental contribution to cope with COVID-19 and to enhance community resilience (Lough, 2020). To name a few, such initiatives include the co-delivery of food, medicine and masks to the population, especially vulnerable people; volunteering in lines created to support mental health issues; the co-creation of digital platforms for validating information about COVID-19, for raising donations for hospitals and/or for supporting people and organizations in neighbourhoods and in the local economies.

#### 3.4.1 Civicness

The Oxford English dictionary defines civicness as 'relating to the duties or activities of people in relation to their town, city, or local area'. Manfredi (2013, p. 128) considered civicness as a principle of democratic governance that is strengthened by 'a vigorous civic community interwoven with extended

trust relationships, generalized reciprocity norms and networks of civic engagement'. Specifically, the word civic derives from Latin and means *civicus* ('of a citizen') and was also used to refer to a 'civic crown' which was awarded to a person who saved the life of a fellow citizen in a battle. Saving or protecting other lives was indeed one of the main motives which mobilized civic and community action during COVID-19. According to Evers, civiness 'tends to be associated with the state, citizenry, and citizenship and refer to the degree to which people identify themselves as citizens' (Evers, 2009, pp. 241–242). Dekker and Evers (2009, p. 218) define civiness 'as the capacity of institutions, organizations, and procedures to stimulate, reproduce, and cultivate civility', with the latter referring to people attitudes and behaviours. From a Tocquevillian point of view, civiness can also be considered also a way of being that is based on the implicit assumption of a social contract among citizens and on active participation in the local community.

#### 3.4.2 Civiness at the Micro-, Meso- and Macro-Level

The appeal to civiness emerged from research on co-production of public services during the lockdown conducted by the author with Italian community leaders, including volunteers, managers and representatives of non-profit organizations and of local government. Specifically, the analysis of the interviews identified three main logics driving civic and community action during the pandemic. At a micro-level, people enacted civic and community action through acts of caring, such as, for example distributing food to elderly, vulnerable people and people ill from COVID-19. At a meso-level, civic and community action was enacted through acts of 'leading by example' and 'organizational generosity'. For example, the city manager of Bergamo pointed out that managing during a pandemic is possible only with a shift from bureaucracy to generosity. Volunteers and public employees behaved beyond formal roles and hierarchies to help others achieve a common mission – saving lives (Magatti et al., 2020). Finally, at a macro-level, hope can be identified as a driver to explain how Italian community leaders described their willingness to take an active role in co-producing public services. Hope was described through symbolic narratives, such as referring to the day after the night; to a flower which springs from a rock; to a better world after the COVID-19; to the piazzas that will be again full of people; to the possibility to beat the virus all together. In other contexts and from other perspectives, other logics of civiness might be defined.



Two perspectives are particularly helpful to make sense of the logics of civicness as drivers of co-creation of public value initiatives: a place and a post-managerial perspective. A place-based perspective draws attention to the strong feelings of commitment people have to their locality (Hambleton, 2019). A post-managerial perspective refers to the importance of prioritizing civic purpose and logics of civicness over purely financial logics. However, how is it possible that during the peak of the pandemic the latent civic energies and resources have been activated and mobilized in an impressive way and now those resources just went back to their latent status? In other words: if this has happened once already, why should we not institutionalize the opportunities for a wide civic and community action to achieve public value purposes? This might be a new way to think about social relations which ‘challenges the assumed value of social relations as essentially instrumental’ (Coule et al., 2020, p. 13).

### 3.4.3 A Research Agenda on Civicness in a Post-COVID-19 World

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that it is possible to re-organize our systems in previously unimaginable ways. According to Aiken (2020), this crisis is ‘an opportunity for us to show imagination about changing some of the traditional ways we might work together in our community organisations, charitable foundations, and civic life’. As Bolden (2020) pointed out, COVID-19 showed us how similar we are for the virus, which makes no distinction on the base of census or race. The fight to COVID-19 ‘doesn’t respect national borders and the spread of the epidemic in every individual country threatens the whole world’ (Harari, 2020). COVID-19 reminded us of the precarity of our inter-dependent lives. However, it also tells us that we can come together for civic and community action in ways which seemed impossible.

Civic and community action is empirically observable into managerial, organizational and social practices and actions which embed the notion of citizenship and of human beings as relational and intertwined within a wider common system. COVID-19 and our new world post-COVID-19 demonstrate that it is possible to study economic and political systems with the category of civicness. However, this requires moving from a sectoral perspective towards complex interactions that cut across sectors (Dekker & Evers, 2009, p. 219) and towards a better recognition of the role of public purpose and place at all its levels (Jackson et al., 2018), from the neighbourhoods to the planet, such as, for example in the fight against climate change (Sancino et al., 2021).

In this respect, a more engaged type of research from academics (Hoffman, 2021) aligns with the idea of civicness also in terms of the role of the academia in a post-COVID-19 world (e.g. Ross & McKie, 2020). At a local level, for example scholars can work on societal challenges with non-profit and community leaders. At a macro-level, for example two academics (Julie Battilana and Isabelle Ferreras) led the drafting of an open letter titled ‘Work: Democratize, Decommify, Remediate’ that appeared in some 36 newspapers in 25 countries and was signed by more than 3,000 scholars (Harvard Ash Center, 2020). The COVID-19 crisis and more generally our turbulent times remind us of the precarity of our interdependent lives: we are individuals, but inextricably tied to one another, with a shared destiny. The world after the COVID-19 is at a crossroad: it either takes a further democratic integration, or it is destined to disintegrate in the grip of nationalism. Who else is best equipped than the academics to build the seeds for a global civil society and to foster international civic action and cooperation?