



# City Research Online

## City St George's, University of London

**Citation:** Fisher, D. (2022). Exploring social and moral dynamics around efficiency in government outsourcing. (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, City, University of London)

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

**Permanent repository link:** <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/29216/>

**Copyright and Reuse:** Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to [City Research Online policy](#).

---

## **EXPLORING SOCIAL AND MORAL DYNAMICS AROUND EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT OUTSOURCING**

---

A dissertation submitted in satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor in Philosophy in Management

Daniel Fisher

Under the supervision of:

Professor Bobby Banerjee and Professor André Spicer



Year of completion 2022  
Bayes Business School  
Faculty of Management  
City, University of London  
EC1Y 8TZ  
United Kingdom

*For my daughter*

*May your future entail efficiencies for good, and may inefficiencies grant you  
freedoms to explore, create and grow.*

## Table of Contents

|                                                                                                                         |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....                                                                                           | 4   |
| <b>THESIS ABSTRACT</b> .....                                                                                            | 6   |
| <b>THESIS INTRODUCTION</b> .....                                                                                        | 7   |
| My interests and motivations .....                                                                                      | 9   |
| Efficiency debates in economics .....                                                                                   | 11  |
| Debates and the many uses of the word ‘efficiency’ .....                                                                | 18  |
| The setting, research design, and methods .....                                                                         | 22  |
| Summary of the four articles .....                                                                                      | 26  |
| <b>ARTICLE 1. Slow train coming: commensuration sense-making between efficiency and social value</b> .....              | 34  |
| ABSTRACT .....                                                                                                          | 34  |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                                                                                      | 35  |
| LITERATURE REVIEW .....                                                                                                 | 37  |
| SETTING AND METHOD .....                                                                                                | 45  |
| EMPIRICAL STAGES AND FINDINGS .....                                                                                     | 49  |
| DISCUSSION .....                                                                                                        | 74  |
| CONCLUSION .....                                                                                                        | 76  |
| <b>Blood on the tracks: bio-power, bio-efficiency and governmentality in an occupational group</b> ..                   | 79  |
| ABSTRACT .....                                                                                                          | 79  |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                                                                                      | 80  |
| LITERATURE REVIEW .....                                                                                                 | 81  |
| RESEARCH DESIGN .....                                                                                                   | 87  |
| CONTEXT AND SETTING .....                                                                                               | 92  |
| BIO-EFFICIENCY IN AN OCCUPATIONAL GROUP .....                                                                           | 94  |
| DISCUSSION .....                                                                                                        | 113 |
| <b>ARTICLE 3. The possibility of moral efficiency: implications for government outsourcing and social value</b> .....   | 120 |
| ABSTRACT .....                                                                                                          | 120 |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                                                                                      | 120 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW .....                                                                                                 | 124 |
| THREE CONCEPTUAL PILLARS TO EXPLAIN MORAL EFFICIENCY .....                                                              | 132 |
| DISCUSSION .....                                                                                                        | 146 |
| CONCLUSION .....                                                                                                        | 151 |
| <b>ARTICLE 4. Piracy as Organizational Wrongdoing: from Public-Private Partnerships to Public-Private Pirates</b> ..... | 153 |

|                                                          |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| ABSTRACT.....                                            | 153        |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                       | 153        |
| LITERATURE REVIEW .....                                  | 157        |
| LINKING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND WRONGDOINGS..... | 157        |
| EMPERICAL SETTING AND METHODOLOGY.....                   | 160        |
| FINDINGS.....                                            | 167        |
| DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....                           | 183        |
| <b>THESIS CONCLUSION .....</b>                           | <b>192</b> |
| <b>IMPACT IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS RESEARCH .....</b>       | <b>198</b> |
| <b>LIMITATIONS.....</b>                                  | <b>200</b> |
| <b>RESEARCH ETHICS .....</b>                             | <b>202</b> |
| <b>AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT.....</b>                         | <b>203</b> |
| <b>REFERENCES.....</b>                                   | <b>205</b> |

## List of Tables and Figures

|                                                                                                                                    |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table 1.1: Empirical material anlyzed in this study.....                                                                           | 45  |
| Table 1.2: Media narratives during the disruption stage.....                                                                       | 57  |
| Table 1.3: From efficiency narratives linked to social value to risk narratives linked with to social value.....                   | 69  |
| Table 1.4: Re-commensurating social value with risk narratives rather than efficiency .....                                        | 72  |
| Figure 1.5: Process model illustrative of how social value is de-commensurated from efficiency and re-commensurated with risk..... | 73  |
| Table 2.1: List of participants .....                                                                                              | 91  |
| Table 2.2: Balancing bio-efficiency through the body, the mind, organizational design & technology .....                           | 108 |
| Figure 2.3: Governance over train drivers' bio-efficiency.....                                                                     | 111 |
| Figure 3.1: Balancing the Demands for Moral Efficiency .....                                                                       | 145 |
| Table 4.1: Data table for empirical material .....                                                                                 | 165 |
| Figure 4.2: Theorized practices model.....                                                                                         | 183 |

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must start by recognizing the scrupulous, adept and talented Selma Fisher, who read every draft, including this section, on behalf of the grammar police. I'm grateful to her for editing confusing sentences and often asking, "are you sure you want to say this?" She supported me throughout the good times and the hard times during my PhD journey. I'm indebted to my amazing supervisors: Professor Bobby Banerjee and Professor André Spicer. Their feedback, and steering, helped me get a part-time PhD done in four and half years. Their willingness to take me on as their student was one of the best moments of my professional life. I admire their work but also value them as colleagues and friends. I was truly lucky to be supervised by two of my favourite scholars. The PhD office at Bayes was hugely supportive. For that I must thank Malla Pratt and Abdul Momin who cheered me on throughout the PhD journey. I also must acknowledge the friendship and kindness of Vince Gould, who helped me navigate the world of train drivers and the industry more broadly. Without his guidance and advice, access to this amazing industry would not have been as easily gained. I would also like to thank the many participants, especially the train drivers who were so generous with their time. Their perspectives and insights taught me so much. I'd also like to acknowledge Dr Thomas Calvard, Dr Alessandro Tirapani and Professor Hugh Willmott who also provided feedback and direction during this PhD. I'm also grateful to my good friends and PhD colleagues, Dr Johanna Jarvela, Dr Alessandro Tirapani, Yousaf Nishat-Botero, Felipe de Medeiros Oliveira, Khamael Al Safi, and Dipsikha Majumdar who have finished or are contending with their own PhD journeys. We have supported each other, and their encouragement helped me greatly. Equally, the friendship and support of (and country walks with) my Bayes colleagues Rob Whitlam and Lui Pisanelli helped keep me grounded.

Of course, I must recognize the amazing community which makes up ETHOS: The Centre for Responsible Enterprise. This community helped and guided me throughout my PhD,

making me a better scholar. The Director of ETHOS, Professor Jean-Pascal Gond in particular always steered me in directions that enlightened me, enriched my work and outlook on research. Communities like ETHOS have been an essential part of my growth as a scholar. And for that reason, I also want to acknowledge reviewers and participants at the European Group for Organizational Studies and the Academy of Management where I presented most of my work. I also want to thank the Faculty of Management at Bayes Business School which is staffed with amazing scholars who are also good people, many of whom gave me their time, support and advice throughout my PhD. In particular I want to thank Professor Paula Jarzabkowski, Professor Caroline Wiertz, Dr Grace Augustine, Dr Ruben van Werven and Professor Amit Nigam. Their time, friendship and advice were kindly received.

The number of my acknowledgements corroborates the idea that it takes a village to raise a PhD student. Without the amazing support of these people and many others not mentioned here, I very much doubt I'd have made it this far. Finally, I want to acknowledge my late Grandfather, Eugene Fisher who supported my M.A. studies, which set me on track to pursue my doctorate. Without his support, this thesis would not have been possible. Equally, I must acknowledge the kindness and love of my two parents who supported my undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. They continue to inspire me and their encouragement gave me the determination to pursue my education and my dream to be an academic.

## THESIS ABSTRACT

Efficiency is an idea that comes in many guises. This thesis is a qualitative investigation that considers the various meanings this word inhabits in different contexts: in a strategy document, during a disruption, in a public inquiry, by an occupational group, in the moral dimension and as a dark practice. Each theoretical lens that is cast onto the uses and understandings of efficiency makes unique contributions to a variety of literatures in business and management studies. My first article contributes to both commensuration and sense-making literatures by detailing how assumptions around what is commensurable with efficiency can break down and be repackaged through disruption. My second article contributes to literatures on embodiment, bio-power and governmentality. In this paper I identify how efficiency plays on a worker's body and mind, detailing how perceived individualized energy trade-offs of train drivers are mediated by technology and organizational design. This article inextricably links understandings of efficiency with wider society - initiating a discussion about normative dimensions of efficiency. This is explored in article three by theoretically considering what a moral efficiency would look like in government outsourcing in the UK. Finally, article four contributes to wrongdoing literatures by detailing how efficiency-cost cutting as a practice sits alongside a broader range of practices used to raid the state and convert public assets into private wealth.

*“...whether public or private, the basic ‘good’ is efficiency”* Luther Gulick (1937)

*“Finding the right amount – what Aristotle called the ‘mean’ – of motivation, collaboration, empathy, choice and many other aspects of life, including efficiency, is a key challenge we face, both as individuals and as a society.”* Barry Schwartz (2020)

## THESIS INTRODUCTION

Invoking efficiency and the meanings that sit behind this word can be taken for granted. Luther Gulick’s remark above assumes a great deal. His narrative is one which has dominated most of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century and I am not alone in making this claim. As Robert Shiller notes in the preface of his most recent book, *Narrative Economics*, “narratives from the second half of the twentieth century describe free markets as “efficient” and therefore impervious to improvement by government action” (Shiller 2020; xii). Because this narrative has been so persistent, I suggest that, when efficiency claims are made, they should be interrogated above and beyond the face value we often give this construct. Interrogating efficiency claims is important because often such narratives grant legitimacy to organizations outsourced by the state to take up the provision of public services. To interrogate understandings of efficiency I examine efficiency narratives, actor perceptions, moral implications and practices. This body of work shows that efficiency can be deployed and infused with meaning - using it to rationalize certain outcomes or benefits, understanding how individuals maintain efficiency or examining how efficiency making can justify piratic practices.

I chose to examine efficiency by studying government outsourcing with a particular focus on the UK rail industry (a public service where efficiency is considered an important idea) which is why I found myself driving into the parking lot of a train depot roughly 30 miles

south of London on a spring afternoon in 2021. There was a refreshing chill in the air as I paid for my parking and walked to the nearby station. At this point the pandemic had persisted for over a year, but the severity of the winter months had subsided. In the months leading up to this meeting, I had managed to navigate the Covid health and safety procedures at my university to conduct this research in person. The university approved my visit and I was excited. Up to that point I had spent over thirty hours interviewing train drivers, customer engagement managers, directors and driver managers. On this day, I was meeting a driver manager who, before heading off on retirement after decades in the industry, suggested that I have a go on the UK's most advanced train simulator onboard a British Rail Class 700 carriage. It felt good to be in the field and to have the opportunity to meet a driver manager I had interviewed previously for my research. When we met, I was taken aback at how tall he was – we had only interacted on Zoom - and he brought someone with him. His replacement, who came from the aviation industry, which had been hit hard by the pandemic. His replacement and I were both going to be trained on the same day, which was an unforeseen bonus, as I could ask a newcomer to the job about their thoughts on managing drivers and their experience of the simulator. Although he was retiring, the acting driver manager was also going to have his first go at the simulator. All three of us were like kids who were getting behind the wheel of a car for the first time. We walked to the Siemens building from the depot and on the way chatted about the pandemic, why we love trains and about the challenges ahead for the industry.

Rewind four years prior to this meeting at the depot. It's the spring of 2018 and I'm at a train station in central London. Farringdon. The platform is crowded. Bursting almost, and people on the edge of the platform must hold back their body weight from the edge as throngs of passengers wait for a train to board. I feel like I'm well dressed, waiting on the last train. For a week now, the trains have consistently been delayed or cancelled. Commutes that would normally take Londoners 30 minutes could last as long as an hour. Sometimes two, depending

on which alternative route one chose to pursue. None of us could count on the train timetable any longer, but instead had to embrace or at least tolerate uncertainty and the disruption that would follow. I was hoping to get home to read my daughter a bedtime story. That morning I had left before she (an early riser) was awake, as I was working and attending PhD seminars. I looked down at my watch. My train had been cancelled and I had to wait 30 minutes to board a train that would take an alternative route. The alternative route would lengthen my commute to nearly two hours. Double the time it would normally take. Finally, the train arrived. I texted my wife to go ahead and put our daughter to bed. I would be late again. I'd miss seeing my daughter and my wife's working day would be prolonged without a needed break. It was difficult for us as a family. The train journey was uncomfortable. It was packed with angry, tired commuters all going through the same experience and similar frustrations. Most of us would likely have a late dinner and would turn around and do the same commute the next day, wondering if we would be able to get to work on time for a meeting or get home at a reasonable hour. This period of disruption and uncertainty persisted for three months. It would prove to be consequential for individual commuters but also the industry as a whole, kicking off a root and branch review of the UK's rail franchise system that would lead to the part-renationalization of the rail network, scheduled for 2023. In the coming years, both myself and the industry would change. For myself, the journey of the PhD transformed how I understood my original thesis question as I developed as a scholar and investigated this fascinating industry.

### [My interests and motivations](#)

But where did my interests in efficiency originate? Rewind further, to when I joined the PhD program at Bayes Business School, previously known as Cass. My original thesis title was, "Are private military firms *efficient* in theatre?". The rationale for examining private military companies fascinated me and, having spent many years reading about privatization trends, I was acutely aware that the USA's obsession with markets translated into very

particular assumptions about both the state and the market. The state is inefficient. Markets are efficient. Therefore, public services are most efficient when they are driven by the market and unrestrained by the state. This simplistic characterization interested me. Partly because it seemed obvious to me that this wasn't the case when considering outsourcing military objectives to companies that were a liability for national security in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The logic of outsourcing has of course been underpinned by neoliberalism in the US, leading to decades of deregulation and privatization. Indeed, neoliberalism in this form has been a defining feature of my life. This ruthless form of capitalism has meant that the value-systems of whole cultures has shifted to accommodate this prevailing economic philosophy. The culture I grew up in was no exception. Such accommodations fail to resolve moral tensions but intensify them. For instance, in my case, the socio-economic conditions I grew up in jarred with my Anglo-Christian values, leading me to become interested in moral philosophy, resulting in my studies at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. Throughout my undergraduate education, I worked under an economic system that promoted the idea of freedom. In reality, the US economic system restricted my growth, potential and access to opportunity. I worked 35 hours a week at a grocery store while studying full time for many years. The strain of balancing my academic aims with making a living, with no healthcare provision, meant I lived precariously for much of my early twenties. This precarity made me question key assumptions about freedom, economics and capitalism more generally. Such an oppressive and exploitative system led me to become interested in the relationship between morality and economics. It seemed to me that philosophy alone couldn't tackle some of the most important empirical issues with which I and those around me were grappling. Economics, for me, held the key to bridging theory into practice and positively changing the lives of people.

With some luck, risk taking and hard work, I defied the odds and broke through my socio-economic status. With the support of my grandfather, I travelled to London to study for

my MA, in which I explored moral arguments for a global financial regulator. What the economists Lance Taylor and John Eatwell called a world financial authority (WFA). Since my MA, my interests have zoomed in on a key feature of neoliberalism: its obsession with *efficiency*. My PhD thesis investigates multiple dimensions of efficiency, including how efficiency is socially constructed into narratives by organization, whether those narratives persist through disruption and how individuals in an occupation perceive efficiency, practice efficiency and manage demands for efficiency alongside other imperatives. The individual dimensions to efficiency naturally lead to the moral implications efficiency entails, and finally, this thesis considered efficiency as a dark practice alongside other practice. Efficiency-making does not happen in a vacuum but interweaves with other practices depending on the kind of efficiency being pursued. This thesis, then, challenges current, taken-for-granted understandings of efficiency through the examination of efficiency narratives, actor perceptions, moral implications and practices. An underlying implication is that traditional notions of efficiency are predicated on major assumptions. Especially in the ways we've grown accustomed to the word 'efficiency' in business and management studies. I attempt to re-examine this central idea with a view to introduce a broader lens that considers more subjective, humane and moral understandings of efficiency - which has too long been dominated by cultural and economic hegemonic paradigms.

### Views on efficiency and debates in economics

There are many ways efficiency is understood and examined in differing contexts: economic efficiency (e.g. Smith 2018), social efficiency (e.g. Lefebvre & Vietorisz 2007; Knoll 2009), organizational efficiency (e.g. Freeman 1999), or moral efficiency (e.g. Sloane 2008). Put in simpler terms, efficiency can be understood as avoiding waste (time, energy, effort, money etc.). In organizations, it can be a euphemism for performing well ("you're a very efficient worker"), delivering results ("I efficiently delivered all my reports on time") or even

used as a rationale to fire a workforce (“We’re going to make some efficiencies around the office”). It is an internally complex concept, but the roots of examining efficiency in organizations can be found in traditional debates on balancing value and utility with profit in economics: Pareto efficiency (Baumol, 1991), economic welfare (Edgeworth, 1923), externalities and welfare (Pigou, 1920; Callon, 1998)), the efficient market hypothesis (Samuelson, 1960), theories on economic utility and value (Walras, 1969) and so on.

A good example of this is the debate in economics around why organizations justify the pursuit of profit, suggesting it can allow them to deliver goods more efficiently, utilizing resources aimed at Pareto efficiency (Smith 2018). Pareto efficiency is understood as “the situation where no improvement can be made to the welfare of one person without making someone else worse off” (Pitelis 2002; 112) or where welfare gains do not incur losses (Smith 2018). Such efficiency has ties to social behaviour, for instance “pareto-optimal equilibrium allocations of commodities are outcomes of social behaviour” (Schultz 2001; 82). Balancing the social outputs of efficiency-making or competition and profits in this way has been considered a key feature of efficiency’s link to economics, organizations and managers. These debates sits within a two centuries old shadow cast by Adam Smith’s *Invisible Hand argument* that suggests the pursuit of self-interest is led by an invisible social force (ie. the hand) that leads to arrangements in society for the common good (Smith 1776). The idea being that the least amount of government interference, allows for humans to pursuit their own self interests. This pursuit, in line with their own security, will lead them to arrangements which benefit both the rich and the poor and are therefore efficiency arrangements for welfare in society. This thread of thinking on efficiency and self-interest profit seeking links with Jeffrey Smith’s (2018) suggestion that an organizations pursuit of profit allows Pareto efficiency. But what about the managerial level? Traditional notions of the positive outcomes of profit in making competitive markets efficient has relied on the idea that managers should be unconcerned with

efficiency, self-interested and more concerned with profit making. As Smith (2018) suggests, decision making and planning by managers is directly linked with how efficiency is valued. Thus, the ethical manager weighs up their actions with reference to the market's desire for efficient outcomes that improve welfare, but this view is not necessarily incompatible with self-interests. For welfare to be optimally accomplished, it is assumed that markets must be optimally competitive, which can promote efficiency thereby allocating moral benefits to society. In other words, efficiency is the outcome of a competitive market (see Heath 2014). And such outcomes ought to be moral ones but importantly for this thesis, involve moral conditions to be in place first rather than simply moral outcomes (Schultz 2001).

Schultz, who inspired article three of this thesis, defined morality as, “a social practice guided by moral rules, which in turn are identified as such by virtue of how compliance achieves and sustains communally defined well-being” (Schultz 2001; 6). For Schultz, such social practices are social phenomena that involve regularity in social behaviour (2001;83). Schultz argues that there are certain moral conditions that must be in place for economic efficiency to take place, which coheres with the view that a market, with the right conditions, allows efficiency leading to outcomes that are best for society because moral conditions allow for efficiency. In order to achieve this, Schultz suggests a variety of normative conditions (that are necessary and sufficient) must be in place in order to achieve efficient outcomes for markets. Put in logical terms, Schultz (2001; 9) specifies a key argument of article 3 of this thesis. Namely,

1. We desire conditions that necessitate efficiency
2. Action A inhibits efficiency and action B is required
3. Therefore, we should avoid action A and pursue action B

While this view is linked with agency, for Schultz it is a zoomed-out and abstracted view of economic efficiency and moral conditions that link moral codes and individuals' self-interests. But one question worth asking is if self-interest has led to efficient arrangements in society? In line with others, this thesis suggests this should be interrogated. For example, Matthews (1981) poses the question whether replacing self-interest for a moral code is "compatible" with efficiency or "necessary" for efficiency. Mathews argues that a competitive market will not be efficient if self-interest is not subordinate to a moral code (Matthews 1981; 306). It then follows that decision making linked to efficiency involves moral concerns, rather than just moral outcomes. Crucially, some have argued, that while competitive markets may lead to efficiency this does not improve ethical behaviour and can incentivize unethical behaviour (Sethi 1994). More recently, the scholar and economist Samuel Bowles has argued that economic arrangements do not work well when moral norms are unaccounted for (Bowles 2016). Bowles (2016) argues that policies designed to perfect markets could actually crowd-out people's desires to adhere to social norms. This thesis follows a similar thread of ideas by exploring the intersection of organizational, and managerial actions that are linked with efficiency in differing contexts. In other words, because individuals' actions in organizations (like managers: see Smith 2018) have an ethical bearing on efficiency and also that efficiency may lead to unethical behaviour, we should consider how efficiency is rationalized in narratives, and understood by occupations. The inductive observation of this thesis questions the consistency of scandals in government outsourcing, defying the neoclassic view that welfare is maximized when a competitive market leads to efficient arrangements in society. While such firms do not operate in a optimally competitive market, the appeal to bring in private actor is that such competitiveness will help make public services efficient. Like Sethi (1994) or Matthews (1981) and others (Smith 2018; Sloane 2008) have argued, human behaviour and decision making must consider moral outcomes linked with efficiency but also the socially embeddedness of

efficiency. To position the social link with efficiency we can turn to the economist Karl Polanyi.

As Polanyi refers to it, the substantive economy is understood by agents' "social environment" but this is considered distinct from the formal economy which is "derived from logic" rather than "fact" (Granovetter and Swedberg 1992; 243). The formal economy involves rational choices where "means are anything appropriate to serve the end" and this involves an "infinite variety of human interests" (1992; 245, 246). Polanyi suggests that such rational choices are brought about by an insufficiency of means - in other words, it must be looked for to choose the right means to get to a particular end. In markets, the means is price, giving rise to the formal economy and the discipline of economic analysis. Still, the formal economy is contingent upon the human or substantive economy and this relationship serves to show human embeddedness within the market. The main aim for Polanyi was to stress the importance of process and intuitionism in economic thinking. To do this, he suggests we consider how an economy acquires its unity and stability at different levels, "instituted at different times and places" (1992; 250).

Polanyi elaborates on these ideas in his 1944 work, *The Great Transformation*. For Polanyi, historically, embeddedness in markets experiences what he refers to as a double movement of stages where the social is disembedded and less central - making conditions difficult for people in society. For example, the welfare state emerged after a period of disembeddedness. This thesis speculates whether we are returning to a more embedded stage as we've observed the rise of a harsh neoliberalism over the past 40 years by exploring the socially embedded nature of efficiency in organizations as opposed to its more logical form in formal economics. Like Polanyi, I argue that the formal economy is contingent on the human economy. Therefore, we should consider the socially embedded nature of efficiency in a space that relies on this as a core objective and rationale – namely, public-private contexts.

This thesis does not explore the wider macro-economic arrangements that may necessitate certain moral outcomes but zooms-in to consider efficiency narratives, occupational understanding of efficiency, stakeholders and organizational decision-making linked to efficiency and the moral or social dynamics that play out as a result of those decisions. Examining the links between efficiency desires, beliefs and actions with the social and the moral in this way allows for specific reflections on how efficiency is used and understood - helping us to refine scholarly approaches to efficiency arguments that desire to move from the particular to the general. I suggest that despite an often-uniformed way of talking about efficiency in organizations, we should attend to how efficiency is “cast at different levels of analysis” in our field (Freeman 1999; 165). For example, how teams are organized, how resources are allocated or how profit is maximized can all be efficiently managed as an input/output ratio, or a comparison (Pennings and Goodman, 1977) and even as a trade-off (Mohony 1998). From the organizational perspective, it is assumed that rational actors who organize are seeking to maximize their utility, therefore promoting organizational efficiency (Freeman 1999). Indeed, a largess feature of Adam Smith’s invisible hand and welfare economics has been focused on utility maximization for society. I do not pursue this line of questioning. Rather than focusing on utility, I suggest a more pluralist perspective that looks to social norms as envisaged by Schultz. As Schultz (2001; 5) suggests a moral rule

*“is partially a matter of its function in achieving and sustaining well-being through a social practice, where the content of a conception of well-being is dependent on the commonly held beliefs of its correlative community's members. Generally speaking, a particular community's concept of well-being depends on what that community values and how it understands reality, human beings, and the cause of thwarted ideals. Accordingly, to understand the rationale for a moral rule is to understand its relation to*

*these beliefs and to the conception of well-being associated with them.*

*Furthermore, since a norm, rule, or expectation is moral due to its function in securing a conception of well-being, it follows that what some groups take to be merely a standard of etiquette, others may understand morally - as functioning, that is, to secure well-being”*

Such a conception of morality’s opens up the moral ground to particular contexts, rather than a utilitarian one which can sacrifice the needs of groups in favour larger groups. I believe a focus on a more pluralistic conception coheres with the idea of organizational life as highly complex or messy (Gibbons 1999). Even more so, when considering the often times messy intersection of public private arrangements conceptualized as public private partnerships. Indeed, I believe the intersection of social and moral dynamics concerned with efficiency’s social and moral links could be examined further in business and management research - in relation to the debates that have gone on regarding the moral conditions for efficiency in the economy between privately competitive firms and public organizations, namely, public-private partnerships.

To sum up this thesis relationship to economic debates around efficiency in the economy and the social; neoclassical economics has stressed the importance of maximizing profits in a competitive market leading to positive efficient outcomes for society. But these outcomes, as Heath suggests, require trade-offs between valuing efficiency with that of justice at the intersection between the market and the state (Heath 2014). But as Smith (2019) points out, the normative demands of justice may conflict with efficiency imperatives. This thesis follows a tradition of articles that questions this line of thinking by examining the importance of efficiency-making in government outsourcing and the extremes to which companies maximize economic efficiency, or organizational efficiency at the expense of important social norms or values. But this thesis will also consider the importance of efficiency in meeting social

value demands highlighting the important of the trade-offs between efficiency imperatives and moral demands. As Smith suggests “separating which actors oversee these *sometime* oppositional values is a lever we can pull to find a more suitable configuration of liberal goods” (Smith 2019;137). This thesis plays a part in pulling the lever to not only examine macro-economic arguments but consider socially embedded (ie. Polanyi 1994) configurational environments (e.g. narratives, occupations, stakeholders and contracts) that require particular efficiency compromises but also hold certain efficiency imperatives. To examine this, I do not take an economist’s position to value socially embedded dynamics by formally commensurating them to quantitative formulas. Indeed, I am not an economist. Instead I stick to a qualitative lens to examine how efficiency narratives are constructed, discarded, perceived by the body and mind of an occupation, how we might conceptualize efficiencies relationship to moral demands and finally how it can be considered social practice that leads to wrongdoing. Still, this thesis appreciates the great works that have been done on balancing value and utility with profit in economics (e.g. Edgeworth, Pareto, Pigou, Samuelson, Walras and others). Particularly Pigou’s notion of externalities which econometrically accounts for some of the dynamics examined in vignettes in article 3. In short, there are many efficiencies examined herem and efficiency is treated neither necessarily “good” or “bad” but is examined as an argument or practice that could be used in a way that violates or adheres to social codes or is linked alongside moral norms. While efficiency isn’t villainized in this thesis, it does implicitly recognize the fetishization of efficiency in public/private contexts to highlight when a focus on efficiency could backfire. The next section considers a more cultural account of efficiency in social life.

### Other debates and the many uses of the word ‘efficiency’

Pinpointing where efficiency and social life may have first merged is challenging but a useful starting point could be to consider daily routines. In an essay on routines, the author

Meghan O'Gieblyn, considers the habits of medieval monks, whose daily tasks and practices were dictated by the clock and whose attachment to order and regimented scheduling would eventually pervade mainstream society (O’Gieblyn, M., 2021, December 20). Optimizing our time became essential for organizing and humans looked to tools and machines, “to make life more efficient”. Fast forward to today, and we can see how the echoes of those medieval monks resonates with today’s attention economy that “encourages optimizing everything a person does toward efficiency” and accelerating “our tendency to engage with our hobbies in a work-like, data-driven way” (Li, S., 2021, December 1). This lens on efficiency, however, focuses on individual outputs of humans. Zooming out on efficiency, away from the level of individuals optimizing their lives, we can see assumptions in how the word is used. For example, recently, a chief executive for a US mortgage company fired 900 of his employees on a Zoom call (The Guardian, 2021, December 7). This news story went viral because of his rather cold choice of method for firing 900 people but what reasons did the executive give? He cited changes in the market but also, “efficiency”, illustrating how efficiency can be used as an excuse for inhumane or ruthless practices. When the word efficiency is invoked, it is often for political reasons which raises the question, efficiency for whom?

In 2019, as rail fares increased for passengers, I questioned such narratives of efficiency arguing, “the decision to outsource public services [like train services] relies on the idea that the market can be more efficient than government” (Fisher, D., 2022, January 12). Similarly, this thesis explores the driver for organizations to cut costs to maximize economic efficiency, like the executive who used a Zoom call to fire his 900 employees. But while such economic efficiency may serve the outsourced firm and its shareholders and may even economize public funding, it can lead to inefficiencies elsewhere. In article 4, this thesis details similar efficiency-cost cutting practices in a wide range of occupations (they are not restricted to government outsourcing settings). For example, consider the private equity industry where “investors can

often buy fragile companies, load on debt to fund strategic change and sack workers in a bid for efficiency” (Goergen and Wood 2022, January 11). This practice is nothing new, but refocusing scholarly attention on efficiency in the ways this thesis proposes is. Reframing efficiency is also important for better understanding of and uncovering the assumptions around an idea that has so much normative and political power. Still, there are many debates around how scholars should focus their attention on efficiency. Many debates are currently emerging, meaning that this thesis comes at a particularly interesting time for management research. One such debate considers whether or not cost cutting is an efficiency practice.

Some have recently argued that efficiency-cost cutting isn’t an accurate characterization of organizations seeking efficiency. For example, Professor Mikko Ketokivi and Professor Joe O'Mahoney are compiling a book that complements this thesis on the various guises efficiency takes in organizations, as well as the many drivers that motivate different types of efficiency-making in organizations (see Ketokivi, B. M., 2021, November 23). While I disagree that forms of organizational costs cutting that involve down-sizing, squeezing workforces and other similar practices do not characterize efficiency in organizations, they, like me are now working on the idea that there are many efficiencies. As Ketokivi concludes in his recent article saying that their,

*“analysis calls for incorporating all aspects of efficiency—not just the familiar, readily measurable parts—into the decision. This fosters sustainable efficiency, which should stand at the foundation of all organizations seeking long-term viability. Efficiency remains elusive and challenging, but smart minds always find ways to improve.”*

There is much alignment in both our projects in uncovering and detailing the many meanings and uses of the term ‘efficiency’, in and around organizations. But to challenge Ketokivi and O’Mahoney’s idea that traditional forms of organizational cost cutting are not

adequate characterizations of efficiency, I would point to other arguments. For instance, Professor Cummings and Professor Bridgman's recent MIT Sloane article, *The Progressive Roots of Management Science* (Cummings and Bridgman 2021) starts out by recognizing that conventional wisdom around management science has zeroed in on "economic efficiency". In other words, it has been assumed that the Taylorist idea "*that economic efficiency is management's fundamental principle*" (2021) should dominate a great deal of management science. Cummings and Bridgman, however, challenge this "conventional wisdom", pointing towards more important organizational ends.

*"Economic efficiency must be a means to other ends: a more balanced existence through improved leisure, greater social connections, and time spent in nature, as well as collective well-being and better civic engagement."*

This thesis builds on these ideas in articles 2 and 3 by demonstrating how efficiency demands are balanced against social and moral demands. During the course of my PhD and more recently, conversations around efficiency being balanced with other demands is increasing following my 2019 working paper on Moral Efficiency which garnered a great deal of interest at European Group for Organization Studies (2019) and the Academy of Management (2020). For example, during a recent winter storm in Texas, where the electrical grid came under considerable strain, the economic efficiency principle so often prized by economists rubbed up against demands for resilience, suggesting that efficiency must contend with environmental demands to succeed (Vardi, M., 2021, October 25). Professor Vardi also highlights a clear finding that comes out of this thesis, which clearly establishes the important linkages between safety demands and efficiency demands. Vardi discussed the important trade-offs that cannot be taken for granted when considering the fuel efficiency of a Boeing 737 Max and safety after technical drives for efficiency which led to a plane crash. Professor Barry Schwartz argues, "we worship efficiency" and this tendency in society contributed to the 2008

financial collapse because “the real flaw in capitalism revealed by the 2008 financial crisis was its unbridled, single-minded pursuit of profit and efficiency” (Schwartz 2020). Schwartz’s solution is to recognize that, at times, inefficiency should be pursued to mitigate risks in society. In other words, a re-balancing of the importance we put on efficiency. My research reveals similar dynamics as train drivers often prioritize demands for safety over demands that may be regarded as more “efficient” by managers, directors, the public or the state. This opens up scope to consider inefficiency as a public good, in contrast to the Administration expert Luther Gulick’s suggestion that efficiency is the basic “good” in public and private contexts.

While there are many contributions to different literatures specific to each article, this thesis has a rather more modest but nonetheless broad and important contribution. It opens up a research agenda that interrogates the many uses of efficiency and generates a broader understanding of the many types of efficiency there are. But it also serves to challenge traditional usages of the term, allowing us to rethink what we really mean when we claim something or someone is efficient. Better understanding such assumptions can improve current uses in scholarship to become more particular and I hope, more humane.

### The setting, research design, and methods

The setting for this thesis broadly considers various public-private partnerships (PPPs) outsourced by the state. These organizations do not own the public services they deliver but instead work to fixed term contracts that are regularly amended, renewed or cancelled. This thesis starts by focusing particular attention on the UK rail industry, which consists of an array of complex arrangements between public and private organizations. The rationale for focusing on this fascinating industry stems from its usefulness in unpacking various meanings of efficiency. The rationale for PPPs has often entailed claims that a competitive, private market is better for efficiency on our rail network and in outsourcing other public services such as private security services. Historically, from 1948, the UK rail industry consisted of a

nationalized system under the umbrella organization, British Rail (BR). In 1993/94 this changed, as the Railways Act 1993 introduced a franchise system, whereby train operating companies (ToCs) would bid and win contracts to run particular rail services while the infrastructure would be publicly managed by Network Rail and overseen by an independent regulator, the Office for Rail and Road (ORR). A key rationale for introducing this new franchise system was, “to promote *efficiency* and economy on the part of persons providing railway services”<sup>1</sup>.

For these reasons, article 1 examines an historic and pivotal moment for the UK rail industry: a 2018 timetable change implemented and coordinated by the Department for Transport (DfT), NR and the ToCs. The reason this was a pivotal and historic moment for the UK rail industry is because this timetable change was a monumental failure, leading to roughly three months of cancellations and delays for passengers. The fallout of this timetable failure would eventually lead to an overall review of the entire rail industry with plans to renationalize parts of the railways system through the creation of Great British Railways (GBR) by 2023, essentially undoing many of the effects of the 1993 Act. At the time of the timetable change I was commuting to City University, and the long disruption was also a crucial and vivid experience for me personally, precipitating my academic interest this industry. Throughout this period, I was also reading a great deal about the failures of other firms outsourced by the state: Carillion, G4S, Serco and many others. These failures led me to consider the normative importance placed on public services and contributed to articles 3 and 4. In article 3, I consider moral efficiency by focusing attention both on the private security firm G4S and on ToCs acting as a transition from the UK rail industry to a broader examination of firms outsourced by the state on fixed term contracts - leading to article 4, where I focus my attention on wrongdoing

---

<sup>1</sup> Railways act 1993. Legislation.gov.uk. Retrieved January 29, 2022, from <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/43/part/I>

committed by UK PPPs. This thesis zooms in on railway PPPs before zooming out to take a broader perspective on these complex organizational arrangements outsourced by the state.

Because this thesis interrogates the many meanings that underly the idea of efficiency in different contexts, a qualitative approach has been chosen. Also, because theory in business and management studies have not yet explored efficiency's links with the social at the interface between the market and the state, I adopt an inductive approach (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). Moreover, as I cast a variety of theoretical lenses on efficiency, often, the "units of analysis" are conceptual (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Rather than procedural templates (Harley and Cornelissen 2020; Locke et al., 2020; Pratt et al., 2019, 2020) guiding this work, I engage in different methodological approaches in each paper that links and joins studies that engage a method best suited to the empirics of each study. This was particularly necessary when drawing on my observational work. Approaching theory and my setting in this way helped me to join a methodological approach of interest to my target journals, while enabling me to practise multiple qualitative approaches throughout this research. This was motivated largely by my very personal engagement with my empirical material, and the writing processes of this thesis, which exemplify and display my reasoning – from my data to theory (Reinhardt et al 2018). Indeed, I was very driven by my empirics. Still, the rigour in my research is presented by utilizing multiple theoretical lenses and contexts to uncover new insights and understandings of efficiency claims at the interface between the market and the state. In other words, the rigour is the quality of reasoning – "where researchers actively reason through alternative theoretical inferences and are reflective in the process while doing so" (Harley and Cornelissen 2020; 19).

My research design(s) and methods therefore attempt to better understand narratives around efficiency, how an occupational group perceives efficiency, what a moral efficiency in UK outsourcing might entail and finally, efficiency as a practice. Each approach demands different methodological approaches and, by allowing a wider variety of approaches, I was able

to balance both the need for a particular methodological approach and the need to speak to a particular theory. To summarize, article 1 takes up the methodological approaches of Andrew Brown (2004; 2002), which largely adopts a thematic sensemaking lens onto public inquiries. Through the process of coding, reflecting, discussing with others, reading and drafting iteratively, I refined my discovery of narrative features involving links between efficiency and social value and how social value narratives are shaped through disruption, ending in an understanding of how that disruption is made sense of. This sociological process enabled me to better understand and explain how narrative dynamics and assumptions change through disruption.

Inspired by the adoption of certain approaches found in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, article 2 takes up an observational (semi-ethnographic), semi-structured interview approach that entailed spending hours with train drivers. I also spent hours conducting ethnographic observations by being trained to drive a 700 Class train, which proved to be absolutely crucial in understanding this occupational group. Collecting the empirical material for this article involved attempts to understand how people and organizations “constitute and are constituted by their surroundings” (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 661). While my key construct is efficiency, I began my interviews by simply trying to understand train drivers’ “life worlds” (Suddaby, 2006; 635), the rich symbolic world that underlies their organizational lives (Kozinets, 2002) and the important experiences and perceptions that are important to them (Arsel 2017; Belk, Fischer and Kozinets 2013). Through this process, I discovered a great deal that was relevant for this thesis as well as new insights into organizational features that are not the focus of this thesis. Article 3 is a conceptual paper designed to develop a theory of moral efficiency, where efficiency demands are balanced with social value demands. This article draws on vignettes to consider moral efficiency as a process in government outsourcing, with implication for efficiency-making. Finally, article 4 adopts a similar approach to article 1 by

engaging in a thematic analysis of parliamentary inquiries, reports and media articles involving public-private scandals. By using an axial coding approach, I was able to link the qualitative data to key concepts (Allen 2017) and, through applying an iterative process, identified three loopholes that invite 5 piratic practices to engage in wrongdoing in government outsourcing.

My approaches towards the empirics involved structured questionnaires and coding software, balanced by theoretical insights and investigatory thematic analyses. My approach always balanced a structured qualitative approach with creativity (see Jarzabkowski et al 2021). Indeed, I have not simply coded my way to interesting findings (Langley, 1999) but engaged in a five-year period of iterative work, guided by structured approaches but also open enough for new discoveries (Klag and Langley, 2013; Locke et al 2020). Additionally, the scholarly practice of conference acceptances (EGOS and AoM) and presentations was a key feature of this thesis, providing additional iterations and reflection. For these reasons, this thesis has been a developmental journey (Jarzabkowski et al 2021). As I write this, a great deal of work and training remains for me as a scholar. One month before submitting my thesis I came across two papers which that would allow me to position paper 2 in a different way in relation to research on efficiency and routines in organizations. Particularly the emergence of a new methodological approach that focuses on embodiment (see Harding et al, 2021). Because methods and researchers grow and evolve, this is only the beginning of this work. For that reason, I now focus on the role of reflexivity in my research.

### Summary of the four articles

This thesis is organized around four articles which make up four distinct publishable papers that are being targeted and prepared for 4\*, world leading journals. Three of which have been accepted at world-leading conferences like the European Group for Organization Studies and the Academy of Management except for my most recent paper which I finished in January 2022. This is the second article in this thesis. A key feature of this thesis is to treat efficiency

as an essentially contested concept that is constructed by different actors and stakeholders in differing contexts. Essentially, contested concepts are value laden, internally complex, there is disagreement about the normative nature of such concepts, there is recognition that it is contested within a community but also that there can be a recognition of a “true line of descent” (Gallie 1956). In this vein, other core concepts are treated in similar ways. For example, there is disagreement among scholars about the measurability of social value (Emerson 2003), what social value entails (Cosenz, Rodrigues, & Rosati 2020) and whether social value can be reconciled with performance targets<sup>2</sup>. For example, work on sustainable business models often defers to social value as an umbrella concept that reflects a wide variety of social, political and cultural issues (Cosenz, Rodrigues, & Rosati 2020). Other studies have attempted to capture and measure social value impact (e.g. Beer & Micheli 2018; Tuan 2008; Rotheroe 2021). Social value in this thesis is treated as a concept that can be measured but can also be examined from a non-measurable pluralistic perspective detailed in stories and people’s experiences. Both approaches to social value provide unique insights to a concept that remains contest not only in scholarship but by practice<sup>3</sup>.

First, I summarize article 1 which demonstrates the importance of commensurable comparisons in government outsourcing when considering what is commensurable with efficiency. Second, I summarize article 2 which demonstrates the importance of an individual’s efficiency and how their efficiency is governed and mediated through technology and organizational designs. Third, I summarize article 3 which considers the possibility of a moral efficiency and what efficiency should be balanced with in government outsourcing. Fourth, I summarize article 4 which zooms out on efficiency in government outsourcing to consider it

---

<sup>2</sup> Cabinet Office. (2016) Social Value Act: information and resources. [online] GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-value-act-information-and-resources/social-value-act-information-and-resources>.

<sup>3</sup> Social Value UK. 2020. Global Value Exchange. Available at: <http://www.globalvaluexchange.org/>

as a practice alongside four other practices that allow firms to raid the state of public assets and convert those assets into private wealth. Finally, this thesis concludes by considering its overall purpose: its relevance for impact where I propose a framework that can help policy makers when considering efficiency-making in public procurement. Finally, I consider future research and how the agenda which comes out of this thesis will enable scholarship to move forward, rather than continue down the same path when grappling with questions of efficiency.

Article 1 is titled *Slow train coming: commensuration sense-making between efficiency and social value*. Commensuration enables organizations to justify quantitative and qualitative comparisons. A considerable amount of research on commensuration has concerned questions of efficiency. However, research has not considered when and how efficiency may be assumed commensurable with social value. Building on existing commensuration and sensemaking research, this article explores when narratives of social value are assumed commensurable with efficiency, but also when and how social value is de-commensurated from efficiency following a disruption. To explore these questions, this article presents an analysis of a controversial rail timetable disruption in the UK that led to three months of late and cancelled trains and a host of negative social outcomes for commuters. I studied a corpus of documents authored by key actors across three competing narrative stages: strategy stage, disruption stage and post-inquiry stage. The findings suggest that, through a process of disruption, social value is de-commensurated from efficiency and re-commensurated with narratives of risk. This research contributes to the commensuration literature by challenging existing narratives on efficiency and by demonstrating a process of re-commensuration. To understand re-commensuration, I also contribute a new lens I call commensuration-sensemaking that extends across all three stages. The findings highlight the importance of commensurable comparisons in government outsourcing, with implications in how social value is reconciled with competing narratives instituted by managers and organizations.

Article 1 was submitted to EGOS 2020 and was accepted. Article 2 was presented at ETHOS in June before EGOS. Work is ongoing with an aim to target Organization Studies. This paper was accepted and presented at EGOS 2020. It was also shared at an internal workshop (ishare) at Bayes Business School and was also presented at University of Bristol in January 2022. These presentations have helped me refine this research and be reflexive about the theories I engage, the methods I use, and the overall framing of my paper. This chapter is driven by my theoretical interest in commensuration – the idea of comparing qualities to a common metric as a social process (see Espeland and Stevens 1998). One of my favourite illustrations of commensuration relates to shopping online for a car insurance policy on a price comparison website, where various qualitative features of your life (including your occupation, where your car is stored, marital status, and so on) are entered. These features are then algorithmically assigned to statistical probabilities of risk which will result in the prices offered by various companies. The qualities of the individual's social existence are translated into an array of metrics and these processes entail many assumptions about our individual circumstances. It can feel that the metric (the price quoted) is not commensurable or comparable to the qualities which make up our lives (and the risks factored in to car insurance calculations accordingly). This incongruence we feel is a useful window into my curiosity about how institutions and actors assign qualities to efficiency as a feature of optimizing organizational phenomena. To examine this, I consider an efficiency strategy document for the UK rail industry which illustrates the various assumptions and beliefs about efficiency claims held by some of the key actors. I then observe how efficiency narratives shift during a disruption and the inquiry that seeks to make sense of that disruption.

Article 2 is summarized here and is entitled *Blood on the tracks: bio-efficiency and governance in an occupational group*. I examine how dynamics around efficiency demands play on the body and mind of an occupational group to deliver a service that has conflicting

efficiency objectives on the demand side and the supply side. Through ethnographic observations and by conducting semi-structured interviews with train drivers in the UK rail industry, I observe that organizational efficiency demands are perceived as important to meet, but at the same time, delivering those demands can be seen as inconsistent with the driver's perceived regulation of physical and mental energy trade-offs. What I refer to as bio-efficiency. On the supply side, I unpack the mechanisms that restrict the efficiency of this occupational group. I do this first by considering the bodily needs of train drivers followed by the impact on their minds: from sleep, restroom breaks and physical health (the body) to mental health, fatigue and attention (the mind). The interplay between these demands offers a look at how the mechanistic assumptions of efficiency demands are governed through technology, demands for safety, organizational design and the human body itself. This analysis more clearly illustrates how the demands of both the body and mind of this occupational group interact to maximize route performance and humane treatment of workers in an operational-based setting.

Article 2 was the final paper and the missing piece of the puzzle at interrogating efficiency's relationship with the social. As my most recent piece of work, its theorization could benefit from future presentations. For this reason, I submitted a short paper to EGOS 2022 on this topic as I consider this to be a crucially important article for future research that looks at the social side of efficiency-making (sadly, since writing this, the sub-theme on embodiment was cancelled this year). Research has yet to fully examine actors' perceptions of efficiency. For this reason, I focus my social lens on the occupation of train drivers to understand how they perceive efficiency and their relationship to running an efficient service. Investigating efficiency in this way helped me to better understand how efficiency is constructed and understood by this occupational group. Through the use of 45 semi-structured interviews with train drivers, directors, driver managers and engineers I was able to unpack the various demands this occupational group encounters and explicitly identify that efficiency for

this occupation is tied to the body and the mind of drivers. For this reason, efficiency measures, technology and organisational plans take account of the body and mind of train drivers, and mediate their individual efficiency – what is termed bio-efficiency. These dynamics have a very important implication. Namely, that since the social can be linked to efficiency in this way, moral considerations must be recognized. For this reason, in article 3, I consider how the moral links with efficiency in government outsourcing in the UK context.

I now summarize article 3 which is entitled, *The possibility of a moral efficiency: implications for government outsourcing and social value*. Government outsourcing has been rationalized as an efficient way of delivering public services. Public services demand unique levels of social value which can create tensions with efficiency-making. Previous research on government outsourcing has failed to capture this tension, nor has it considered a form of non-technical efficiency - moral efficiency - which is inextricably tied to social value, impacting a firm's ability to reproduce social value and, ultimately, maintain legitimacy in the long term. Drawing on the ethics literature on government outsourcing, this article presents a conceptual process model that illustrates the importance of moral efficiency, defined as the balance between efficiency demands and social value demands. By examining high-profile scandals and failures in government outsourcing, this article demonstrates how scholars can uncover taken-for-granted social values tied to efficiency, contributing a new ethical lens in public-private spaces.

Article 3 was submitted and accepted at both EGOS 2019 and AoM 2020. It was also voted the “best student paper” in my sub-theme at EGOS. This article set me on the theoretical journey of this thesis by exploring the linkage between moral imperatives and efficiency. There is a scant assemblage of work on this topic, and this inspired and challenged me to further develop the idea that there could be a moral efficiency if both efficiency demands and social value demands are considered. This article opens up new ground in a very specific context by

considering the UK context. The UK is an interesting environment to consider government outsourcing because of the Social Value Act, which seeks to maintain an optimal combination of quality and best value for the taxpayer in public procurement. Theorizing this relationship and the overall aim of wanting to achieve efficiency in government outsourcing seemed a good place for me to start understanding the claims that the market is better at delivering efficiency than the state. To consider where this claim meets moral implications for the social, I consider some empirical cases as vignettes which illustrate when moral demands are violated by attending to the demands of economic efficiency without due weight being given to social value demands. Throughout the process of working on this thesis I continually observed cases of wrongdoing in government outsourcing, leading to the final article of this thesis, which considers wrongdoing in government outsourcing. And through the research process, I unpacked a variety of practices of wrongdoing in government outsourcing – one of which happens to be cost-cutting for economic efficiency, a common practice in the cracks between the market and the state.

Finally, I summarize article 4 – the final study in this thesis - which is entitled *Piracy as Organizational Wrongdoing: from Public-Private Partnerships to Public-Private Pirates*. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have enjoyed growing support as legitimate and efficient arrangements for providing public goods and services. Nonetheless, mounting theoretical and empirical evidence challenges the positive aura surrounding such arrangements, as private entities have often demonstrated behaviors antithetical to partnerships designed to serve the public. Yet, to date, there is a dearth of empirical research that examines the forms of wrongdoing such organizational arrangements entail, leading to an under-theorization of how and why wrongdoing persists so close to the state. To address this, I take the case of the UK, and code official Parliamentary committee reports and inquiry documents concerned with PPP wrongdoing. I observe that, while the state outsources to PPPs, it also allows regulatory voids

that invites bad practices. I empirically identify five such practices that underpin PPP wrongdoings, most notably fraud. Observing persistent PPP wrongdoing led me to coin the term ‘Public-Private Pirates’ to explain unsuccessful partnerships that sustain wrongdoing and undermine public services. This empirical study contributes to the wrongdoing literature by demonstrating processes, mechanisms and structures that enable normal wrongdoing in government outsourcing. This paper was accepted and presented at EGOS 2021 and accepted to AoM 2022.

Together, these four articles open up the efficiency black box theoretically and empirically by examining the various meanings this construct represents in different contexts. Understanding efficiency is important because it often legitimizes organizations at the interface between the market and the state. This thesis shows how assumptions about what efficiency is commensurate with can breakdown during a persistent disruption and repackaged into narratives of risk. I also demonstrate how an occupational group understands efficiency for their work and how their bodies and minds are individually self-managed but also mediated by technology and organizational design. The tie-in with the social in this article clearly implicates the normative dimension of efficiency leading to a theory of what a moral efficiency would look like in government outsourcing by balancing efficiency demands and social value demands. Finally, by zooming out, this thesis shows how efficiency practices sit alongside a range of interweaving practices that lead to wrongdoing in government outsourcing. Together, these articles apply a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to uncover these important social dynamics linked with efficiency, dissolving traditional understandings and assumptions that underly this concept that is so often utilized in scholarship, by industry and by governments around the world.

# ARTICLE 1. Slow train coming: commensuration sense-making between efficiency and social value

## ABSTRACT

Commensuration enables organizations to justify quantitative and qualitative comparisons. A considerable amount of research on commensuration has concerned questions of efficiency. However, research has not considered when and how efficiency may be assumed commensurable with social value. Building on existing commensuration and sensemaking research, this article explores when *narratives* on commensuration around social value and efficiency are assumed, but also, when and how social value can be de-commensurated from efficiency following a disruption. To explore these questions, this article presents an analysis of a controversial timetable disruption in the UK rail industry that led to three months of late and cancelled trains leading to a host of negative social outcomes for commuters. I studied a corpus of documents authored by key actors across three competing narrative stages: a strategy stage, a disruption stage and a post-inquiry stage. The findings suggest that, through a process of disruption, social value is de-commensurated from efficiency and re-commensurated with narratives of risk. This research contributes to the commensuration literature by challenging existing narratives on efficiency and by demonstrating a process of re-commensuration. This analysis also highlights a narrative approach towards commensuration processes. To understand re-commensuration, I also contribute a new lens I call commensuration-sensemaking-making which involves making processual sense of comparative qualities and quantities through disruption. The findings highlight the importance of commensurable comparisons in government outsourcing, with implications in how social value is reconciled with competing narratives instituted by managers and organizations.

**Keywords:** social value, efficiency, sense-making, de-commensuration, re-commensuration, commensurable-sensemaking

## INTRODUCTION

Commensuration can be defined as an important social process whereby organizational actors identify common metrics for comparing the value of entities on underlying ‘commensurate’ qualities (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). In everyday organizational experiences involving practical reasoning and empathic identification, commensuration tends to transform these bases for judgement by stripping away qualitative contexts and relationships and representing them in more abstract, numerical terms (Espeland & Stevens, 1998).

Existing organizational and sociological research on commensurability has examined how specific constructs affect judgements of comparable meanings and values in differing contexts (Khair & Wadhvani, 2010). Much of this research has been concerned with questions of efficiency as a key measure or construct in commensuration processes (Espeland & Stevens, 1998; Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011; Quinn, 2018). To date, however, relatively little attention has been paid to how efficiency is commensurated in relation to alternative conceptions of social value, understood as outcomes that go beyond more private market-based gains toward addressing societal needs, by producing more public benefits or reducing public costs (Phills et al, 2008; Quélin et al., 2017). Some examples included in this paper are passenger’s anxieties, uncomfortable journeys due to overcrowding, their ability to get to work on time, pick kids up from school, or obtain value for money (Vfm). In this paper, I examine how commensuration takes place between narratives of social value involving more non-measurable or non-quantifiable concepts, and narratives of efficiency involving concepts

assumed to be more measurable and quantifiable (Emerson, 2003). I take this approach because there has been disagreement about what social value is and whether social value can be reconciled with performance targets (Cosenz, Rodrigues, & Rosati 2020). Nevertheless, I recognize that measuring social value or social value impact is recognized as another form of analysis scholars take. To examine this, I consider perceptions of efficiency and social value and how these perceptions are constructed in authoritative documents by key actors.

In organizations, efficiency is typically understood as an input/output ratio or comparison (Pennings & Goodman, 1977), and involves trade-offs (Mohony, 1988) that enhance or deteriorate social value. For instance, commensuration processes that standardize efficiency can fail to appreciate the social value outcomes of such efficiency-making: “[T]he impersonality of economic and bureaucratic rationality is vastly enhanced by commensuration, because it standardizes relations between disparate things and reduces the relevance of context” (Espeland & Stevens, 1998: 321). Context, however, is hugely relevant and important to making sense of a wide variety of social and organizational phenomena (e.g. Johns, 2006).

Here, I draw on theoretical insights concerning commensuration to investigate how competing narratives on efficiency and social value are assumed commensurate, but also build on and extend this idea to consider to what extent they can become ‘de-commensurated’ (where rationalization is disrupted or called into question), and ‘re-commensurated’ (redefined or recalibrated through inquiry). To achieve this, I also draw from the sensemaking literature, given its focus on several related and relevant dynamics around order versus collapse of meaning (Weick, 1993); multiple narratives (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012); post-incident inquiries (Brown, 2000; Dwyer et al., 2021); and periods of updating, learning and recovery (Christianson, 2019).

This empirical study is based on documentary analysis of a corpus of material concerning a timetable disruption in 2018 affecting the UK rail industry, resulting in public

outcry over months of catastrophic delays and harm to passengers' and employees' working lives. Key organizational stakeholders and transportation actors such as the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail (NR) and other train operating companies (TOCs) were engaged in sensemaking regarding changing constructions of the importance of efficiency and its commensurability with delivering social value for society. My research question was 'how do commensuration processes affect narratives of efficiency and social value through events that disrupt or call into question their commensurability?'

Drawing on both sensemaking and commensuration literatures, I examine how efficiency is constructed and made sense of before and after such a disruption. Across stages of disruption, I make a contribution to these literatures by theorizing an overall process of 'commensuration sensemaking', which serves to challenge and reconstruct linkages between organizational and stakeholder priorities like efficiency and social value. I also contribute by illustrating how a process of re-commensuration happens following disruption. Below I elaborate on key theoretical background within and across commensuration and sensemaking literature, before presenting my study, findings and discussion.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Commensuration and Commensurability**

What is commensurable or considered incommensurable demonstrates what is valued. As Espeland and Stevens (1998) suggest, "defining something as incommensurate is a special form of valuing" (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). In contrast, the process of commensuration seeks to compare different features of an entity to develop a common metric (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). Commensuration has examined a wide variety of settings and studies. For instance, commensuration research has examined how public measures change people's behavior by effecting peoples' expectations (Espeland & Sauder, 2007). Other studies have focused on

standardized testing in higher education (Lemann, 1999), university rankings (McDonough et al, 1998) or environmental regulations (Levin and Espeland, 2001). They emphasize a key underlying feature when considering commensuration: the relevance of non-market features in a setting. Indeed, studying universities, hospitals, and government agencies entails an emphasis on public interests and the social services they deliver.

Given that social value focuses on societal benefits and costs (Phills et al, 2008; Quélin et al., 2017) I was motivated to better understand what those benefits are assumed to be by actors. While some commensuration studies have considered moral and social issues (see Healy, 2004; Quinn, 2018 Zelizer, 1994; Zelizer and Healy, 2017) commensuration literature have not yet focused attention on social value, as a non-measurable construct. Additional considerations of efficiency have failed to account for efficiencies relationship to social value. Moreover, while research has demonstrated a process of de-commensuration (Kiviat, 2019) studies have not yet demonstrated a process where re-commensuration occurs. To consider how a process of re-commensuration may occur, I consider a narrative approach, because such narratives reveal assumptions around what is deemed to be commensurable.

### **Narrative sensemaking and post-inquiry sensemaking**

Narrative sensemaking embodies narratives that involve stories that are contested and constructed to make sense of the present, the past and the future (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). Narrative sensemaking also involves examinations of crisis, where sensemaking fails (Boudes & Laroche, 2009). Such crisis induces a sense of disorder and unreasonableness in the universe (Weick, 1993) that must be corrected. Actors collectively construct narratives that bring order on either side of a crisis (Abolafia, 2010). This co-construction involves "sedimented assumptions" and "proper" relationships that enables and constrains agreed upon narratives (Abolafia 2010; 363). These assumptions carry legitimacy but research has not yet examined commensuration assumptions in narratives through a crisis. In order to examine such

commensurable assumptions in narratives, we can turn to public documents, reports and inquiries.

Public inquiries, parliamentary committee reports and reviews are vehicles for rationalizing failure. Contained within such reports are a multiplicity of assumptions. Among those assumptions sits processes of commensuration between particular concepts. In the UK context, there are no clear definition(s) of what a public inquiry is “deriving much of their procedures, philosophical underpinnings and norms from the ‘British legal system’” (Brown, 2004). Such inquiry reports are particularly helpful in understanding the perceptions of government as their narratives are, “constructed according to the conventions of public policy” and “creating, clarifying, sustaining, and modifying” particular versions of reality (Brown, 2004; 98; Brown, 2000). Similarly, media reports rationalize the commensurability of business practices and perceptions of what is moral (Quinn, 2018). Such rationalizations have previously enabled the use of public measurements to facilitate accountability. Public measurements have thus largely relied on the reaction of people who monitor and interpret the social world around them (Espeland & Sauder, 2007). Therefore, because stories offer narratives that provide normalcy, efficiency as well as emphasize social value, scholars out to consider the relationship between efficiency and social value – especially since “the industrial world is driven by the search for efficiency” (Richards et al., 2017). By zooming in on this key feature in public documents, we can better understand the relationship between social value worldviews and efficiency, with implications for public benefits in society. Addressing this uncovers the “complex institutional mechanisms underlying the socially embedded nature of markets and value” (Khaire and Wadhvani 2010; 1298). For these reasons, a narrative sensemaking approach is adopted as it’s the most appropriate way to examine failure and enquiries into those failures.

## **Commensurability and sensemaking**

This article draws on commensuration to investigate competing narratives and actor perceptions when efficiency and social value are deemed commensurable. I also build on and extends the idea to consider to what extent they can become ‘de-commensurated’ (where rationalization is disrupted or called into question), and ‘re-commensurated’ (redefined or recalibrated through inquiry). To achieve this, I also draw on the sensemaking literature, given its focus on several related and relevant dynamics around order versus collapse of meaning (Weick, 1993); multiple narratives (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012); post-incident inquiries (Brown, 2000; Dwyer et al., 2021); and periods of updating, learning and recovery (Christianson, 2019). In general, the essence of sensemaking in organizations concerns “order, interruption, recovery” (Weick, 2006: 1731), while organizing involves acting through various means of communication and construction to hold things together (Weick, 2006). Ongoing challenges arise with sensemaking where certain surprising events, interruptions, and crises lead to breakdowns in organizing, with an associated loss of a shared sense of structure, order, and meaning (Weick, 1993). These challenges can generate situations of crisis and change (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), and prompt further sensemaking efforts to learn, update, and recover shared understandings of a situation for solving problems - correcting failing courses of action (Christianson, 2019). Narrative sensemaking involves attempts to “interweave multiple, alternative and contested narratives and stories” (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012: 64), where “narratives are the means by which we organize and make sense of our experience and evaluate our actions and intentions” (66) but also aides in developing a prospective and collective sensemaking process (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012) Where a crisis involving confusing moments of sensemaking failure has occurred, it is typically in post-crisis or post-incident inquiry reports that events are analyzed and sensemaking re-established through investigative narratives seeking to restore meaning about events, causes, foreseeability, and

responsibility (Boudes & Laroche, 2009). Sensemaking involves actors constructing shared narratives that seek to identify relevant cues from complex and ambiguous environments and integrate them into plausible and coherent interpretations of events and actions (Abolafia 2010). Existing research has not yet examined the role of commensuration assumptions and processes in shaping narrative sensemaking through a crisis, but commensuration is likely to be important because of the emphasis on comparisons common to both sensemaking and commensuration. It is therefore important to understand how commensuration and sensemaking interact. This is likely to occur where organizational actors are trying to sort through multiple competing narratives to select and compare attributes or concepts that are difficult to compare but potentially relevant to changing conditions; as well as being contested stakeholder priorities that are called into question by a crisis - demanding a restoration of order (Abolafia, 2010; Grossberg, 2010; Weick, 1993). As well as through organizational talk and conversation, the texts of public inquiries and associated regulatory committee reports and reviews are vehicles for rationalizing and addressing disruptions and surprising incidents through processes of sensemaking and commensuration (Brown, 2000, 2004). Public inquiries are typically defined and organized by relevant governmental and legal procedures, principles and norms (Brown, 2004). The reports produced are particularly helpful for understanding influential narrative constructions and commitments to versions of reality concerning salient events of public and organizational interest (Brown, 2000, 2004). Such inquiries and public reports also build narratives that make sense of and reconcile relative judgements of what ought to be perceived normal, moral and efficient in areas of organizational life, business practices, and organizational functioning (Herman 2002; Quinn, 2018). The rationalizations and meanings in sensemaking narratives arising from public post-incident inquiries inform public assessments and measurements of value and accountability, as well as generating recommendations and changes, which feed into further sensemaking as stakeholders monitor

and (re)interpret the social world around them (Dwyer et al., 2021; Espeland & Sauder, 2007). To the extent that sensemaking narratives restore order by providing a coherent sense of what constitutes social, economic, and moral value, commensuration involves finding ways to compare and legitimate sources of order across multiple co-existing and competing principles and worldviews, such as industrial efficiency and social or environmental value (e.g. Richards et al., 2017). In sum, public documents contain sensemaking narratives and post-incident inquiries that can help us understand commensuration processes between social value and efficiency worldviews, as embedded in markets and rational or normative managerial discourse (Barley & Kunda, 1992; Khaire & Wadhvani 2010). To further discuss how commensuration and sensemaking interact we can look to the similarities of in contexts and settings explored.

Commensurations focus on public measures (Espeland & Sauder, 2007), higher education (Lemann, 1999), university rankings (McDonough et al, 1998) or environmental regulations (Levin and Espeland, 2001) naturally lending itself to the setting of the UK rail industry. When public interests are at stake, the state has proved to be a key actor in commensuration research as the role of the state “can be central to catalyzing homogenization and commensuration” (Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011). As Huault and Rainelli-Weiss (2011) hypothesize, particular historical conditions (Cronon, 1991; Quinn, 2018) or interventions by the state (Carruthers & Stinchcombe, 1991; Porter, 1996) enable processes of commensuration to be successful.

The reason the state has played a central role in commensuration research has been its state-like responsibilities tied to what is moral, social and in the public interest. Moreover, commensuration issues stem from “irreconcilable moral or cognitive world views” (Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011). Such moral worldviews are important in understanding how markets are constructed (see Lounsbury and Hirsch 2010). Thus incommensurability is often due to moral (Quinn, 2018) and cultural (Porter, 1996) hurdles. For instance, the process of

commensuration has been considered by transaction dynamics (Carruthers & Stinchcombe, 1991) in markets but as previous research has examined, moral considerations in markets fall by the wayside as transactions are, “stripped down to numbered accounts” (Quinn, 2018). For example, Quinn (2018) highlights how life insurance may not be considered commensurable to a life by certain groups and therefore deemed incommensurable. Such impersonal trends in markets have given rise to moral conflicts in commensuration research, resulting in calls for more accountability. Indeed, commensuration has reinforced stakeholders’ need for accountability resulting in an increase of emphasis on public measures (Espeland & Sauder, 2007) emphasizing the need for a more narrative driven approach towards public accountability.

Huault and Rainelli-Weiss (2011) suggests commensuration research has produced few empirically documented cases and this research examines an empirically documented failure and the narratives around that failure. Indeed, focusing on failure proves to be fertile ground for commensuration theory as focusing on commensuration failure has had “widespread” and “varied success” in contributing to research (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). Focusing on failure also places an emphasis on what is found to be incommensurable within such failures and is a central feature of post-inquiry sensemaking where sensemaking is used as a lens for analysis (Brown, 2000, 2004; Dwyer et al., 2020). However, these studies do not consider the important social and processual dynamics involved with commensuration despite both approaches being highly complementary. For this reason, I focus on some key features that are shared by both sensemaking and commensuration. First, both sensemaking and commensuration are about social processes (Espeland & Stevens, 1998; Weick, 1993) which lends itself well to the temporality involved in post-inquiry sense-making. As Dwyer et al (2021) point out, sensemaking has concerned situations that give rise to equivocality (Weick, 1990; Dwyer et al., 2020), interrupting key actors activities, leading to sensemaking that enables them to

resume those activities (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Indeed, sensemaking provides a useful way of understanding how actors order narratives or practices but also how disruption and recovery are made sense of (Weick, 2006). I consider commensuration to contribute to these stages as actors actively compare qualities with quantities - the key activity involved in commensuration.

Understanding processes of sensemaking that involve judgments of what is deemed to be commensurable is important because it shows what is also valued. For example, if social value is deemed commensurate with efficiency, then efficiency is assumed to be linked and should also value social value outcomes. For these reasons, I contribute to both sensemaking and commensuration literatures by marrying up the stages of a disruption using these two lenses. I do this in the following way: this study involves three key stages. Stage one involves “efforts to create order” (Weick, 1993) where efficiency and social value are assumed as commensurable. Stage two is a disruption that leads to crisis providing a “particularly powerful occasions for sensemaking” (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) and an occasion to observe a process of de-commensuration. Stage three leads to a period of sensemaking that involves updating, learning and recovery (Christianson et al, 2009) where a process of re-commensuration occurs. Through these stages I introduce the conceptual groundwork for a theory of commensuration-sensemaking as each stage details familiar dynamics in both literatures. To do this I examine and compare narratives of efficiency and social value. I explore how efficiency is made-sense-of and commensurated with social value in a period of ordering. Through disruption I observe whether actors’ perceptions and practices consider efficiency and social value as commensurate and finally how those concepts are considered in the commensurable sense-making stage. In the next section, I transparently lay out the three core documents that make up the empirical material for my study (see data table 1 below). I justify why the empirical material is the best context to engage my research question, followed by details of my methodological choices and

methods. After the data and methodology section, the empirical cases are laid out in succession.

I then discuss all three stages, theoretical contributions and implications.

| Timelines |         | Type of stage    | Empirical material                                                                            | Type of source                                | Text analysis                                                                                                                |
|-----------|---------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2017      | Stage 1 | Strategy stage   | <b>Department of Transportation:</b><br>Transport<br>Infrastructure<br>Efficiency Strategy    | Government<br>department strategy<br>document | Key word count in the corpus: transport (137); button (101); cost (100); projects (94); infrastructure (92); efficiency (80) |
|           | Stage 2 | Disruption stage | <b>Media Reports and observations</b>                                                         | Media reports and stakeholder interviews      | 100 media articles were analyzed                                                                                             |
| 2018      | Stage 3 | Inquiry stage    | <b>Office of Rail and Road:</b> Independent Inquiry into the timetable disruption in May 2018 | Independent Government Regulator              | Key word count in the corpus: rail (279); timetable (271); network (259); industry (241); programmes (188); efficiency (6)   |

*Table 1.1: Empirical material analyzed in this study*

## SETTING AND METHOD

Through the use of a qualitative study of the UK train network before, during and after a failure to deliver a new train timetable, I examine narratives linked with efficiency and social value. The key actors involved in my study are the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail (NR), Network Rail System Operator (SO), Train operating companies (TOC), employees and passengers. Motivations for using the core documents by these authoritative actors is driven by my research question around efficiency's commensurability with social value: can social value be de-commensurated from efficiency through disruption; and, if so, is social value re-commensurated elsewhere? This directed me to search for a coherent place to understand the efficiency perspectives of authoritative actors. This search identified the Transport Infrastructure Efficiency Strategy (TIES) - the first piece of empirical corpus of materials

analyzed in this study. Rather than asking organizational actors about efficiency, I decided to first understand the organizational perspective by unpacking assumptions around efficiency beliefs in a strategy document around efficiency. This approach joins commensuration research that also utilized documentary sources (Espeland and Sauder 2007; Kiviat 2018). The TIES document provides an understanding of how efficiency narratives are constructed and strategized by key actors (NR and DfT). This was published in 2017. NR system operator mandated the timetable change for the ToCs for May 2018 which led to three months of cancellations and delays which led to a failure to deliver the timetable., I then turned to a post-inquiry commissioned to make sense of this disruption.

I analyzed the material through concepts (e.g. efficiency and social value) which form the basic units of analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I identified codes that pay particular attention to how narratives around these concepts were compared and assumed commensurate (see table of examples). Using the software NVivo 12, an axial coding approach to the qualitative data to link (relate) key concepts was used (Allen, 2018). This approach is motivated by research that highlights the importance of associating existing categories to build support for new categories (Etzion & Ferraro 2010; Bingham & Kahl, 2013). This method produced 32 nodes that led to additional iterations to refine the conceptual boundaries of the three constructs and their commensurability (see Annex 1). Examples of the themes (codes) that emerged were “efficiency beliefs”, “efficiency outcomes”, “efficiency standards”, “social value”, or “passenger experience”. The material was read and re-read to refine the codes. The empirical material was collected over a period of two years. I detail each core document for full transparency: as already mentioned, the first is the DfT’s, NR’s and the ToCs own Transport Infrastructure Efficiency Strategy, (stage 1), media reports and observation (stage 2) and Office for Rail and Road’s (ORR) inquiry into the timetable disruption (stage 3; see data table 1 in appendix for each document).

The TIES strategy document outlines two important features of the UK's rail system: (1) the key organizations involved in its operations, maintenance, involvement in the timetable changes and (2) the organizations' beliefs about efficiency as documented in their efficiency strategy. The empirical material for stage 2 consists of daily observations of the timetable disruption which does not make its way into the analysis but built considerable understanding and awareness of the case. What is analyzed in stage 2 are daily media articles (both national and regional outlets) over the period of May 2018 - September 2018. News articles were pulled from Factiva using key words "timetable" or "trains" and 100 articles were selected from a wide variety of media sources to run a content analysis of the timetable disruption (see table 2). I selected both regional, national and international outlets to enable a wider grasp of how the disruption stage was perceived. Additional care was taken to consider the political bias of outlets and to scan and select a wide variety of outlets from across the political spectrum. The variety is deemed wide enough to avoid editorial bias by particular news outlets and does not favor any particular sources. The media coverage reflects this crisis and prominent narratives of key actors (e.g. the ToCs, NR, DfT and passengers). For the disruption, I analyzed how media narratives evolved as media articles are a good source of data in understanding business events (Qian et al 2019). In research, news articles can help us understand sentiments (Schumaker 2012) and help scholars to better understand public discourses (Dijk 1988). Indeed, media outlets can be used as data that exemplifies outlets of public discussion and "regarded as primary sites of the legitimacy struggles" (Joutsenvirta & Vaara 2015; 746) and can also enable scholars to follow disruptive conflicts (Ehrnström-Fuentes 2015). Stage two exemplifies instances of sense-making of the timetable disruption which demonstrates a break from commensurating efficiency with social value. Following the disruption, stakeholder and the government called on an independent review of the disruption. This naturally led us to examine the how this disruption was made sense of, comprising the final stage of my study and

analysis. This final stage involves the ORR's inquiry into the timetable changes. Such reports "straddle boundaries between the state and civil society" (Rodger, 1985; 426). These three documents then make the core of the empirical corpus designed to analyze how actors perceive efficiency.

All of the publicly available material – TIES and the ORR Inquiry into the timetable disruption - are key sources of empirical material because they make efficiency claims. Efficiency claims in public reports have been considered by previous research. For instance, Bourdes and Laroche's (2003) study confirmed that 9 reports concluded that public authorities were efficient in restoring the health service to normal levels following the 2003 August heat wave which led to the deaths of 14,800 people. Public inquiries also help scholars to understand the subjectively constructed perspective of key actors: they cannot be objective, as some facts are chosen and others discarded in the process of building a narrative (Brown, 2004). Still, a public inquiry can convey a "feeling of impartiality because it gives the impression of sticking to the facts" (Bourdes and Laroche, 2009). Moreover, inquiry reports are key in understanding the perceptions and narratives of government as they are, "constructed according to the conventions of public policy discourse" and "creating, clarifying, sustaining, and modifying this particular version of reality" (Brown, 2004: 98). Bearing this in mind, analyzing the empirical material in this way followed a strong backbone of research that seeks to understand narratives that make sense of a crisis of some sort (Brown 2004; Bourdes & Laroche, 2009; Dwyer, Hardy & Maguire, S. 2021). These reports have also been chosen as they play a crucial role in the sense-making of what is meant by efficiency before and after a disruption. Such assertions are made as policy expectations alongside strategic aims (stage 1), the disruption (stage 2) and how that disruption is perceived by key actors (stage 3). I therefore code the uses of efficiency and social value throughout the empirical material, which proves to be a useful occasion to consider the commensurability between varying beliefs, perceptions and

understandings of efficiency. The coding processes were conducted over an intensive three-month period, followed by presentations at a research center, a world leading academic conference and workshop to refine the preliminary findings. There then followed a more in-depth analysis of the media material for stage 2, as well as a re-read and coding of the core documents for each stage. As the text was re-read, greater attention to selecting and discarding material was refined into the existing analysis. Such analysis does not obtain a single method approach, merely different templates that are “heavily dependent on craft skills and tacit knowledge” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; 175). Therefore, I draw particular attention to the methods employed by Brown (2000; 2004) who also analyzed public documents in a similar fashion, working under the assumption that narratives embed authorial interpretations in texts, reflecting particular institutional and ideological circumstances (see Brown 2000; 2004; Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Culler, 1982). The next section details the deconstruction of the empirical material through all three empirical stages showing how the narratives shift and change through each stage with particular attention to what is assumed commensurable. Then there is a discussion about the theoretical contribution and implications of this work for managers, society and government.

## EMPIRICAL STAGES AND FINDINGS

### **Ordering efficiency and social value through commensuration**

**Stage One: strategizing efficiency.** Stage one is analyzed as a strategy formulation stage. In 2017, the UK government’s DfT set out its Transportation Infrastructure Efficiency Strategy (TIES). This document lays out a wide array of efficiency beliefs by key actors in the UK rail network (i.e. DfT and NR). Among these beliefs is the idea that efficiency is key to delivering social value. The then-Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, establishes a strong

relationship between social value and efficiency in his first two sentences by emphasizing the benefits to transport users.

*My goal as Transport Secretary is to see the Department for Transport and its arm's length bodies put transport users at the forefront of their operations. If we are to succeed, we must pursue efficiency – making sure that transport users get the best possible return on every pound we spend on our transport networks* (DfT 2017: 4)

The TIES encompasses seven core strategic aims intended to deliver efficiency, including one to “*maximize value and prevent inefficiency throughout delivery*” (DfT 2017: 27). To maximize value, non-market benefits associated with social value are assumed as linked with efficiency as an idea and practice. There are many efficiencies considered in this stage. For example, the efficient delivery of projects that is “faster and cheaper” than the original business case. Others include trade-offs between the selling of train paths to private franchises and public enhancements to the rail infrastructure by NR which serves both passengers and ToCs. Financial efficiency plays a prominent role. For example, NR’s £3.5bn “efficiency target” involves improvements to train performance (£150m), operational and maintenance improvements (£125m), renewals deferrals (£500m) and other related business plans designed to deliver social value for passengers and the taxpayer. Still, such social values are not always in harmony. A clear tension emerges in the following aim: “*whilst standards must address our core statutory, regulatory and performance requirements, they should not stifle innovation or efficiency*” (DfT 2017: 8). Such tensions are key features of the analysis and reveal implicit and explicit relationships - where efficiency denotes a wide variety of meanings and beliefs that get bundled alongside social values like attending to passenger needs. Such propositions were coded as efficiency beliefs which also entail beliefs about inefficiency. Such beliefs drive the narratives of the TIES providing unique insight into commensuration beliefs of key actors.

In the TIES, efficiency continues to be linked with social value related propositions, serving the overall motivations for the strategy as a whole - to provide optimized partnerships and services for users and taxpayers. These motivations reveal social value codes that interweave with other key concepts. For example, by emphasizing social values in certain ways, the strategy appeals to different audiences: the state, regulators, the public and the market. The TIES builds confidence with its core audiences by promoting a link between efficiency and the subsequent social value it produces through exemplars. These exemplars are characterized around narratives of ‘value for money’ (VfM) for government or the taxpayer, social value for passengers (their lives generally), the valuing of standards, innovation or productivity which also entail by-products of both VfM and social value for passengers. The first social value narrative, VfM is important for government as the rationale for competitive tendering is viewed as providing better VfM for government and the taxpayer.

*Efficiency is key to ensuring Value for Money for taxpayers and being able to describe how we are delivering efficiencies provides confidence to the public and Government that our costs are under control and that our investments will keep pace with what passengers and transport users want (DfT 2017: 12)*

Such links to efficiency are emblematic of how social value is deemed commensurable. This relationship serves “what passengers and transport users want” (DfT 2017: 12) because of the impact it has on social value outcomes like getting to work on time, picking up kids from school or planning a social evening out. These particular social values for passengers serve to capture the core audience in VfM narratives by appealing to the public, both as taxpayers but also passengers. However, alone these social values cannot be achieved without other key social values. In order to achieve VfM and social value for passengers, it is necessary to consider a range of key features of these public private partnerships: standards, innovation and productivity.

Standards are viewed as “*an agreed, repeatable way of doing business*” (DfT 2017: 56). This agreed and repeated way of doing business serves to provide confidence for key stakeholders that the temptations of market mechanisms do not override the public nature of transportation services and the social value such services provide. Standards help transportation bodies adhere to their sector wide and individual statutory, regulatory and performance requirements. Standards also serve to promote issues of safety for passengers and employees. Such safety standards are a social value in their right but also enable other social value outcomes because without them, passengers could incur serious costs. Standards thus enable risk management in the operation of transport. Appealing to standards also serves the interests of the public, as well as regulatory actors. By maintaining good standards, actors are considered to be strategically efficient.

Innovation is assumed to be an important driver of efficiency with an outcome of higher productivity leading to positive outcomes. Innovation is thus a social value. Public bodies like the DfT often appeal to key market mechanisms like innovation or productivity because they are seen to enable more efficient public services for passengers. Increasing innovation is viewed as a key objective for the Government’s Industrial Strategy (DfT 2017), and innovations, whether through technology, ways of investing, or other routes, are viewed as a desirable feature in public services. Innovation is both a social value and enables social value outcomes and collaboration across partners. The implicit hope in this narrative is that a balance can be struck between VfM, passengers, standards, innovation and productivity but that all are key to delivering efficiency while attending to social values. This balance serves to illustrate the demands of being efficient for four key audiences: the state, regulators, the market, and the public.

The strategy formulation stage involves sensemaking that acknowledges the social values of stakeholders, but insists that efficiency must be achieved to meet those social values.

In other words, efficiency and social value are assumed commensurable. You cannot achieve one without attending to the other. These narratives assume there must be a balance struck. The next section highlights stage two, which serves to illustrate how disruption resulted in a period of prolonged inefficiency, de-commensurating efficiency with social value.

### **De-commensurating efficiency and social value through crisis**

**Stage Two: the 2018 timetable disruption.** Stage two follows on from the publication of the TIES which makes sense and orders a commensurable relationship between efficiency and social value. Stage two involves a breakdown of these commensurables. In the spring of 2018, GTR and NR Services announced forthcoming changes to their regular timetable imposed by NR's System Operator (SO). A campaign by the ToCs was launched in preparation, notifying users of the impending changes. When the timetable changes were due to be implemented, a national disruption resulted in, "mass train cancellations and no information about why services were not running" (Brignall, 2018). Delays and cancellations were a regular feature of the railway system from May 2018 to July 2018, with negative impacts on train service employees and passengers stating that the continual delays and cancellations of trains daily affected their job, their health and social lives (Kollewe, 2019), incurring "serious financial consequences" (Cook, 2018). It was largely viewed as a scandal on grand proportions for individuals and the economy at large. Losing taken for granted social values such as getting to work or home on time compounded, incurring serious social costs for both employees of the ToCs and even more so for passengers. This is what could be considered, poor social value outcomes that deter societal needs by producing poor benefits and incurring costs<sup>4</sup>. The costs

---

<sup>4</sup> This is emblematic of my definition of social value that goes beyond private gains of the market to address societal needs by producing benefits or reducing costs (Phills, Deiglmeier and Miller, 2008; Quélin, Kivleniece and Lazzarini, 2017)

were so high, an independent review was commissioned by the government to review the timetable disruption which is explored in stage 3.

As the disruption progressed, passengers began regularly posting pictures on social media about the disruption to their lives. By reading and analyzing 100 media articles between May 20, 2018 - September 30, 2018, we can see how narratives about efficiency begin in relation to the timetable change but the efficiency code is largely absent in stage two as efficiency literally disappears from the rail network. First, the timetable changes are rationalized along the lines of making the rail service more efficient for passengers. For example, the purpose of the timetable change was to “optimize capacity” for passengers (Oxford Mail, 2018). Once the disruption began, narratives shifted emphasizing the social value impact on passengers (Brighton and Hove Independent, 2018) without any reference to optimizing or providing efficiency. This juncture isn’t where efficiency is de-commensurated from social value but where the breakdown begins. This break can be observed most acutely in calls for accountability by renationalizing the railway as taxpayers and media articles consider government’s investment in the transportation service as a public good, rather than a private gain - emphasizing the dominance of social value dynamics over profit driven ones. This prompted many calls to nationalize the UK’s train service (O’Connell, 2018).

In stage two, media narratives were observed as first presenting the “chaos” of the disruption - highlighting the impact on passengers and the explanations provided by rail franchises. At this point the disruption was considered a crisis for passengers, DfT, NR and the ToCs. There was an inability to capture a narrative that made adequate sense of the disruptions. Confusion persisted for passengers and rail employees alike. This crisis was also a breakdown in sensemaking for key actors as reasons for delays were opaque, continuous and the rationales for cancellations were often absent. This first stage of the crisis led to a second period of “apologies” by public organizations and rail franchises in the months that followed. The delays

continued and ToCs attempted to mitigate confusion with better announcements or explanations in the media, however, confusion persisted for months. The shift from crisis to apologies led to a third theme of finger pointing with attempts by actors to skirt responsibility eventually leading to calls for greater accountability leading to a public enquiry that is analyzed in stage three. In each phase, we can observe passengers as the key unit of analysis between actors, emphasizing the negative social value impact on people's lives which eventually led to a societal re-evaluation of the crisis but also to a review of the entire rail industry. To summarize, media narratives recognized that the timetable was intended to improve "efficiency" or "optimize capacity" for passengers but tended more to focus on the social value fallout of passengers and the public more widely. It is at this juncture where efficiency and social become de-commensurated.

| Disruption themes           | Representative illustration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | News Outlet            |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Presenting the chaos</b> | "Commuters faced disruption during Monday morning's rush-hour as trains were cancelled amid the largest timetable change across Britain for decades."                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Lancashire Post</b> |
|                             | "Rail operator Govia Thameslink Railway introduced the changes on Sunday (May 20) as part of plans to improve reliability and boost capacity across the network. However on Sunday a number of Thameslink services were cancelled for operational reasons, while this morning passengers have reported cancellations, delays and overcrowding on Southern trains." | <b>OSussex World</b>   |
|                             | "While not everyone has experienced cancellations this morning, many woke up to the news that their usual commutes would be more complicated than usual thanks to GTR choosing to streamline services by removing some of the stops."                                                                                                                              | <b>The Guardian</b>    |

|                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Apologies for the chaos</b>                      | "The idea of the shake up is to improve efficiency and thus increase capacity, creating much needed space for an extra 50,000 passengers at peak times. That's laudable given the way some services pack 'em in like sardines. But of course, what has been produced is less a brave new world in which people can get to work without screaming than it is the same old song." | <b>The Independent</b>               |
|                                                     | "Despite some cancellations, passengers will benefit from an overall increase in capacity with immediate effect. We apologise to customers for any inconvenience caused"                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>The Daily Mail</b>                |
|                                                     | "The number of services we operate will begin to increase from August as we review our interim timetable period. We're truly sorry for what happened to customers."                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Knutsford Guardian</b>            |
|                                                     | "It has been a difficult morning for some of our customers, in particular on a number of routes around north Manchester extending up to Blackpool, and we are very sorry for the delays and cancellations they have experienced."                                                                                                                                               | <b>The Evening Standard</b>          |
| <b>Finger pointing and calls for accountability</b> | "We apologise to customers for any inconvenience caused during the initial stages of the timetable change. The improvements we are making will lead to a significant boost in capacity with a 135 increase in services across the GTR network immediately."                                                                                                                     | <b>Lancashire Post</b>               |
|                                                     | "Network Rail and the Department of Transport should be scrutinised as part of a review into the current train chaos, say Hertfordshire County Council."                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Borehamwood Times</b>             |
|                                                     | "Why were there Northern Rail and GTR cancellations and delays this summer? Who's to blame?"                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>The Evening Standard</b>          |
|                                                     | "Nobody took charge' in the rail industry to avoid the chaos caused by the introduction of new train timetables in May, according to the industry regulator."                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Brighton and Hove Independent</b> |

"The "most significant" review of Britain's railways since privatisation has been launched. Here is all you need to know about the timetable fiasco and what the sweeping review will cover"

**Chester Standard**

*Table 1.2: Media narratives during the disruption stage*

The literal breakdown of efficiency for passengers and the ToCs, alongside justifications that the timetable would bring a more efficient service shows the important link between efficiency and the service for passengers. As the rail disruption compounded over months, passengers began to distrust the service which began producing persistent anxiety for commuters. When some forms of efficiency returned to the service in the form of fewer cancellations and delays, and timetable reliability was restored, social value perceptions continued to be negatively impacted and was deemed no longer commensurable by stakeholders. It is at this point when efficiency and social value are decommensurated. For example, the mental health of passengers was reported as being deeply impacted by the disruption. For example, this commuter's anxiety was normalized as trust in the service eroded, impacting her wellbeing beyond the disruption (see Botherton, 2019). Another indicator of this de-commensuration is a satisfaction survey which followed in a government wide review of the rail industry (See Williams Rail Review The rail sector in numbers, 2019). As social value deteriorated for passengers over the course of three months, authoritative actors were forced to act, with calls for an enquiry which comprises stage three – the post inquiry stage.

Stage three analyzes how the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) which is an independent regulator acts on behalf of rail users, government and taxpayers in order to make sense of the disruption through a public inquiry. Inquiry's act as a way to understand the perceptions of actors and how those perceptions are constructed by narratives through a processes of creating, clarifying, sustaining, and modifying particular versions of reality (Brown, 2004: 98) The ORR

who is an “independent statutory body, with powers vested by Parliament” (ORR website) was asked by the Secretary of State for Transport to provide advice on the causes of the timetable disruption. My findings so far suggest that a period of ordering efficiency occurred in stage one. In stage two, this ordering deteriorated as a moment of crisis ensued. Stage three examines this sense-making stage by analyzing efficiency linked narratives that act in the same way as the efficiency narratives in stage one but are linked with narratives of risk. Through the disruption stage (stage 2), efficiency narratives were repackaged as narratives of risk. Through this repackaging, social value is re-commensurated with narratives of risk.

### **Re-commensurating social value through recovery**

**Stage three: the post-inquiry stage.** The UK government commissioned an inquiry (published in December 2018) into the, “failures in May 2018 to deliver a satisfactory timetable in two parts of the country” (ORR 2018, 5). For this I turn to a public inquiry on the timetable disruption which follows a line of established sense-making research (e.g. Brown, 2004; Gephart, 1993). This inquiry comprises the third stage which sought to make sense of that disruption, with a particular emphasis on user experience that would inform policy makers. Like other inquiries, such inquiries are key in understanding the perceptions of government and regulators (Brown, 2004). Still, as previous research has identified, such reports are part invention and not necessarily a process of discovery (Watson, 1995). The analysis of the texts thus far naturally leads to the final sense-making stage where I can observe how social actors re-order meaning by “reinterpreting historical constructs in ways that enhance” commensurability - developing into processes of valuation and comparison (Khaire and Wadhvani, 2010). To summarize thus far, stage one involved “efforts to create order” (Weick, 1993; 635) where efficiency and social value are assumed as commensurable. Stage two involves disruption or interruption that led to a crisis. As previous research suggests such crises

provides a “particularly powerful occasions for sensemaking” (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; 552).

### ***Post-disruption re-commensuration and recovery as sensemaking***

Hindsight often allows for crucial insight into whether an organization provides efficiency. I began by assuming the meanings of efficiency would change due to the nature of examining something ex post. While the ORR inquiry does recognize a lack of efficiency it is not *explicitly* understood as being a key driver or important in understanding disruption. As a code, efficiency lies *implicitly* underneath the text which drives the natural progression of this analysis. A good example are excerpts that recognize a lack of efficiency but reassert the problem as being one of mitigating such disruptions in the future. For instance, Network Rail’s System Operator (SO) was charged with delivering and negotiating a timetable offer with train franchises, like Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). These offers are amended through an iterative process between key actors. The final timetable offer was received on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 which

*“left a much shorter time (six weeks) than normal in which to carry out the necessary planning activities to ensure that the diagram workload could be efficiently aligned with the available driver resource”* (ORR Inquiry 2018; 132).

The lack of time meant that GTR was unable to optimize the number of trained drivers for the timetable changes. Assertions such as this serve to not only highlight the missed opportunity for efficiency but also illustrate the lack of efficiency of offering a timetable without enough time to respond. However, the lack of efficiency, on the part of the SO, is understood as failing to recognize the risks.

*“In hindsight the only way in which these risks could have been avoided was for the advice on the replanning of phasing to have been sought earlier. The commissioning of*

*this advice by DfT was not triggered until after the creation of the IRB in January 2017. This suggests that a more complete approach to understanding and managing system integration and risks would have been desirable at an earlier stage in the Thameslink Programme, as explored further later in this report.” (ORR Inquiry; 139).*

This excerpt is demonstrative of how this lack of efficiency is understood in the sense-making stage by repackaging it as risk. The risk narrative attempts to make sense of actors understanding of what results from inefficient operations (example: optimum number of trained drivers, train stock availability, timing of timetable delivery and more). Such risks result from inefficient rostering, timetabling, number of trained drivers and many other optimizations that are crucial for a well-run service. These risk narratives tend to take on two different forms of meanings: (a) risks are considered as any foreseeable danger in the future for costs, passengers, government and so on. These risks are either managed by the responsible party or parties. For example, much of the 2018 timetable changes narrative focuses on the dangers of disruption which key actors failed to anticipate.

*“In the approach to May 2018, ORR identified some but not all of the systemic risks that contributed to the timetable disruption.” (ORR Inquiry 2018; 169).*

In contrast, narratives about risk in the inquiry also act as (b) a signifier for efficiency or inefficiency rather than foreseeable dangers. This appears to take a natural turn as inefficiency has already taken place and making sense of inefficiency takes on a narrative about disruption and mitigating future disruptions that could have taken place to avoid those inefficiencies in first place. Often times, efficiency or inefficiency could be interchangeable in meaning with the word risk as the efficiency code in narratives in stage one mirrors those of the risk code in stage three. In addition, the social value code interweaves with both efficiency narratives in

stage one and risk narratives in stage three. For this reason, de-risking is about being efficient whereas risk can be understood as inefficient activity (see ORR inquiry 2018; 136).

The risk narrative also emphasizes social value for passengers in the same way efficiency does in stage one. Like efficiency in stage one, risk is about recognizing the need to protect key stakeholders' social value. For instance, the inquiry explicitly references the risks to passengers that resulted from the late timetable offer by the SO (ORR inquiry 2018; 24, 178). Even more so, it also implicitly references risks to passengers by examining both the experience and impact of the timetable changes on passengers' lives. For instance, the inquiry found that GTR failed to adequately plan and train the optimum number of train drivers needed for the timetable changes, resulting in there not being enough drivers leading to cancellations and delays. Failing to have the optimum number of train drivers meant that *"passengers were denied the opportunity to plan and make informed decisions about their journey"* and *"that GTR did not adequately understand the magnitude of the driver resource risk issue"* with poor social value outcomes for passengers (ORR Inquiry; 153). The divergence of linking passengers' social value with risk instead of efficiency continues to designate the efficiency code as less distinguishable which serves to further decouple social value with efficiency in the way it is understood in stage one. This decoupling happens through a process of interweaving narratives that focus on capabilities, communication, reliability and resilience. Each of narrative code assumes social value as commensurate with risk mitigation in these four spheres.

For example, narratives on capabilities in the sense-making stage are about recognizing the available resources of key actors. Actors can best understand risks by ensuring that they are adequately resourced and therefore capable of responding to prospective disruptions. This can be done explicitly as the ORR blames a lack in capabilities as contributing to the timetable disruption. For example,

*“in terms of capability, the SO’s Train Planning System is not used to full functionality and corresponding systems used by the industry are not fully integrated” (ORR Inquiry 2018; 103).*

This explicitly points to the failure to recognize these capability risks which can lead to disruption. While explicitly observed in the inquiry, capability narratives are implicit about whether an actor had enough time, workers, or routes of communication to adequately respond to disruption.

*“The scale and complexity of the May 2018 timetable changes exceeded the resources of the System Operator (SO) available to prepare the timetable. As set out in Part B, the Inquiry has found that the SO was in a position to identify and mitigate this risk by taking better account of the problems with the development of the Northern infrastructure schemes.” (ORR Inquiry 2018; 163).*

By appealing to the lack of resources, the inquiry suggests that the SO could have been able to manage potential risks that could result from the timetable changes. While capabilities are not mentioned explicitly, they are implicit and were coded accordingly. Such codes are a key feature of risk mitigation in the sense-making stage. Moreover, these narratives prove to show the inefficiencies of actors - in this case the SO - by showing that the structural makeup of actors may not allow or enable the resources needed to prepare or respond to disruption. As with other risk narratives, not mentioning efficiency is again natural, as inefficiency has already taken place on the part of key actors.

While capabilities emphasize resources of key actors, the narrative can interweave with other narratives related to communication, reliability and resilience. For example, the SO failed to communicate a timetable offer early enough to GTR. The late communication on the part of the SO,

*“left just six weeks for GTR to optimize and roster staff to deliver the new passenger timetable. A period of 12 weeks (T –12) is normally allowed for this.”* (ORR Inquiry 2018: 142).

The inability of GTR to optimize and roster staff was deemed by the inquiry as both a product of what GTR was capable of, due to the late communication of the SO. This shows how the interweaving between underlying themes of risk occurs, but communication as a risk narrative also played a central role in the sense-making stage.

While the SO was blamed for not sharing the timetable offer efficiently with train operating companies (TOCs) the TOCs were also blamed for failing to provide the right kind of communication to passengers. The inquiry, found that GTR’s communication to passengers during the timetable changes was “inadequate” and the methods used provided no information, inaccurate information or helpful information which meant that, *“passengers were unable to plan and make their journeys with any certainty”* (ORR Inquiry 2018:155). This meant that certain social values could not be met by the TOCs. For example, passengers were *“denied the opportunity to plan and make informed decisions about their journey”* which allows them to get to work on time, home in enough time to pick children up from school and other socially important activities (ORR Inquiry 2018:153). The inquiry suggested, this lack of communication was due to not understanding the potential risks involved in failing to provide accurate or helpful information.

Miscommunication and misinformation were common features of the timetable change. Passengers who were interviewed in the inquiry continually cited the poor communication of the TOCs. In many instances, TOC employees began to use the national rail website to relay updates on late or cancelled trains. This inefficient form of information gathering, and communication often meant that employees and passengers alike had very little understanding

of the ongoing disruption. The social value fall-out of which was highly negative; passengers failed to get to work on time, were late for meetings, late to pick up children from school as well as psychological stress, financial costs and undue anxiety. Here we can overlay the objective of stage one - to safeguard these values through efficiency. However, in stage three, the social value fallout is linked with failing to recognize the risks and effectively communicate with key stakeholders. Social value again is re-commensurated through a narrative of communication risks. Like other narrative codes in stage three, communication narratives interweave with other narratives linked with risk.

For example, failure to communicate effectively with passengers meant that a service that is intended to be reliable for passengers wasn't. It is this reliability which builds confidence with passengers. While there was a lack of communication about the service, there was a lack of communication across the TOC industry systems. The inquiry found that, "*There was a failure to ensure information was consistent across industry systems*" and that therefore, "*it is not reasonable for information to not be consistent across those systems which would provide reliability for passengers as well as providing greater detail to frontline staff to enable them to give better advice to passengers.*" (ORR Inquiry 2018: 155). Here the interweaving between communication risks and reliability risks can be observed. Providing accurate information across industry systems allows for reliability. Addressing such reliability risks are another narrative which signals another feature of what many might be considered providing an efficient service through regular consistency rather than pure optimization.

Risks to reliability denote particular associations with consistency or trust with a service. Such associations are emblematic of what risk narratives in the inquiry attempts to achieve - by recognizing what a lack of reliability does for stakeholders. The creation of the TOCs franchise structure was intended to address questions of reliability. For example, the inquiry suggested that the, "*Thameslink services required a single operator to integrate the full*

*routes to the north and south of the Thames in order to plan and operate services reliably”* (ORR Inquiry 2018; 312). For the DfT, NR and the TOCs, service reliability is key to maintain trust with passengers. This risk narrative demonstrates that issues of trust are at stake when a service is no longer reliable. For example, the inquiry found that as the SO and GTR developed various iterations of the timetable, there were other factors which limited their ability to provide a “*reliable timetable*” (ORR Inquiry 2018; 140). The following excerpt highlights this relationship between reliability narratives, the risks involved with implications for a reliable service that delivers social value.

*“In summarizing the effects of the May 2018 timetable and its ultimate impact for passengers, GTR maintains that the short time frames allowed to develop diagrams and rosters resulted in a timetable that was operationally undeliverable. The core issues being: incorrect work balance across depots; imbalanced rosters; low ratios of diagrams to drivers (less than 2); and the shortfall in training. Each of which contributed to GTR being unable to deliver a stable and reliable service”* (ORR Inquiry 2018; 145).

Here we can see how narratives of reliability are linked to the operational actions of the key actors. These actions were deemed to be “incorrect”, “imbalanced” or “low” which carry negative connotations but are also linked to conception of inefficiency or efficiency because the service failed to optimize rosters, diagrams and drivers. These actions however are regularly linked to the consequences of not only an unreliable service but how that unreliability impacts passengers social value. For this reason, throughout many interviews with passengers, reliability was highlighted as a key concern.

*“It’s not changed for me. I still want the train to be on time, I expect it to be on time. There are still delays, people are still complaining. Replacement buses aren’t good enough, it’s more stress. It’s not reliable.”*

Reliability risk narratives convey similar features to efficiency in stage one, where a consistent service is perceived as being necessary to maximize social value for stakeholders. Like other risk narratives, the reliability risk narrative can interweave with other risk narratives. For example, a revised timetable was introduced in mid-July 2018 to provide “reliability”.

*“This followed a period of several weeks of intensive work by GTR to optimize rolling stock and driver plans” – “to reduce pressure on available resources and create greater resilience” (ORR Inquiry 2018; 150).*

This interweaving suggests that being resilient in the face of disruption can help alleviate or avoid risks to reliability, but resilience carries with it its own risks. That is, not being resilient enough to respond to disruption also serves the risk mitigation called for by the inquiry. Being resilient is key for the social value of passengers.

Resilience serve to highlight actors’ preparedness for disruption and actors’ ability to respond and navigate disruption. By recognizing appropriate risks, actors are assumed able to put in place procedures or structures which can aid in the event of a disruption. Like other risk narratives, it links stakeholders’ social value with resilience. Indeed, the inquiry recognizes that the timetable changes were intended to improve the number of trains per hour and that this would build in a level of resilience for the system (ORR Inquiry 2018; 134). The rationale was also to increase efficiency. In the lead up to the disruption, the inquiry highlights instances where TOCs attempted to deal with the timetable disruption through narratives which focus on the TOCs’ resilience. For example, Northern experienced difficulty with their electric line trains and had to roll out diesel trains to meet the demands of the revised timetable.

*“This provided enough units to operate the revised May 2018 service, though there were capacity and resilience concerns resulting from having too few carriages on some services and a lack of contingency units at depots” (ORR Inquiry; 116).*

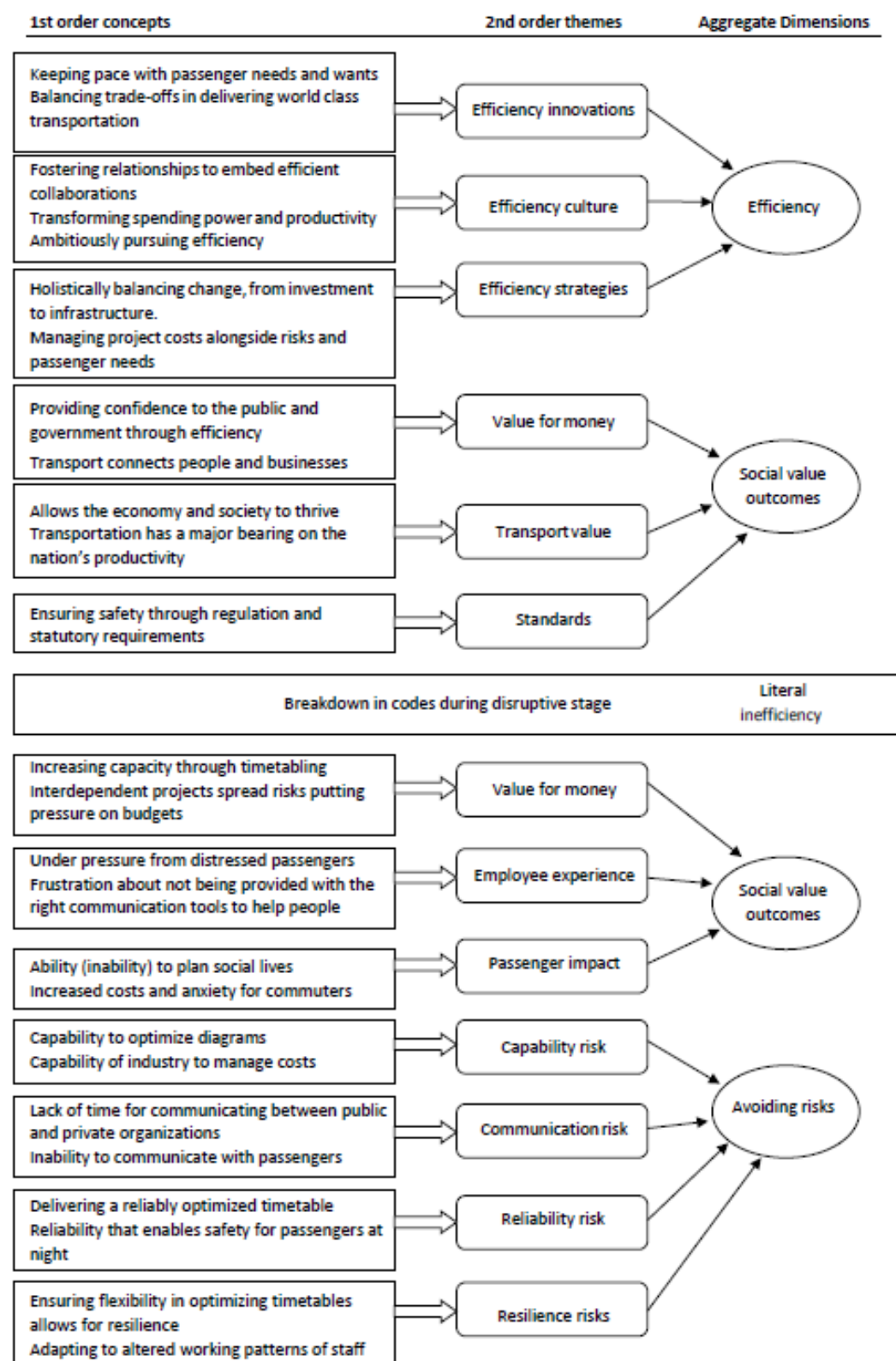
Following the disruption, the inquiry highlights how a lack of resilience due to the complexity and scale of the timetable change added to the prospective risks that should have been identified by the SO (ORR Inquiry 2018; 163).

While resilience is an important feature of the risk narratives – it is a less prominent narratives in the inquiry. Each narrative code carries its own degree of metaphorical heft, nevertheless, each narrative shows strong links between the others - largely because each help to make sense of disruption as well as serves to highlight authoritative blaming (Brown, 2004). The interweaving between narratives is not intended to dilute the other but instead stresses the linkages between them and their ability to address the impact on passengers’ lives – namely social value. Like all risk narratives in the inquiry, the perceived relationship between resilience and adding stakeholders’ social value is a strong implication of the resilience-risk narrative. This serves the efficiency narrative in stage one without explicitly recognizing the links between social value and efficiency because the narratives are repackaged to ones of risk as social value was de-commensurated from efficiency in stage two.

| Social Value            | Stage 1<br>Efficiency-narrative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Stage 2<br>Disruption                                                               | Stage 3<br>Risk-narrative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Value for money</b>  | "Efficiency is key to ensuring Value for Money for taxpayers and being able to describe how we are delivering efficiencies provides confidence to the public and Government that our costs are under control and that our investments will keep pace with what passengers and transport users want"                                                                                                                                         |    | "One of the consequences of the increasing interdependency of major programmes of work is that substantial pressure will be placed on total portfolio costs if an overall P-80 probability of delivering specified programmes on time and to budget is to be maintained, and benefits to passengers delivered. The alternative options are to vary either the time over which schemes are delivered, or to vary their specified scope, while remaining inside portfolio cost limits" |
| <b>Passengers</b>       | "Passengers and train operator franchise revenues both benefit from selling greater access rights so that operators can run more trains. Conversely, infrastructure investment can be delivered more efficiently by granting Network Rail longer possessions to undertake enhancements and renewals. It is therefore important to find an optimal balance between the selling of train paths and the efficient delivery of infrastructure." |   | "The Inquiry has found that in the lead up to the timetable change, Northern failed to adequately understand or communicate the risks arising from failing to have a sufficient number of trained drivers to operate the 20 May 2018 timetable. As a result, passengers faced severe disruption and were not provided with information that would have allowed them to manage the impact."                                                                                           |
| <b>Safety standards</b> | "The safety of the transport users and those who work on the infrastructure is paramount and standards help us achieve this. Standards provide a framework and the ability to manage safety and technical risks in the design, construction and operation of transport infrastructure. Standards prevent shortterm imperatives from resulting in longer-term operational cost or unacceptable asset performance."                           |  | "The impact of the unreliability of services means that personal safety has become an increasing concern. There is a worry that trains late at night will be cancelled or delayed and they will be at increased risk and vulnerable."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Transport</b>                   | "Transport matters. It connects people and businesses and allows society and the economy to thrive"                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  | "the overall objective is to provide benefits to passengers and freight customers, not just to deliver railway projects"                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Innovation and productivity</b> | "Collaborative models ensure a shared understanding of a client's requirements and innovation potential is released. In particular, building deeper relationships with small to medium-sized enterprises provides clients with a better understanding of how innovation can drive the right outcomes more efficiently" |  | "The Inquiry has found broad and strong consensus between operators, Network Rail business units, DfT and others regarding the value added to the effective delivery of the programme by IRB. Participants said that IRB effectively identified gaps and risks created by the diffuse responsibilities and accountabilities of individual participants, as described above, to seek collective solutions." |

*Table 1.3: From efficiency narratives linked to social value to risk narratives linked with to social value*



## Data structure

Risk narratives take on two differing forms: recognizing foreseeable dangers in the future and as a signifier for a lack of efficiency. The divergence of linking the valuing of

passengers with risk instead of efficiency designates efficiency a less important construct in the commensurable sense-making stage and serves to de-commensurate social value from efficiency in the way it is understood in stage one. Through this process, we can see how the commensurability of efficiency with social value is repackaged following disruption (see figure 1 - this paper's process model for re-commensurating social value and commensurable-sensemaking). The examining of narratives in this stage shows how efficiency narratives are replaced by ones of risk. Nevertheless, in this section there are clear links between the efficiency code in stage one, but the code is understood through a different concept due to the nature of the examination being done after a disruption. While efficiency was largely a key feature of stage one, a lack of efficiency becomes an important feature in the post-inquiry stage as it looks to the disruption of the timetable changes between May and July 2018. A lack of efficiency in the inquiry proves to be consistently linked with key actors in stage one – with overlapping narratives between efficiency and risk - particularly by the DfT and NR. Because actors failed in a number of ways to provide an efficient or optimized service in a variety of areas. Notably in how the timetable was rolled out, the number of weeks given to prepare, the communication between stakeholders and the number of trained train drivers. The lack of efficiency in these areas are made sense of through these interweaving narratives. But these narratives have a purpose.

Narratives observed in this stage seek to safeguard social value intending to account for foreseeable risks involving the capabilities of key actors, communication between stakeholders, the reliability of services and resilience when facing disruption. Risk overrides each theme in the form of anticipating risk, managing risk or understanding risk ex post. While a lack of efficiency in operations led to much of the disruption in the timetable changes, the word disruption is favored as a key term for the timetable changes period because sense-making requires an ex-post narrative that establishes the kind of event that took place. To adequately address this disruption, the inquiry acts as a way to deconstruct the causes of the disruption with a view to insulate key stakeholders and actors against similar disruptions in the future but also to dilute blame (see Brown, 2004). This inquiry proves to be fertile ground for investigating beliefs about the core constructs examined in stages one and two. Stage three illustrates a process of *updating*, *learning*, *recovery* and *renewal* with differing commensurables than in stage one and stage two. Recovery has allowed organizational members to view disruption as a temporary setback and opportunity for renewal (Christianson

|                                     | <b>Capability-risk</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Communication-risk</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Reliability-risk</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Resilience-risk</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Efficiency/<br/>inefficiency</b> | <p>“it was not viable to do complete diagram runs for every single change [to the timetable] because those diagram runs take a period of time to set up and a period of time to optimise and that there was only so much that could be done in the time available”</p>   | <p>"as the diagrams had been developed late following receipt of Network Rail's timetable on 9 April 2018,<sup>351</sup> this in turn meant that GTR had less time to negotiate the rosters with the drivers' trade unions and optimise them fully to have sufficient drivers, with the right route and rolling stock knowledge at the right depots with the right shift length available"</p> | <p>"GTR has provided the Inquiry with counterfactual analysis which suggests that with more time it could have developed better optimised driver plans that worked within its overall driver numbers. However the Inquiry cannot say with confidence that GTR would have been able to deliver a stable and reliable service if provided with a robust timetable at an earlier stage"</p> | <p>"had the turnback's been in place they may have reduced the scale of the disruption by providing additional flexibility for GTR in optimising its train and driver diagrams. It may also have provided additional resilience once disruption occurred on 20 May 2018 by allowing GTR to recover services more quickly during disruption"</p> |
| <b>Social<br/>Value</b>             | <p>"However, while DfT is responsible for making big decisions about projects and changes to them, and is accountable for most of the costs, it is the industry that best possesses the information and capability needed to manage these and advise DfT about them"</p> | <p>"Fewer than one in 10 respondents to the ORR survey found the communication from the rail company during the disruption to be helpful"</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>"The impact of the unreliability of services means that personal safety has become an increasing concern. There is a worry that trains late at night will be cancelled or delayed and they will be at increased risk and vulnerable"</p>                                                                                                                                              | <p>"The Inquiry has also heard the rail staff performed well and with great resilience in the face of extremely difficult circumstances. The widespread changes in May 2018 affected the working lives of many rail staff, including altering working patterns and workplaces for hundreds of staff"</p>                                        |

*Table 1.4: Re-commensurating social value with risk narratives rather than efficiency*

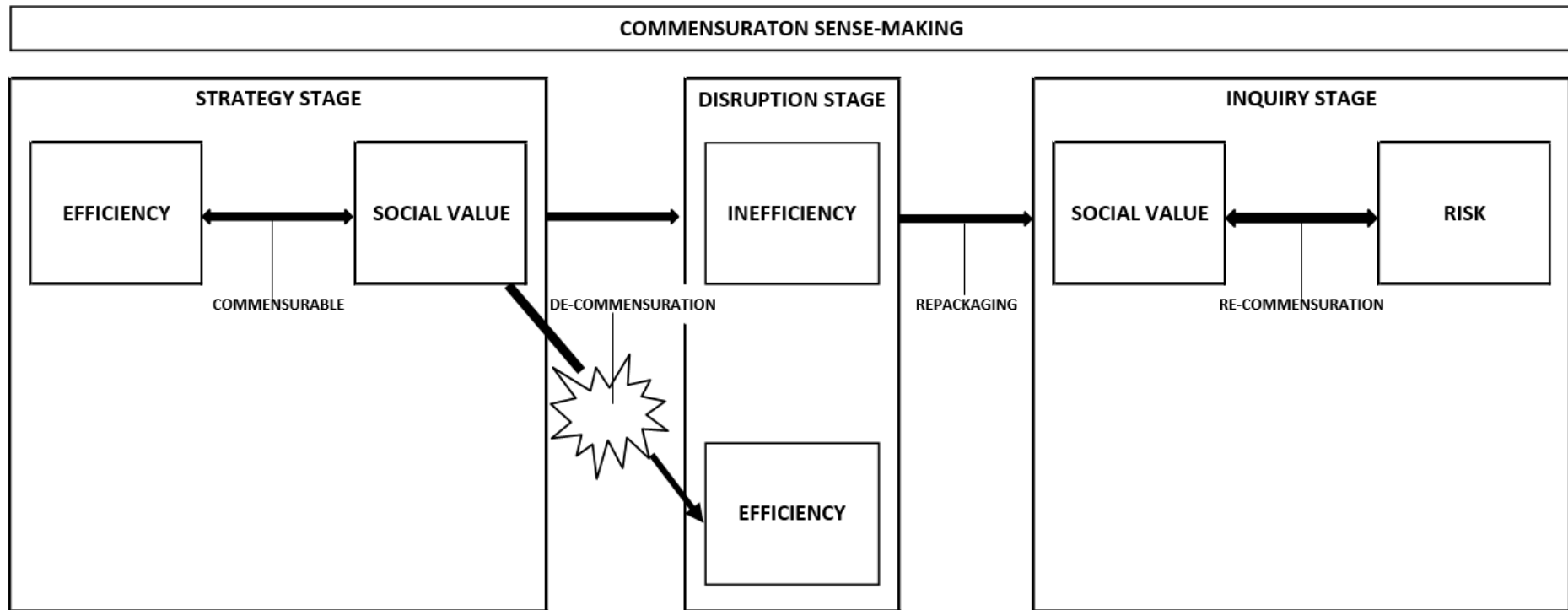


Figure 1.5: Process model illustrative of how social value is de-commensurated from efficiency and re-commensurated with risk

et al 2009). In this case, there is a process of re-commensuration sensemaking identified as narratives of efficiency are repackaged into narratives of risk.

## DISCUSSION

This study involves three key stages. First there is a stage which seeks order (see Weick, 1993), where concepts are assumed commensurable. Second, there is a disruption where actors seek to make sense of that disruption and concepts within competing narratives are de-commensurated. Finally, there is the post-inquiry stage which acts as a period of updating, learning and recovery (see Christianson, 2014), where social value is re-commensurated - which is a key contribution for this paper. This process of re-commensuration happens by following narratives on social through a disruption showing how assumptions around what is deemed commensurable shifts. Espeland and Stevens (1998) suggest that impersonal bureaucratic rationality is “vastly enhanced by commensuration, because it standardizes relations between disparate things and reduces the relevance of context” (Espeland and Stevens, 1998; 321). This study addresses my research question by showing how the ordering of efficiency is compared and commensurated with social value. Through disruption, efficiency and social value are de-commensurated. Disruptive events entail a period of crisis in the sensemaking process where intersubjectivity is lost (Weick, 1993). By turning to a process of de-commensuration we can better understand efficiency’s commensurability with social value. Re-ordering and recovery entail a reconstruction and a process of re-commensuration. In this study I observed social value being re-commensurated with narratives that seek to mitigate risks that would lead to future disruptions. Understanding this shows how a process of re-commensuration follows disruption. I therefore contribute to commensuration research by showing how social value is both re-commensurated and made-sense-of pre and post a disruption - what I term commensuration-sensemaking; making processual sense of

comparative qualities and quantities through disruption. This research highlights the delicate balancing act of making sense of commensurables.

By focusing the sensemaking lens to processes of commensuration we can better understand bureaucratic rationality and the assumptions around efficiency claims and social claims. This helps resolve tensions between differing value systems that periodically come to be perceived as incommensurable. My study stresses the importance of how actors perceive social value in relation to efficiency and how social value can be de- and re-commensurated. Demonstrating a process of re-commensuration follows on from Kiviat's (2019) paper which highlighted how a process of de-commensuration can occur. I consider re-commensuration to be the reconstruction of comparable concepts previously unrecognized by actors. I argue, understanding this helps uncover the "complex institutional mechanisms underlying the socially embedded nature of markets and value" (Khair and Wadhvani, 2010; 1298) by examining types of efficiency that are at the heart of public-private interactions.

This research also refines "questions and concepts" that "compare explanations across fields" (Espeland and Sauder, 2007; 34). As Espeland and Stevens (1998) note, "the efficiency of bureaucracies and economic transactions depends on their growing depersonalization and objectification." (Espeland and Stevens, 1998; 321). This paper is the first attempt to focus on how efficiency is assumed commensurate with social value. To some extent, this study entails an historic event analysis as called for by Ramus et al (2017) to examine the logics of compartmentalization and integration resulting from efficiency strategies, claims and beliefs. While the need for an optimized service on multiple fronts is desirable, so too is meeting the social value demands in society. Meeting such social values means that there must be a balance between a wide variety of qualities to ensure commensurability. Stage one reveals that standards must not obstruct efficiency and also reflects how efficiency must be balanced alongside the needs of passengers and the public. This balance recognizes the two sides of the

efficiency coin - the technical demands and the social demands. The change of efficiency's relationship with social value from stage one to stage three suggests that, post-disruption has not been considered and the decoupling of efficiency with social value could have serious implications for actors. For instance, had the balance between technical demands and social demands been explicitly recognized throughout each stage, it could potentially safeguard some of the issues the risk narratives focused on. In other words, by not recognizing the social values commensurable with efficiency, stakeholders were less well equipped to respond to disruption because safeguards that ensure efficiency were not adequately anticipated to account for such social values. This is one of the many advantages in recognizing the social side of efficiency as it could potentially link to "the moral implications of quantitative accountability" (Espeland and Sauder, 2007). Re-orienting our conception of efficiency to meet social as well as technical demands enables scholars to question the value of quantitative measures because it captures other aspects of firm performance. Indeed, "we do not typically associate ethics with measurement" (Espeland and Sauder, 2007; 36). Nevertheless, it's clear that future research ought to consider the linkages between efficiency and risk with that of the social values they deliver.

## CONCLUSION

Examining this is an exciting prospect for future research. By examining social value's commensurability with efficiency, this research provides a new and innovative way forward for scholars and managers to investigate ethical problems with efficiency claims by focusing on the narrative's that sit behind and alongside efficiency claims. For instance, attending to the commensurability between efficiency and social value contributes to research on logics by comparing ethical problems and misconduct management (Berggren and Karabag, 2019). Within the commensuration literature, this study aids some questions left by Huault and

Rainelli-Weiss (2011) to better understand the mechanisms involved when constraints hinder ambitious commensuration promoters (Huault and Rainelli-Weiss, 2011). For instance, the commensuration promotion of key political actors in stages one and two demonstrate the mechanistic rationalizations employed by differing worldviews which, differently to Huault and Rainelli-Weiss's study, results in de-commensuration rather than compromise.

Future research could further investigate instances of public documents whose meanings of particular constructs are repackaged by differing narratives but are also taken for granted. This study paves the way for a better understanding of the social implications in public-private interactions by showing how the demands of social value can be incommensurable with efficiency following disruptions. The findings show how efficiency, can be de-commensurated from social value, overriding the intent of government outsourcing to increase social value for government and taxpayers (see Cabinet Office, 2016). Indeed, one key contribution of this article indirectly addresses a key feature in this space, as government outsourced firms often claim to be more efficient than the state, delivering better social value for stakeholders. This research highlights the delicate balance between making sense of commensurables. When states like the UK pay as much as one-third of public expenditure (i.e. over £284 billion per annum) on outsourcing (Davies, Chan, Cheung, Freeguard and Norris, 2018: 2), ostensibly on the premise that the market provides efficiency, understanding this delicate balance ought to be among the most pressing for policy makers.

Organizational actors assume many elements of organizational life are commensurable. What is assumed commensurable changes over time. For this reason, my study is limited to the historical time and place of each stage. Nevertheless, this study reveals dynamics that are crucial for strategizing, managing disruption and making sense of that disruption. By showing how actors assume efficiency as commensurable with social value, we can better interrogate and test the demands of each to further refine or justify commensurable claims. Another

implication is that we can see when those elements are de-commensurated, providing insight into how we might construct strategic narratives that can better manage disruption. To do this, we must engage in a commensurable-sensemaking approach that retrospectively questions what is deemed to be commensurable in the past. Through this process, we can then understand how important organizational elements may be re-commensurated should disruption occur.

## **Blood on the tracks: bio-power, bio-efficiency and governmentality in an occupational group**

### **ABSTRACT**

I examine how dynamics around efficiency demands plays on the body and mind of an occupational group to deliver a service that has conflicting efficiency demands on the demand side and the supply side. Through observations and by conducting semi-structured interviews with train drivers working in the UK rail industry I observe that efficiency demands are perceived as necessary but also at times inconsistent with the perceived regulation of energy trade-offs involved with the body and mind of the train driver. I call this 'bio-efficiency'. To better understand this, I draw on recent organizational work on body/flesh, body work and bio-power to explain how bio-efficiency interacts with organizational design and technology but also how certain efficiency trade-offs prioritize demands which act as a point of resistance against bio-power. On the supply side, I unpack the mechanisms that restrict the efficiency of this occupational group. I do this first by considering the bodily needs of train drivers followed by the impact on the mind of train drivers: from sleep, restroom breaks, physical health (the body) to mental health, fatigue and attention (the mind). The interplay of these demands offers insights into how the mechanistic assumptions of efficiency goals are governed through technology, safety requirements, organizational design and the human body itself. This analysis more clearly illustrates how the demands of both the body and mind of this occupational group interact to maximize route performance and humane treatment of workers in an operational-based setting.

**Key words:** occupational groups, efficiency, bio-efficiency, organizational coordination, social dynamics and technology

## INTRODUCTION

Organizational research is only beginning to understand how the “human body is shaped by the intentional efforts of individual and collective actors” (Lawrence et al 2022; 2). Routines in organizations have been examined as mindless (Ashforth and Fried 1988) but routines, in relation to the body are purposeful responded to by workers and shaped by organizations (Lawrence et al 2022). In organizations, efficiency can be considered an input/output ratio or a comparison between organizational demands (Pennings & Goodman, 1977) and often such comparisons involve trade-offs (Mohony, 1988). Such trade-offs involve balancing different organizational demands. For example, research has examined how actors balance efficiency with other conflicting organizational goals such as organizational design (Salvato & Rerup, 2018). Studies on balancing such goals have emphasized the role of action in addressing such balances (Turner and Rindova, 2012; D’Adderio, 2014; Spee, Jarzabkowski, and Smets, 2016; Rerup and Feldman, 2011) rather than the influence of structures and how they interplay with organizational actors. My research addresses the lack of focus in previous research on the interplay between structural influences, such as technology or organizational design and the interplay with actors’ actions to address conflicting organizational goals (Parmigiani and Howard-Grenville, 2011; Salvato & Rerup, 2018) in relation to an occupations body and flesh (see Harding et al 2021). I do this by paying particular attention to efficacy goals and demands in relation to organizational body work (Lawrence et al 2022). While previous research has examined how conflicting goals in organizations can be generated by routine dynamics (Feldman, 2000; Canales, 2013; Bertels, Howard-Grenville, and Pek, 2016) there is scope to consider how such routines manage and coordinate tensions but also how other structural factors manages employee’s body and mind. This paper examines how understandings of efficiency are balanced by the body, the mind, technology and organizational

design. Both technology and organizational designs structure how workers balance efficiency demands but this paper also shows how workers' bodies and minds also are self-managed to meet efficiency demands while technology and organizational design influence and mediate workers' behaviour.

A key factor in how workers balance conflicting goals can be generated by the influence of technological factors. For example, despite a rise in self-driving technologies and predictions that certain skilled occupations may become obsolete as a result, there is, nevertheless, ongoing demand for operationally skilled workers to ensure that safety levels are maintained (Bucchiarone & Feldmann, 2019). Nevertheless, technology continues to have an impact on occupational skills and can influence how organizational structures organize actors' bodies (Walker et al 2021). For example, theories have presumed that "technology is a material cause, that relations between technology and structure are orderly, and that these relations hold regardless of context" (Barley, 1986; 79). But structure is more complex. It is negotiated between institutions and actors. Technology must be considered as something which triggers, "social dynamics which, in turn, modify or maintain an organization's contours" (Barley, 1986) allowing the technology to influence the realms of actors and institutions. To explore the intersection of technology, organizational design and workers' bodies, I turn to recent work on organizational bodywork (Lawrence et al, 2022).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In this article, I consider what I refer to as the "independent" body/flesh and the subjectivity required in managing the independent features of bodily and mental demands. To explore this, I build on recent organizational body work research (Lawrence et al 2022). Lawrence and colleagues (2022) define organizational body work as "purposeful, organizationally embedded efforts to shape human bodies" (2022; 2). This approach explores this crucial intersection between agency and the body, or subjectivity in relation to body/flesh. As Lawrence and

Phillips (2019) suggest, the body is purposively targeted, shaped, constrained and facilitated by organizational contexts. These efforts are largely designed to control workers' bodies.

Understanding organizational body work is important because it can enhance or diminish both physical and mental health but it can also contribute to workplace autonomy and control (Amsterdam, Eck, and Kjaer, 2022; Burchiellaro, 2021; Chang, Milkman, Chugh, and Akinola, 2019). Still, existing control theories have not fully explicated the interplay between an occupation's subjectivity (invisible) in relation to the control their bodies and minds exert over them alongside technology and organizational design. In this sense, a person's body and mind both operate in ways that require the subjectivity of individuals to manage alongside more external controls, such as technology or organizational design. Previous research has examined bankers' bodies in a knowledge-based organization (Michel 2011). This work aligns with a tradition of examining technological controls (Taylor 1911, 1997), or job design (Hackman and Oldham 1976). Similarly, to knowledge-based work, train drivers occupy a reasonably autonomous solitary work life. The solitary nature of their work means that they occupy a space that has cultivated forms of control that resist managerial controls in contrast to traditional cognitive theories that demonstrate autonomous alignment with industry patterns of work (Van Maanen and Schein 1979; O'Reilly and Chatman 1996). Moreover, train drivers exemplify an operationally based setting where control is diffused between multiple organizations – both public and private. While work has examined control on the body of workers (Michel 2011; Courpasson and Monties 2017) work has also examined control over the mind (Alvesson and Robertson, 2006) or mindfulness (Fraher et al, 2017) but more recently, there have been calls for research to examine the post-Cartesian agential flesh and how our flesh also exerts limitations or controls on our agency (Harding et al 2021). This study is a step in that direction.

Harding (2021) and colleagues coin the term body/flesh to illustrate the interplay and interconnectedness between agency and the body rendering the slash "/" a "false agential cut"

(Barad, 2007; Harding et al 2021; 3) shining a light on the materiality of body work and agency. Harding and colleagues (2021) draw on Barad's work which redresses an over reliance on the discursive influences on embodiment (i.e. Butler 1997) towards one which recognizes the anatomical and physiological elements that "actively matter to the process of materialization" (Barad, 2007, p. 65). This article continues on this position, agreeing and inspired by the idea that there are not boundaries between entities but only the appearance of boundaries. In other words, our body/flesh interacts with a multiplicity of factors. It exists inside and outside of language extending to our environments (Harding et al 2021). I suggest that organizational and economic efficiency can be explored and linked with what I refer to as bio-efficiency by considering the material conditions of control over train drivers' organizational lives. But also, illustrates an important feature that is of interest to management scholars – namely, how workers contribute to organizational efficiency (Delaney and Huselid 1996). Thematically, this article builds on work that recognizes the materiality the "body manifests as a series of relationships with other material" (Attala and Steel 2019; 5) that involves a network of other materials within organizational life. (Cristea and Leonardi 2019; Orlikowski 2007; Rafaeli and Yavetz, 2004).

The working life of train drivers is an opportune setting to consider the ways in which drivers manage their thoughts, their bodies in relation to the demands their own thoughts and bodies place on their subjectivity – but also – how their subjectivity manages more external factors such as design and performance alongside internal demands. Work has looked at similar dynamics with police officers' identity work and how certain elements such as fitness, intimidation, cleanliness, and toughness construct their identity (Courpasson and Monties 2017). While research has considered how the embodiment in organizations can constrain intentional consciousness (Pullen and Rhodes 2014) more work is need to understand conscious responses to bodily constraints or challenges. One avenue that provides a useful

perspective on intentional organizational body work are functionalist perspectives. Previous work on the more functionalist conceptions of bodies have considered how workers manage activities that sit outside of work, such as exercise, sleep and sex (Leavitt, Barnes, Watkins and Wagner 2019; Sonnentag 2003) as well as organizational design and performance (Carayon 1994). Functionalist perspectives have considered how bodies in organizations are imagined as idealized bodies (Taussig 2020) rather than the more heterogenous body as conceptualized and observed in this article. Such an approach recognized that workers are agentially different (Lawrence and Phillips, 2019).

To better illustrate the independent body/flesh and the subjectivity I turn to Michael Foucault's work on bio-power which can help explicate subjectivity alongside the body. Drawing on Foucault's notion of biopower (or biopolitics) I examine how workers utilize micro-resistant techniques that are individually formed and practiced by an occupational group to counter-shape the political possibilities biopower exerts. For example, micro-resistant techniques that attend to bio-efficiency needs counter organizational efficiency and economic efficiency priorities in favour of public values. Biopower as a concept first appeared in print in Foucault's book on the History of Sexuality and was later elaborated on in a series of lectures that considered and critiqued the persistence of market values in everyday life (Foucault 2003; 2007; 2008). Biopower is a form of regulation involving "life itself, individuals' bodies, time, personalities and everyday decisions" (Walker et al 2021; 27).

According to Foucault, biopower is understood in contrast to the sovereign power of monarchs or disciplinary power. These two forms of power are visibly exerted over life whereas biopower works invisibly through agential freedoms directing our desires and actions. Biopower then acts as a form of control. The desires biopower creates are neoliberal market-value desires rendering the agent an "entrepreneur of himself" – "being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of his earnings"

(Foucault, 2008: 226). In other words, biopower frames “people’s possibilities of agency in ways that turn their desire to govern their own conduct freely into a productive force and organizational resource” (Moisander et al., 2018: 377).

In business and management studies, biopower has been explored by focusing on the gig economy (Walker et al 2021), entrepreneurship (Norback 2021; Moonesirust & Brown’s 2021) and in the neoliberal university (Fleming 2022). Recent work has demonstrated how biopower exerts influence on an occupation with relative freedom (Fleming 2022). Drawing on platform labour (De Stefano 2015; Hill 2015; Prassl 2018) research has examined how biopower works on Uber drivers leading to isolation and resignation which inhibits collective dissent and resistance (Walker et al 2021). While technological mediators such as algorithms have been explored to mediate worker behaviour, this study examines technology that mediates the body to prioritize safety, rather than exploit workers for neoliberal ends. Through biopower, workers freely act in the interests of employers (Moisander et al., 2018; Moonesirust and Brown, 2021; Norbäck, 2021). Fleming (2022) suggests however that theories have not grappled sufficiently enough with the mechanisms at play. Fleming suggests scholars consider what he calls “pivoting mechanisms” that play on occupational freedoms alongside managerial control (Fleming 2022). To further examine mechanistic dynamics related to bio-power we can turn to organizational design, routines and technology in relation to the body and mind.

Technology in organizations acts as governance mechanism to control and order actors’ organizational lives. Such organizational controls can lead to tensions in occupational groups, with implications for how coordination is achieved (Bechky & Chung, 2018). Such coordination may, however, come up against unpredictable demands and organizations may employ workers who obtain specialized knowledge and skills that can help them to respond to unpredictable events (Alvesson 2011). Among the many goals to which organizations aim to attend, efficiency has been a key consideration for the coordination of technology in

management (Chandler, 1977). For example, previous research has explored how process management activities that focused on efficiency shifted the balance between exploitation and exploration in the paint and photography industry (Benner and Tushman, 2002). Such research has built upon the tradition of assuming the meanings of efficiency in organizations are stable and understood (i.e. Garvin, 1988; Harry and Schroeder, 2000; March 1991; Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Rosenkopf and Nerkar, 2001) without understanding how actors in an operational group perceive and manage efficiency demands and trade-offs.

Literature which focuses on occupations, routine dynamics and efficiency is well positioned to explore how workers manage efficiency demands alongside other organizational pressures because of the relational nature of such groups with other organizational controls (Van Maanen, 2010). Occupations can also demonstrate unique variations to navigate between organizational demands because they control knowledge (Child and Fulk, 1982) and uphold quality standards independently of the organizations they work for (Van Maanen and Barley, 1984). Managing efficiency demands entails coordination with other organizational demands and this research builds on previous occupational studies that examined equipment manufacturing, film production, doctors, nurses, designers, SWAT officers, software engineers and technicians (Betchky and Chung, 2018; Crowston, 1997; Faraj and Sproull, 2000; Bechky, 2003a, 2003b; Crowston et al., 2005; Okhuysen, 2005; Kellogg, Orlikowski, and Yates, 2006; Klein et al., 2006; Metiu, 2006; Vaast and Levina, 2006). Similarly, previous research has examined the economic and operational efficiency of the trucking industry (Nickerson et al., 2003). This research examines the occupational roles train drivers inhabit to explore how efficiency demands are individually managed but also mediated by technology and organizational designs that involve other workers such driver managers, signallers, control room coordinators, and passengers. Also, crucially this research examines the limitations of both technology and this occupation in the pursuit of certain kinds of efficiency. By unpacking

the mechanisms that are involved in the interplay between workers, technology and organizational design, this research contributes to literatures on organizational bodywork (Lawrence et al 2022). In the following sections I introduce the research design and methodology. Following this I unpack the unique context of this occupational group. I then detail my analysis of how bio-efficiency interacts with organizational designs and technology but also how certain efficiency trade-offs prioritize safety acting as a point of resistance to the influences of bio-power and governmentality (Foucault 2003; 2007; 2008). I then discuss the implications of this point of resistance, limitations of this study and paths forward for future research.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Because theory has not yet fully detailed how occupations manage and coordinate their efficiency in relation to their own body and mind, as well as, organizational design and technology, I adopted an inductive approach (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). Interviews began in person before the disruption of the pandemic brought such activities online and the interviews had to be collected online. I first began an initial interview phase of train drivers that work in one franchise operating in Northwest London. This first phase of 10 interviews provided the basis for having a grounded theoretical understanding of train drivers' "life worlds" (Suddaby, 2006; 635) and the rich symbolic world that underlies the needs, desires, meanings and choices of those I interviewed (Kozinets, 2002). I adopted a semi-structured interview process that allowed for diversions and, as a result, was able to understand perceptions and experiences that are important to the interviewees (Arsel 2017; Belk, Fischer and Kozinets, 2013). Based on the participants' experiences of working for both their current and previous franchises, it emerged that the train driver occupation appeared to be relatively uniform in how they confronted, managed and coordinated various demands. Franchises or

regions therefore became a less important feature of the dynamics under consideration, motivating me to widen my interview pool to other geographical parts of the UK rail network. The initial phase of interviews also enabled me to refine my semi-structured interviews and focus more precisely on conflicting multi-organizational demands by highlighting key occupations around train drivers: driver managers; customer service managers; director; signallers platform staff; and network maintenance workers.

This led to a second round of 35 additional interviews over six months (45 interviews in total between phase 1 and phase 2) of train drivers, driver managers, customer managers and directors in the rail sector that operate in the North and South of England - providing additional variation and enabling me to identify key overlaps in how this occupational group operates. During this second phase, in person observations were collected. I undertook training on the UK's leading British Rail Class 700 simulator which involved driving the same London route I use for my commutes to my university, adding an additional layer of familiarity to my route knowledge when driving. I was also a participant-observer when a new driver manager was trained on the simulator and an experienced retiree drove the simulation for the first time. During this session, I collected additional interviews. Collecting the empirical material for this article involved attempts to understand how people and organizations "constitute and are constituted by their surroundings" (Cunliffe, 2011; 661). While my key construct of efficiency, I began my interviews by simply trying to understand train drivers' "life worlds" (Suddaby, 2006; 635) and the rich symbolic world that underlies their organizational lives (Kozinets, 2002) and the important experiences and perceptions that are important to them (Arsel 2017; Belk, Fischer and Kozinets, 2013). Through this process, I discovered a great deal that was relevant to understanding how this occupational group understands and manages efficiency demands.

Following the collected 45 interviews (see table 1), multiple readings of the transcripts and the iterative processes of theoretic coding I reached saturation of the critical concepts under investigation: efficiency demands; bodily management; thought-life management; organizational designs; and technological governance. These themes emerged gradually through the interview process. I updated my semi-structured interviewed questions as each theme became more prominent. It was clear early on that drivers had to manage their bodies and minds. Managing their body and mind was essential for the overriding priority of safety on the railways. When asked about efficiency, the theme of how they optimize safety, with particular attention to themselves became a prominent theme. How organizational design factored in emerged through the interview processes as drivers recounted the structure of their work day, how their time is ordered and the procedures they had to follow during period of disruption as well as period in which the service ran as normal. Finally, the technological theme became particularly prominent and emerged from both the interviews but also observations. By being trained on a train myself, I was able to experience how onboard technology significantly mediated the mind and the body of the driver. Through these observations, experiencing the dynamics first hand and linking them to my interviews, I was able to best understand the interplay between technology and the train drivers' bodies and minds. This experience was in the spirit of Harding et al (2021; 7) as a moment of experience which brings the present instant of recall into language for analysis. As they aptly put it,

*“Can you remember occasions while working when you became acutely aware of your body?’ This resolved the problem of which aspects of our work to analyse: the evoked memories made that choice for us.”* (Harding et al 2021; 7)

This became a focal point of this study, where a great deal of context was discovered by me as the researcher because I was able to enact the train driver occupation through my body, enacting lived experience which can form the basis of knowledge (Onyx and Small 2001). Following

this observational trip, short-listed insightful moments dictating notes directly after the observational trip. Following this, I interrogated these instances in future interviews to balance out my initial experience with the mature experience of train drivers. I reflected on how this experience involved my body as a researcher. For example, by keeping my foot on the DSD pedal, I experienced a slight discomfort. The small amount of effort over time built up and compounded as I drove the train. This was corroborated by other drivers who experienced the same discomfort. This drove me to reflexively compare my experience to my interviews, asking myself what Harding and colleagues (2021) asked what my body is saying to me and translating that into words. Following this observational trip, I took extensive notes, collected additional interviews with the trainers and found that onboard technology played a far stronger feature in the working lives of this occupational group than I understood, despite this theme being a prominent feature of my interviews. Finally, I took on the work of comparing my experience, interviews with theory on efficiency in organizations, routine dynamics, body work, embodiment and biopower. Through iterations of exploring first routine dynamics, then being prompted to explore body work and bio-power, I reworked and formulated a new focus for organizational scholars – namely, bio efficiency which focuses on the relationship between agential efficiency, organizational efficiency and economic efficiency.

| ID            | TITLE                                  | GENDER | INTERVIEW LENGTH |
|---------------|----------------------------------------|--------|------------------|
| Interview 001 | Customer engagement manager            | Male   | 1 HR 8 min       |
| Interview 002 | Depot based engineer                   | Male   | 49 min           |
| Interview 003 | Driver manager and former train driver | Male   | 43 min           |
| Interview 004 | Train driver                           | Female | 50 min           |
| Interview 005 | Train driver and driver trainer        | Male   | 1 HR 11 min      |
| Interview 006 | Train driver                           | Male   | 1 HR 21 min      |
| Interview 007 | Train driver                           | Female | 1 HR 7 min       |
| Interview 008 | Train driver                           | Male   | 1 HR             |
| Interview 009 | Train driver                           | Male   | 1 HR 27 min      |
| Interview 010 | Driver manager and former train driver | Male   | 1 HR 18 min      |
| Interview 011 | Train driver and H&S Rep               | Male   | 1 HR 30 min      |
| Interview 012 | Customer engagement manager            | Male   | 57 min           |
| Interview 013 | Train engineer                         | Male   | 53 min           |

|               |                                                           |        |                     |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Interview 014 | Director of customer engagement                           | Female | 1 HR                |
| Interview 015 | ASLEF official and former driver                          | Male   | 1 HR 25 min         |
| Interview 016 | Train driver                                              | Male   | 1 HR 11 min         |
| Interview 017 | Train driver                                              | Male   | 1 HR 9 min          |
| Interview 018 | Train driver                                              | Male   | 1 HR 4 min          |
| Interview 019 | Train driver, ASLEF and H&S rep                           | Male   | 1 HR 6 min          |
| Interview 020 | Train driver                                              | Female | 1 HR 4 min          |
| Interview 021 | Network Rail Signaller                                    | Male   | 42 min              |
| Interview 022 | Train Services Director                                   | Male   | 56 min              |
| Interview 023 | Outsourced parts engineer                                 | Male   | 47 min              |
| Interview 024 | Train driver                                              | Male   | 1 HR 35 min         |
| Interview 025 | Train driver                                              | Male   | 1 HR 28 min         |
| Interview 026 | Train driver                                              | Female | 1 HR 10 min         |
| Interview 027 | Train driver (retired)                                    | Male   | 1 HR 22 min         |
| Interview 028 | Train driver                                              | Male   | 1 HR 5 min          |
| Interview 029 | Train driver (Eurostar)                                   | Male   | 1 HR 9 min          |
| Interview 030 | Network Rail Communications Manager                       | Male   | 1 HR 2 min          |
| Interview 031 | Train driver (retired)                                    | Male   | 1 HR 53 min         |
| Interview 032 | Train driver (freight)                                    | Male   | 1 HR 22 min         |
| Interview 033 | Train driver (retired)                                    | Male   | 58 min              |
| Interview 034 | Train driver(s) during observation                        | Male   | 1 HR 2 min          |
| Interview 035 | Train simulator manager and train driver(s) [observation] | Male   | 2 HR 30 min         |
| Interview 036 | Train driver                                              | Male   | 1 HR 39 min         |
| Interview 037 | Driver manager and former train driver                    | Male   | 1 HR 2 min          |
| Interview 038 | Train Services Director                                   | Male   | 55 min              |
| Interview 039 | Director of customer engagement                           | Female | 33 min              |
| Interview 040 | Customer engagement manager                               | Male   | 46 min              |
| Interview 041 | Train driver, ASLEF and H&S rep                           | Male   | 55 min              |
| Interview 042 | Train driver                                              | Male   | 1 HR 22 min         |
| Interview 043 | Train driver                                              | Female | 37 min              |
| Interview 044 | ASLEF official and former driver                          | Male   | 50 min              |
| Interview 045 | Train driver (Eurostar)                                   | Male   | 1 HR 16 min         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |                                                           |        | <b>51 HR 15 min</b> |

*Table 2.1: List of participants*

Driving trains as an operations-based setting exemplifies demands for efficiency, as this occupation regularly experiences tensions between these four organizational features. In addition, train drivers are a specialized group whose decisions impact significantly on private and public demands: they must meet private organizational demands alongside public service demands of passengers and government. They therefore grapple with conflicting demands to

run trains on time without causing disruption but do so against demands for safety. The interface of these demands was deemed to be an appropriate setting to best understand the role efficiency plays on the body and the mind because of the conflicts and trade-offs inherent in this occupational role.

## CONTEXT AND SETTING

Train drivers encounter a variety of roles and organizational actors at work. At the rail network level, the UK rail industry is made up of both public and private organizations. The infrastructure is run and maintained by a public body called Network Rail (NR) while the trains are run by for-profit franchises. NR is responsible for communicating and coordinating information between train drivers and franchises via the signal room, which drivers refer to as “the signaller”. Similarly, franchises maintain their own line of communication via a control room, which drivers refer to as “control”. Both the signaller and control have different priorities and can often be brought into conflict in the event of a service delay. While train drivers have to engage with the signaller and control, they also must “book-on” to their shift by reporting to driver managers who are responsible for driver competences and health before starting their shifts. Driver managers also regularly pull “driver downloads” - data that tracks all train movement a driver makes, including the timings of stops and departures. This data is then analysed by the driver manager and discussed with the driver.

While train drivers must engage with the signaller, control and driver managers, they must also coordinate and meet a variety of demands made by onboard technology and organizational designs. The technological side involved driver safety devices (DSDs) onboard the train – what drivers often refer to as “vigilance”. One DSD is a button that the driver must press when prompted by a regular beep. If the button is not pressed, then the train will come to a stop and the driver will have to reboot the cab which can be time- consuming and cause delays on the line. Another DSD is a foot pedal that must be pressed down at all times unless an

alternative beep is heard in the cab – at which point the driver must lift their foot and rapidly reapply it.

As well as technological demands, organizational design also governs drivers' occupational lives. For example, when booking on to a shift, drivers must read their route "notices", which involve knowledge of the route that is necessary for driving the trains safely and include details of possible hazards or when to lower electric cables before entering tunnels or bridges.

To drive a route, drivers must first be supervised on that route by a driver manager. Taken together, experience of driving the route and the notices form what drivers refer to as "route knowledge". Notices also notify drivers of when they are able to take breaks or timings between final arrivals and departures. This coheres with a driver's schedule or diagram which are designed by the rail franchises. Before rostering of the diagrams can be accomplished, rail services must first have timetables in place that support the rostering. Timetables are created by both Network Rail and the franchises. Shifts then must have human needs built into the schedule for restroom breaks and eating. Route knowledge is one of a variety of other forms of knowledge drivers must maintain. Others include "traction knowledge" which refers to the type of train that is driven. "Rules knowledge" involves organizational rules (both Network Rail and franchise rules) and health and safety rules. Rules knowledge informs procedures for departures, arrivals, delays and disruption. Rules knowledge depends on the geographic coverage of train drivers. For instance, Eurostar drivers must obtain rules knowledge in three jurisdictions: the UK, France and Belgium. Within the UK, rules knowledge may be divergent depending on whether a service is intercity (e.g. Edinburgh to London) or a commuter line (e.g. Thames Link) because such services entail different maximum speeds, numbers of stops or may not share a line with other franchises which is often the case within and around City services that operate in and around major cities versus services that operate between cities.

## BIO-EFFICIENCY IN AN OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

### **Managing bodily consumption needs and utilizing routes for human needs**

Delivering an efficient rail service requires a variety of human needs inputs that entail biological, social and mental health needs. Train drivers' bodily needs in particular are key to organizational planning and coordination as their operational duties enable the smooth running of the network. Before a service is run smoothly, routes must first be planned for in the form of diagrams (rosters) and train timetables. Diagrams are managed by specific depots whereas train timetables are first proposed by the public organization, Network Rail, who then negotiates an amended version with the privately-run rail franchises. Through this process, particular rest times must be agreed and observed with the train drivers' union, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF). For example, when a train arrives at their final destination, before it can depart again, for some companies, drivers must have a rest break of at least 6 minutes to use the toilet and get food. While train operating companies have different terms and conditions depending on routes, diagrams, and human needs breaks - turnaround times must assume a degree of human needs inputs. These times are negotiated and agreed to be a sufficient amount of time for drivers to manage their bodily needs; having a restroom break or ordering food and drinks to eat. However, these small amounts of time are contested by many of the drivers I spoke with.

Such bodily needs are unavoidable and the pressure to not attend to those needs in order to maintain a steady service leads some drivers to bring bottles onboard for human needs or, when at a standstill, stories like jumping out of the cab for a speedy break were observed. Such dynamics play into how an efficient service is planned for and impacts the optimization of diagrams because of the distractions human needs can cause drivers. Some train drivers consider the breaks built into diagrams as sufficient time for human needs while others

disagree. Such disagreements are emblematic of the interface between human factors and the drive for efficiency in modelling timetables and diagrams; “we gave a lie to how long management felt that we could function driving a train without a toilet break. We gave them the lie if you like, that we could do it longer than we could. So, by hiding it in the first instance - whenever that may have been done [urinating in a bottle], we can't review it. So, we couldn't know how long it was felt that we were able to drive without a break. I think continuous driving was something like three hours. It might have even been five hours - it was ridiculous amount of time.” (interview 33). Similar tensions were observed by female drivers, who are allowed hygiene breaks. While the pressure to maintain a service was observed by both male and female participants, some drivers reported that they found the turnaround time or break times to be suitable and appropriate. The variation between diagrams and actual human needs illustrates how assumptions about optimization sit on a spectrum of human needs. Such human needs are also a key feature of this kind of service: the smooth running of a service relies on more than just the human needs of the driver but also of passengers. “Yeah, but we've sometimes had cases where that's happened so we'll come back from Liverpool and we'll get to Crewe and the guard will say to me, we've got people on here that need the loo. We're going to be here for a few minutes while they use the loos on the platforms, that's absolutely fine.”

Another bodily input is the length of a shift and the shift pattern which includes maximizing as much driving of trains as possible within a nine-hour window each working day. Driver managers manage teams of train drivers from a particular depot. Driver managers expect to maximize as much train driving time as possible in a shift window. Coordination for this comes in the form of rostering train driver schedules (what drivers refer to as “diagrams”) and the driver manager oversees this process and the implementation of diagrams. As a driver manager observed, “my job is to make as many train drivers as possible available to business as rostered.” – “In theory, they [train drivers] could drive trains solid for nine hours but that

wouldn't be safe, and it wouldn't be humane either - you have to make sure they've [train drivers] got sufficient breaks and sufficient rest (interview 10)". Train drivers must be fit for service and driver managers will also have to ensure their fitness levels to maximize driver efficiency. "I've got a team of 60 drivers – efficiency is getting as many of them available for driving, i.e. that they don't have any medical restrictions that stop them driving, that they haven't had an incident, they don't have any competency issues with driving, they don't have any personal issues going on that could be playing on their mind and driving. If they do, my job is to get that resolved, as quickly and safely as possible to return them to productivity and efficiency" (interview 10). This rostering entails another important feature of this occupation – rest. Rest days and getting enough sleep are key for this occupation to maintain an efficient service as well as maintain efficiency within themselves in performing their duties.

Much of the activities involving the body and rest occur away from the workplace and entail very personalized techniques for maintaining one's sleep pattern or sleeping enough to fight the effects of fatigue on the job. While most professions entail some degree of personalized fatigue management, the solitary and highly repetitive nature of their occupation gives train drivers a unique relationship with fatigue as the quietness, and movement of the train can be conducive to falling asleep or blurred vision. Managing rest then becomes a way of life for drivers and they manage their rest in personalized ways. "I'm quite strict on my sleep patterns, making sure I go to bed at a reasonable time and try and get up at a reasonable time so that I do sort of control it [fatigue] in that way, I make sure I get enough sleep. Because with the running and the exercise - I do a lot of that stuff - to keep myself fit and healthy which I find helps" (interview 25). While some drivers may regulate their sleep with exercise and healthy living others recognize that unhealthy living can affect their focus at work. "I do know what it was like before, because a couple of years ago, I was really out of shape and it made me exhausted, generally with work - I find, keeping the personal health, good health, helps a

lot with fatigue and a lot with keeping focused at work, because before that when I was out of shape, I found it a lot harder” (interview 25). Regulating the body outside of work, for example through healthy habits or being well rested, are key for a driver’s efficiency because franchises want a driver’s attention to be optimized. “I know what the company definition of efficiency is - based on my union - they ultimately want the most out of the driver for what they can do in their day.”

Indeed, optimizing a driver is considered a key feature of efficiency in this occupational group. “If I’m feeling efficient in my job - it would be - I fulfilled my diagram. That's all happened as it should happen, you know, and on time, and that I probably had sufficient downtime [rest] between trains. So that I'm feeling refreshed as well. That’s an important part for me” (interview 24). Rest and feeling refreshed is considered an essential feature and can override the demands of a train timetable. “So even if I'm running late, I'll always go to the loo or go and make myself a drink, or literally just do one lap of the concord - So although there might be a delay involved, I’m more efficient as a driver, if in fact, I’ve had that gap between trains.” (interview 24). This sentiment was often observed in this occupation because safety is an overriding feature of the industry and because drivers view their interactions with diagrams and timetables as requiring human needs inputs for an efficient service to occur.

Because managing the body through sleep and rest are such a key feature of the role, particular lifestyles and ages are drawn to particular shift patterns. “The older hands these days seem to be pushing more towards ‘can we add those middle shifts - those ones that start at nine in the morning and run through the day?’ Because it means you get a lie-in” (interview 34). These preferences serve to demonstrate one feature of how drivers manage their rest alongside organizational allowances for rest during their shifts. Both are key in the organizing of a service and efficiency making when developing a train timetable and a diagram. The amount of sleep required for individuals varies widely. Therefore, when a driver is not getting the rest they need

or is unhealthy in some way, it can affect their mind. This can take the form of fatigue that interrupts a driver's concentration on their tasks. Managing fatigue then moves from being a way to regulate the body to one that involves managing the thought-lives of train drivers. After managing the body, the next step is managing the mind to optimize driver performance.

### **Managing thought-lives and utilizing tools for fatigue**

Driving trains is a solitary occupation. There is considerable effort to manage the thought-life of this solitary occupational group because the mental health of the driver impacts on the safety of the passengers. For this reason, Driver Managers must inspect drivers physical and mental well-being before driving. This can be done face to face or remotely. Driver managers do this to ensure that drugs or alcohol have not been consumed and that the driver is mentally fit. Having built up a relationship with the driver they are examining, they look for signs of depression, anxiety or simply unusual social cues. Remotely booking-on by calling a driver manager at another depot loses some of the social cues that in-person booking can catch and is controversial because booking on face-to-face enables driver managers to better assess a driver's fitness for their shift. Driver managers also regularly meet with drivers to chat with them about how they're doing in their role. This can also involve liaising with occupational health if drivers have a medical issue or are taking prescribed medication which could potentially affect the mind.

Driver managers are one of the key social nodes in a train driver's world because most of their job involves sitting in a driver cab on their own. Nevertheless, drivers interact with other actors in a unique relational dynamic because it is always at a distance mediated by onboard technology. This is also a unique feature of the present study because previous work has been concerned with the relational dynamics of different groups. Kellog (2009) studied two hospitals (Advent and Bayshore) to better understand how micro-institutional relations change

in the face of resistance in organizations but this was examined in open relational spaces where occupational groups intermingle to shape their environment. In contrast to open relational spaces, drivers occupy close relational spaces that go unshared by other groups. This solitariness involves a unique relational space for managing thought-life in the workplace.

Managing thought-lives and fatigue are important because of what's at stake for drivers. Mistakes due to fatigue or mental instability can result in serious consequences for the driver and the public. "It's the level of vulnerability. Well, that fear of actually if I mess up, essentially, I could kill people. If I make a mistake. Worst case scenario - if you've got something that's weighing so heavily on your mind, that you can't put it back in your head then you need to speak up and get yourself out of the driving cab and then take a break and be more focused again." (interview 26). In addition to life and limb, drivers' continuing employment can also be at stake. "I've represented people and got sort of clear examples of individuals who cannot manage their thoughts so I was reading recently about someone who nearly lost his licence and there was a safety panel review too which is basically the last step before you lose your licence, and we were arguing to keep them in the job, and it was literally about if you can drive a train" (interview 34).

Because the stakes are so high, drivers seek to maintain concentration by developing their own personal tactics and by applying tactics that are taught and diffused throughout the occupation. Among those tactics is what's called "commentary driving" which is the practice of a driver literally speaking out loud the actions they are engaging in: from accelerating using the lever to passing a speed restriction. Speaking out loud helps drivers maintain concentration in their mind. Choosing to use this tactic comes down to the individual driver. "Some of my colleagues might not do commentary driving, but we are encouraged to do it. And it's always worked quite well for me, especially if I'm tired - yeah, we learn things to just keep ourselves focused. Like, if you have the heating on, it can make you quite sleepy and relaxed. So if I'm

feeling tired, heating goes off - windows open” (interview 4). But while commentary driving or opening cab windows are diffused practices, individuals also have their own tactics. “I mean, I can just sing to myself - not too loudly if I've got passengers” (interview 4). The solitariness of the occupation enables such individual approaches to managing the mind and warding off fatigue.

The route determined for a driver can also be a way to track one's concentration and plan for needed breaks. All drivers utilize pre-existing route knowledge that is required of them to drive a particular route. Before driving any route, they must first practice that route with another driver or a driver manager. Establishing such route knowledge empowers them to track land marks and distances between stations. Awareness of routes can help maintain concentration and help a driver spontaneously manage bouts of fatigue. “The advice I was given about sort of losing my train of thought, was simply - and it sounds really weird - but it was, ‘what's your speed’. ‘What's your signal’. ‘What's your next station’. Those kinds of route specific stuff are our direct access point. Am I on a viaduct? Am I in a tunnel?” (interview 34).

Managing the body and the mind are key for this occupational group and drivers are internally responsible for managing their body and mind. Externally, however, there are structures, plans and practices in place. Meeting the driver manager plays a part in helping to manage the mind and fitness of drivers as driver managers act as a checkpoint between safety and optimizing driver performance. Such meetings are a part of the organizational design of this industry. Such organizational designs require a variety of demands that also must be considered as external ways of maintaining, ordering and managing this occupational group's efficiency. To do this, organizational designs must consider the bodily and mental inputs of human needs necessary for fulfilling a timely, reliable and efficiency service.

### **Meeting organizational demands through structure, planning and social interaction**

Human needs inputs into diagrams and timetables help organizations in the rail industry plan, manage and optimize this occupational group. Train timetables ensure agreed upon levels of gaps between services to allow for humans to prepare their engines for the days service or when they clock off for the day. Planning such timetables is also designed to maintain capacity on the rail lines to ensure that passengers' needs are met. For example, train drivers' schedules must incorporate rest days (when they do not drive at all) to allow for bodily and mental recovery. These calculations are referred to as maintaining a "fatigue index" for drivers. "When a new roster is compiled - it's a juggling act - so for example, there are a 100 odd each day that need to be factored into each roster which will range from early shifts as early as 4:15 through to starting as late as 23:59 and anywhere in between which could range from 6 to 10 hours in length. So what the fatigue index does is it calculates through a roster the fatigue level, i.e. are you subjecting anyone to any amount of fatigue. Are they doing an excessive number of night shifts followed instantly by an early shift" (interview 24). This is emblematic of where efficiency making in the form of organizational design must account for human needs of the drivers but also to safeguard passengers from mistakes that could lead to accidents. Such calculations are finely tuned to the minute so as to not waste any driver capacity.

Organizational demands that govern drivers can change on a daily basis. Rail conditions in the autumn – what drivers refer to as the "slippery season" - can be affected by leaves covering the track. This creates an oil that can allow a train to slide past a platform. Other conditions might bring down the cables from the top of the train – the "pantographs" - because the electrical current switches from wires to the tracks. Notices also inform on speed restrictions due to hazards on the line or changes to the voltage that supplies the train with electricity. Such changes on a route are sometimes noted down by drivers to help with their concentration while driving. "There are locations which are dual voltage and sometimes there's almost - like it's a trap set for you - so you just got to be extra careful to check these things.

And that's why I always write it down.” Changes to routes are key for drivers on the day and notices enable drivers to better assess the conditions of their daily routes and to manage their concentration because such hazards entail career- and life-altering risks for the driver.

As well as the notices, social interactions are built into the organizational design of this occupation. As discussed, meetings with driver managers are a key part of safety and optimizing performance. For example, driver managers ensure, “they [train drivers] don't have any personal issues going on that could be playing on their mind and driving, or if they do - my job [driver manager] is to get that resolved, as quickly as possible, and safely as possible to return them to productivity and efficiency from a driver's point of view is using them.” (Interview 10). This practice also plans for and tackles the human needs inputs that effect the efficiency of the rail lines. While it also safeguards against risks, managing drivers in this way helps driver managers to quickly replace drivers if they appear unfit for their shifts. For this they have drivers on standby that can take on unforeseen circumstances. Disruption can then be avoided and the trains can continue to run efficiently within the network.

To summarize thus far, it is clear that because human needs must be organized and planned for, railway organizations must develop diagrams (rosters), train timetables, notices and social oversight by Driver Managers, to optimize this occupational group. These approaches maintain driver capacity and minimize driver disruption. Such human inputs and needs are unavoidable for efficiency work. Also, such human needs interweave with the bodily and mental inputs observed by train drivers as an occupation. Taken together they govern the efficiency of the train drivers, efficiently delivering passengers and meeting the planned for train timetables. While diagrams (rosters), train timetables, notices and social oversight help govern train driver behaviour so too are technical elements that track driver behaviour in the form of data – what are referred to as driver downloads. Such technological demands are

explored in the next section, where onboard technology and infrastructure technology also mediate the efficiency of this occupational group.

### **Meeting technological demands through physical and mental cues**

Train drivers' mental attention and bodies are regulated by onboard technology consisting of automatic warning systems (AWSs) and driver safety devices (DSDs). Some in my empirical material refer to such technology as "human factor devices" – a term I found to be an accurate and useful description. This onboard technology regulates the attention of the driver by incorporating vigilance through actions, ensuring the presence of the driver and maintaining surveillance of the driver via infrastructure that tracks train movements as finely tuned data points. This technology mediates and governs the efficiency of this occupational group. As well as being a key regulator for attention and bodies, technology also influences "driving styles" as braking techniques are adjusted depending on how new the onboard technology is. Such driving styles can impact how efficiently a train approaches and departs a station. "Technology has made a huge difference to driving and driving styles" – "heavy braking, because it was [applying the breaks for the train], if you like, all or nothing. Now, because of the physical, I'm talking the actual physical technology of the trains. Your style of braking may change over time. A lot of drivers will have certain places they put the brakes in to make sure they stop" (interview 32). Such braking and driving styles can depend on the type of engine a driver is using as onboard technologies require different styles. While driving and braking styles are important for the efficient operation of the train, so too is maintaining bodily attention in the cab.

The body of the driver is also mediated through technology, playing a role in what drivers refer to as "vigilance" – the act of being alert and sensitive to dangers or risks on the railway. To confirm a driver is being vigilant there are DSDs onboard that regularly confirm

the bodily presence of a driver. For example, there is a foot pedal – what some refer to as a “dead man’s switch” - where a driver’s foot must rest and apply pressure constantly while driving. “That’s one of the things that you really struggle with when you first start driving because it sounds really simple, keeping your foot on the pedal all day but at the end of a seven hour drive your legs feel like you’ve had to press diamonds” (interview 41). On top of ensuring driver’s feet are applied, the pedal DSD also has a regular vigilance buzzer or alarm that sounds in roughly one-minute intervals. When this alarm is triggered, the driver must swiftly lift their foot off the pedal and reapply it. If this does not occur, the emergency brakes of the train will be applied. This practice mediates the mind of the driver, ensuring more than just their physical presence by ensuring they are alert through a series of different interventions. A similar DSD is on the dash near the driver’s switch. This DSD often is a button that must be regularly pressed when a similar vigilance buzzer is triggered but at a different pitch. Within seconds of this buzzer sounding, the driver must swiftly press this button.

Technological innovations like these help mediate a driver’s relationship to their train and impacts a driver’s performance efficiency. A key indicator of performance is how efficiently a driver approaches a rail platform and departs following safety protocols. For instance, how well a driver applies the brakes is understood as a key feature of driver efficiency when approaching a rail platform. In this way, driver downloads are deployed to manage driver performance and drivers are assessed as to whether they approach or depart a platform safely and speedily enough. These downloads then feed into how a Driver Manager manages his drivers and optimizes their performance and in turn optimizes the running of the service. As a technical performance manager relayed “so like I showed you on the download - the person’s taken 2.26 seconds before he’s released the doors before the train has come to a standstill. So, what he’s done is – he’s secured the train outside - seen an adequate brake step so it’s not going to roll. He’s assessed what side the platform is, and his fingers are then, releasing the doors. -

so, when a driver gets these downloads and then you meet with a driver, it is usually centred around safety and how safe is it or you're also talking about if you're [the train driver] driving too slow" (interview 35). Assessing driver downloads not only captures a driver's efficiency but helps maintain economic efficiency as train franchises are fined if a train causes a delay on the network. When such delays occur, a technical team comes in to assess its causes from these finely tuned data points. "We work out what we could do [in response to a disruption], what training was required [for a train driver] and what we're doing to prevent a £5,000 fine happening for the same event." (interview 35).

The technological demands from driver downloads play a key feature of a train driver's world. They input into what kind of training a driver may require but they also detail how delays and disruptions happen. For this reason, driver downloads mediate a driver's performance by surveilling driver performance. Such surveillance may improve driver performance but it also fails to capture route conditions that may affect driver performance. As one driver suggested, "That was always one of my concerns about it [driver downloads] – it doesn't really explain why somebody did what they did" (interview 44). As already noted, leaf fall can dramatically change the conditions of the tracks. Such conditions are outside the control of the driver, illustrating the limitations of optimizing driver performance via technology. Such limitations are a key feature of what drivers and in turn the franchises that employ them can deliver as this industry relies on weather conditions, infrastructure conditions, signal conditions and even franchise competitors to ensure the smooth running of a vast and complex network illustrating the many limitations that are outside the scope and control of a train driver. Such limitation can cause delays. For this reason, train drivers are less focused on timeliness and more concerned with safety. As a driver manager relayed, "safety will always come first" (interview 3). As safety overrides other demands, safety can cause delays that are outside the control of drivers adding a further dimension to the demands they encounter. From supplying

the trains and the service to the demands of passengers and the state which fines franchises for delays, drivers must also encounter demands that fall outside the limit of efficiency in this occupational group. “If we're running late, I’ve not just been sat there making a cup of tea or filing my nails. I get there as soon as I’m asked to drive according to the signals and the conditions of the line – but passengers do react as if it's my personal fault that we are late” (interview 4).

| Dimension/Theme                                           | Representative Illustration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Body management</b><br>Recognizing consumption demands | <p>"This is what I learned very quickly - that you have to kind of know your body. So for me, I'll have water in the morning but I won't drink too much. Because I have to make sure that my bladder is kind of empty before I go onto my train. But then I don't want to dehydrate myself. So then halfway through the first half of my shift. I'll drink some water so then on my break, I'll be going to the toilet. It took me a couple years to work that out."</p> <p>"somebody said to me recently that shift work - when they work shift work - it gets to the point where they somehow managed to crack the system in terms of their body, but then they need to have rest days. So, it kind of starts all over again and you know, you never really crack it unless like it's your it's kind of like you know you're on your final shift towards the end of a really long week. And you're like okay I got this, I figured it out"</p> |
| Utilizing route knowledge                                 | <p>"The service was such that there was never very long before we were still at a red light, stationary, and that was my cue if I ever wanted to go. Then I will just get down on the steps, usually if you look at any slot – if you look at much of the railway going inside you will find that, that it’s pretty easy just to jump down and face your own engine and relieve yourself that way, without anyone ever being any the wiser or seeing you."</p> <p>"You also have to have route knowledge - I could have the same stopping point on the same route one day if I drive a passenger train – I might break a lot later. The other day, if I'm driving a freight train I break a lot earlier. So my job is about knitting everything together to find the finished product. Yeah, different trains, different styles, different times"</p>                                                                                            |

## **Mind management**

Disciplining thought-life

"you've got to have mental discipline. You've got to be able to compartmentalize things and for me - if I've got an issue going on - I put it away, mentally, until I get to a time where I can deal with it - And it's took a lot of practice, many years of practice but I've got quite good at that now"

Utilizing tools and techniques for fatigue

"I know that I do it [address my thoughts] afterwards because if I've had an argument with the wife, if the kid has done something wrong, or if I've had a noggin with the person on the street. It's not necessary to think about it during the job, but if I need to think about it, I can always do it afterwards"

"Okay, so on an early shift, it obviously can be difficult to get enough sleep. So I do things like what we call commentary driving. So if a signal is yellow, I will call it out to myself, just to get it properly into my brain. And so I react differently. Obviously, I'll lower my speed and you're taught these techniques"

"it's you that has to tell yourself that you're tired. And how are you gonna overcome it? - It's kind of just trying to think of ways - I like to open the windows - I won't have my cab to warm - if it's warm, I'll fall asleep."

## **Organizational design management**

Planning and structuring shifts

"We run a sort of fatigue calculator on the roster. So we have a six month roster, and it involves early shifts, late shifts, night shifts, and we'd run this fatigue index, and you'd look at it you'd see that we don't come anywhere near the kind of the threshold that would say it [roster] it is going to cause fatigue above and beyond what you would normally do as a shift worker"

"And it's all very much to the minute. So there's no time wasted, it's not, "I'll just come in at two o'clock", it's two thirteen. Because you get 30 minutes to read your notice and get to your train on time. And it's all governed to the minute - even like how long it takes to walk from the train to the platform is time - and governed. So you live your life by the times that are written on this piece of paper during the day for you to work off"

Social check-ins

"so you would arrive at your recognized depot, and you go through the booking on process [checking in with a driver managers]. And you find out what your first train is, you know, doing your stops and up and down where you're going."

"competency developers will, on a regular basis, ride with the drivers check their driving check they're doing everything okay. They'll download the onboard data recorders and the trains, so they can get a what they call an unobtrusive ride -

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                          | we need to prove that we're checking drivers performance and safety when they don't know they're being monitored"                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Technological management</b>          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Incorporating vigilance through actions  | "every minute, if you don't do anything with any other control this noise will go off and you have to lift your foot up and pull it back down again or sometimes it's on the handle"                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|                                          | "because we've got different companies that are building the trains, Siemens, Bombardier, GE, that have different software versions, because it's not just the mechanical way now, where you put in a lever to isolate something. It's buttons. And the problem with these buttons, some of them are soft touch buttons, some of them are hard touch buttons"                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Ensuring presence                        | <p>"The foot pedal - which is the DSD [driver safety device]. I sometimes have trouble with that because I'm a bit skinny and I haven't got my heavy legs. So I've really got to wedged myself underneath the desk a little bit to keep it there, whereas some of the men have less problems because they're just heavier than me."</p> <p>"So in the cab, to keep driving, of course, I had the AWS [automatic warning system] system. And then I had the pedal on my feet"</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Awareness of scrutiny through monitoring | <p>"I just want to do the job without raising any flags - I don't ever want my manager to come looking for me to say, "why did you do this, why have you done that" - they download this all the time. We've got a monitor data management system, they download us once every three months or something like that and they assess your driving on your download and they'll call you in and say "you were going 72 miles an hour here in a 70 - You should have braked here but you braked 50 yards further back or 50 yards further up."</p> <p>"So like I showed you on the download [data of driver performance] - the person's taken 2.26 seconds before he's released the doors before the train has come to a standl. So what he's done is - you see is what we call - he's secured the train outside - seen an adequate break step so it's not going to roll. He's assessed what side the platform is, and his fingers are then, releasing the doors."</p> |

*Table 2.2: Balancing bio-efficiency through the body, the mind, organizational design & technology*

It was a common feature to observe such attitudes among drivers who see delays as being outside the scope of their control. When those things that are out of their control occur, efficiency in many areas of the network can break down. Therefore, a driver's perspective is more dominated by what they can control by being safe, and many referred to working in a "safety critical industry" or a "safety critical business". Safety, however, can sometimes come in the way of certain kinds of efficiencies such as technical timeliness and can clash with passenger demands or demands of the state - as reflected in their system of fining rail franchises should a train not depart within a certain time window. This system is based on the premise that such fines will act as incentives for franchises to pursue economic efficiency. Demands from the state and passengers for train franchises to deliver efficient timetabling and timely services can at times be directed at the drivers themselves. These demands can have a detrimental impact on a driver's bio-efficiency and interviewees reported that older drivers often experience bladder issues in later life. Female train drivers have agreed with the unions a certain amount of allotted time for women's hygiene needs due to the important health implications of failing to attend to those needs. Women do not practise using bottles in the cab, like some cases discussed by men, so the unions agreed that women may also take comfort breaks at a platform if needed. Despite these agreements, women and men alike will often prioritise keeping the service to its agreed timetable despite their human needs.

To summarize thus far, the perceived regulation of energy trade-offs involved with the body and mind of the train driver – what I refer to as the bio-efficiency of this occupational group is governed and mediated by a wide range of factors. Organizational design determines the parameters and constraints of this occupational group by structuring when and how factors are managed in the governance of train drivers' bio-efficiency. Organizations achieve this through the planning and structuring of shifts and social check-ins. These organizational designs also determine the technological demands that are built into the trains themselves. Such

technological demands mediate the driver's body and mind by incorporating vigilance through actions, ensuring driver's physical presences in the cab, and surveilling drivers driving styles and actions. These help govern a driver's bio-efficiency by maintaining certain levels of alertness. Driver interactions with organizational designs and technology impact a drivers' bodily demands that have to be managed individually. These involve the management of one's body by attending to consumption demands and attending to human needs breaks. Bodily demands also managed by utilizing route knowledge. Route knowledge allows drivers to plan for and optimize their body to meet organizational demands. Train drivers who manage their bodies and minds effectively can, in turn, optimize their interactions with technological demands. The dynamics of organizational design, technological demands, bodily demands and mental demands all are a part of the supply side of this industry. Train drivers supply and drive trains that move the public from one destination to another. But the demand side requires certain kinds of efficiencies as well.

The rail franchise system in the UK is part-privatized under the assumption that private rail companies will improve efficiency by operating within a market<sup>5</sup>. For this reason, franchises are fined should a delay occur. Like the state, passengers also desire a timely and efficient railway they can depend on. These demands for efficiency sit alongside the overriding demands for safety, which can also conflict with efficiency demands. "*First we must be safe, efficiency comes second.*" (interview 2). However, both the demands of passengers and the state often sit outside of the control of train drivers. For this reason, train drivers focus their bio-efficiency to meet safety demands demonstrating the limits of efficiency between this occupational group and the UK rail industry as a whole. "*Efficiency in the context of the job is getting passengers from A to B safely*" (interview 26). The implications of these findings

---

<sup>5</sup> 1993 Railways Act: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/43/contents>

suggest that efficiency is inextricably linked to human inputs that must be attended to and accounted for in order to achieve efficiencies this occupational group can deliver.

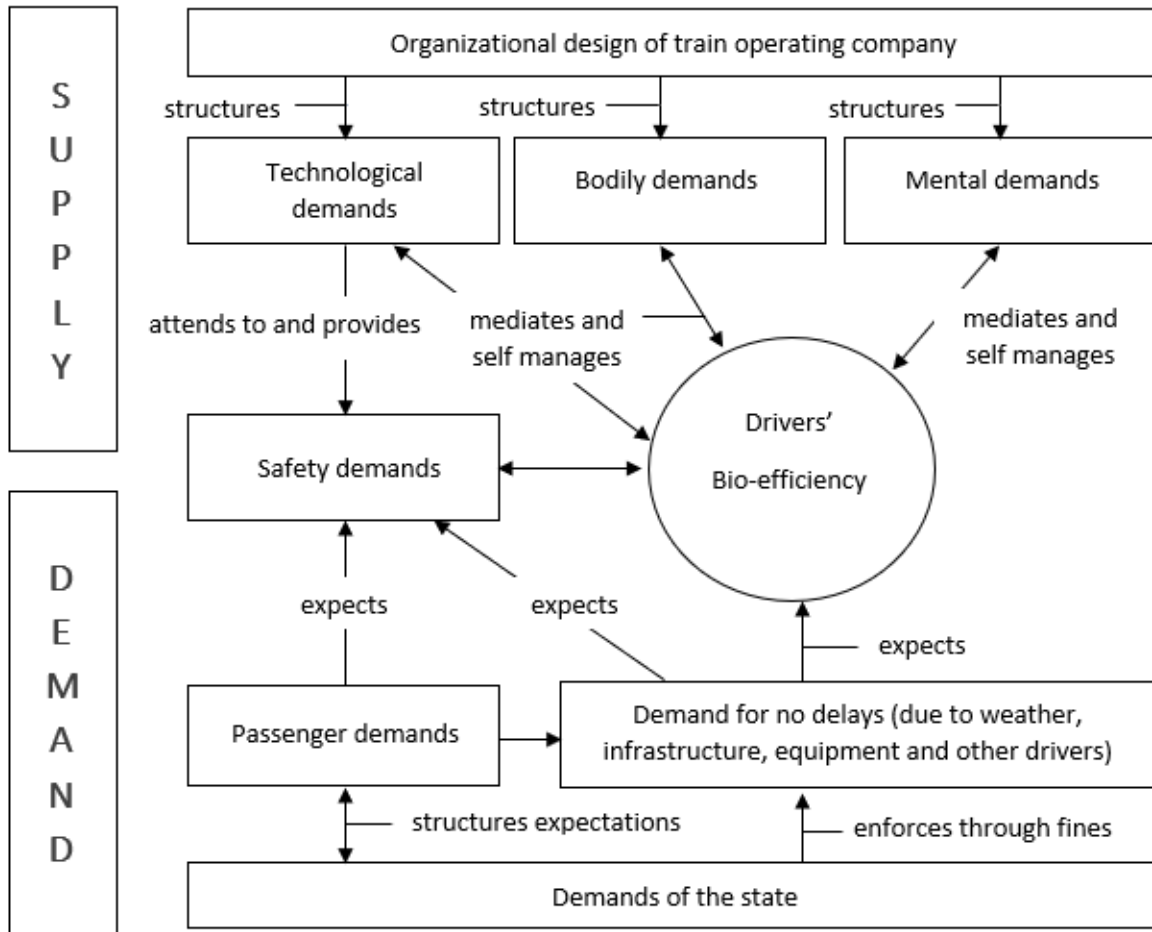


Figure 2.3: Governmentality over train drivers' bio-efficiency and resistances to bio-power

To summarize the model, bio-efficiency is managed individually by drivers (bodily demands and mental demands) but there are a series of interventions which mediate their bio-efficiency. These involve organizational design which structures their work. Technological demands which are structured by organizational designs mediate the bio-efficiency of drivers. All these dynamics adhere to a priority of safety on the railways. These dynamics sit on the supply side of this operational setting. On the demand side, there is first the state, as this is a public-private arrangement between private franchises and the public state. Here I observe demands for a service that is efficiency for passengers. These demands come from passengers

themselves and is observed in this thesis. However, there are clear limits to the demands of both the state and passengers. Namely, delays due to causes which sit outside the scope of this occupational group. This illustrates a key point in how this occupational group deals with these efficiency demands by defaulting all action to the priority of safety which straddles both the supply and the demand side. The centrepiece of how these demands are managed is focused on this occupational group – train drivers – which enables us to better understand the links between human needs and efficiency.

These human elements also entail efficiency dynamics that are governed by organizations, technology and individuals. This kind of efficiency is bio-efficiency (see figure 1). Bio-efficiency involves the regulation of energy trade-offs involving the body and the mind. Individuals are unique and therefore bio-efficiency is a dynamic and is therefore a distinctly personal balance or trade-off. But a person's bio-efficiency is also regulated by organizational design and technology. Both mediate or intervene in the demands around human elements such as consumption demands (eating or drinking) or mental demands (attention to track conditions). Managing these competing demands illustrates an indisputable tie between efficiency-making and human needs. Attending to the social human needs of drivers acts as a key input for train planners fatigue index which ensures drivers are not driving hours deemed to be longer than is safe to do so. Therefore, attending to human needs when considering efficiency means that efficiency-making has a normative dimension that must be considered in terms of what is deemed safe for drivers and passengers but also, what is deemed humane. Balancing competing demands for efficiency on the railways and human needs is nothing new but scholarship has relied on efficiency as being an asocial dynamic. This research outlines a new theory of efficiency – bio-efficiency. Bio-efficiency suggests that organizations must consider a more diverse and varied understanding of efficiency-making and organizing to optimize performance.

Human needs are essential for the running of an efficient rail service until such time as the human element is taken away. As a retired driver noted *“that's the future that they've got to look for, to take the human element out of it altogether. But that, to me is still a long way off - extraordinarily expensive. And open to all sorts of faults, failures, and its far better to have someone on there until such times as you've created a train, which is 100%, reliable and successful”* (interview 31). Even when trains are automated, a human will be involved to ensure the key priority of railway work – safety. As a driver manager, whose job is to maximize the technical sides of bio-efficiency of his train drivers reported, *“safety will always come first”*. This is because safety sits between efficiency demands on the supply side and the demand side. Rail suppliers, passengers and the state demand safety, and it remains the priority for most stakeholders. Beyond safety, this occupational group's ability to satisfy efficiency demands, such as meeting timetables, avoiding delays and maximising economic efficiency for franchises, is highly limited. For example, if there's a delay, it has a domino effect on the whole system – something that quickly moves disruptions further away from the control of the driver.

*“Sometimes you'll leave late on your own journey and it has a domino effect, so once one train's late, it can affect the whole day. I never let that pressure me because I just drive as I've been taught and if I'm late, I'm late, there's nothing I can do about it.”*

This limitation serves to demonstrate the variety of demands and pressures drivers encounter and how this occupational group attends and managed their bio-efficiency but also, how organizational design and technology interact and mediate a driver's bio-efficiency.

## DISCUSSION

Not attending to organizational body work risks overlooking and undertheorizing organizational life (Lawrence et al 2022). By identifying and defining bio-efficiency as perceived energy trade-offs between the body, the mind, and organizational controls, this study

sheds light on the invisible subjectivity of an occupation alongside more visible forms of organizational life. This account details certain contours of organizational body work as called for by Lawrence et al (2022), and highlights the heterogenous nature of organizational body work. For instance, bio-efficiency demonstrates the important role individual strategies play in managing competing demands and in some cases, how such individual strategies overcome the constraints of bio-power. While biopower involves exerting invisible restrictions to exploit human volition in order to “get things done” (Fleming 2022; 2). This study illustrates how the independent body/flesh restricts getting things done, deferring to human needs that must be optimized alongside demands that Foucault would consider as neoliberal ones. Fleming (2022) suggests that workplace independence or freedoms necessitated the need for biopower, enabling employers to nudge workers towards productive ends to avoid resistance to management. Building on Flemings’s recent work, this study runs counter to the setting he examined because the biopower being exerted over train drivers enables occupational resistance rather than discourages it. Still, the pull of governmentality over train drivers’ lives remains a powerful and invisible force. We can only see glimmers of micro-resistant actions on the part of train drivers such as not rushing between arrival and departure timetables as bodily needs override the demands of efficient scheduling. Michel (2011; 356) suggested that future research could examine how workers non-instrumental body actions may modify an organizations culture. This study is a step in that direction as train drivers demonstrate an occupation whose body and mind require significant levels of recovery outside of working hours. If these working hours are not met – they may resist working hours or negotiate favourable terms creating a culture that focuses on both safety but also empowers an occupation that is necessary for the industry to function.

Bodily inputs alongside technical and organizational demands govern a driver’s bio-efficiency. This kind of efficiency entails bodily human needs inputs like rest, sobriety and

well-being. Bio-efficiency for drivers means attending to optimizing their bodily and mental needs alongside organizational and technological demands. The implication of which is that in order to follow organizational demands or attend to the technological demands of this occupation, human needs inputs must be optimized alongside other competing demands. This requires individuals to optimize their own bodies and in turn, optimize their bodies with organizational and technological demands. Doing this requires a variety of both personal balancing as well as organizational balancing. In order to accomplish this, organizational designs attempt to optimize human needs inputs of train drivers' bodies and minds which are an essential feature for the smooth running of the UK railways. To illustrate their importance, consider a 2018 timetable change by Network Rail and several franchises in England. The rollout of the timetable led to three months of cancellations, delays, two public inquiries into the incident and a full review of the UK rail industry which led to a government plan to part-nationalize the UK rail network in 2023. The causes of the disruption were many; however, one principal cause was a lack of trained drivers to fulfil the new timetable. Training drivers is a lengthy process and ensuring that there were enough to adequately staff the network took months, with dramatic consequences for franchises' economic efficiency, as fines for delayed trains piled up. Technical efficiencies evaporated as trains were persistently late. The optimization of rosters and diagrams became a consistent headache for driver managers, customer engagement managers and directors. Train employees at some meetings had to have police protection. This case illustrates the importance of this occupational group and the ways in which efficiency is achieved (McGivern et al, 2018) at the organizational level as well as the individual level of train drivers' bodies and minds. Without this occupational group, we wouldn't have a rail network at all. They are a necessary organizational feature. Essential occupations therefore require some form of optimizing or must be considered when engaging in efficiency-making. However, a big take-away from this research is that even when attempt

to capture physical and mental needs of worker, there can be severe limitations which attempt to generalize efficiency across a social group, such as an occupational group. The implication is that flexibility and creativity may be necessary when attending to organizational demands for efficiency and the bio-efficiency of workers.

Without optimizing this crucial occupational group, the network loses many kinds of efficiencies. Technical efficiencies like trains smoothly arriving and departing a platform require a driver who has had adequate rest and is not experiencing fatigue. Such technical efficiencies are essential for keeping to a train timetable and meeting organizational expectations for timelines and safety. Moreover, technological demands act as a mediator in optimizing human inputs to optimize driver performance. For this reason, some referred to the DSDs as “human factor devices”. But, as outlined in the findings, there are limitations outside the control of an optimized train driver. When delays are caused by weather related activities, another driver from another franchise, infrastructure problems or technical problems with signalling equipment, a driver is simply stuck in their cab like any passenger. Despite this, drivers often feel hostility from passenger demands which are driven by a desire that trains are run efficiently, as public anger at the 2018 train timetable fiasco illustrates.

The implications of this work are many. First, this study inextricably links organizational life and technology to a new understanding of efficiency (bio-efficiency). Bio-efficiency is not restricted to this occupational group either. Any essential occupation will act as a human input to organizational efficiency. Such human inputs implicate that a great deal of normative considerations should be considered when engaging in efficiency-making, ensuring that human needs are met, alongside organizational designs and technology. Such normative implications suggest that organizations have a responsibility to be humane in their treatment of their workers in relation to their efficiency-making. As Mohony (1998) suggests, efficiency in organizations requires trade-offs. The UK rail industry exemplifies an industry that has

involved negotiating these human needs inputs to establish the right trade-offs between human needs and organizational demands. Such trade-offs suggest there is an organizational balance to be struck.

While Salvato and Rerup (2018) examined the role of action in organizations, rather than context, to explain how workers balance conflicting goals, this study examines and considers both the actions and the context of workers to ensure safety (see Catino, & Patriotta, 2013), regulating their bio-efficiency accordingly. In the context of this study, structural factors that come into play, such as societal demands for efficiency and safety add an additional layer into understanding the routine dynamics of this occupational group. Economic factors, such as the franchising out of the rail industry with a view to maximizing economic efficiency, also plays a role in how drivers enact their organizational roles. While organizational designs and structural factors are considered, so too are technological factors. This study builds on Barley's (1986) notion that technology is often a social object and through social processes can order organizational behaviours. Technology in this study mediated the attention of both the driver's body and mind. This dynamic did not always exist on the railways or existed in different forms as onboard technology has advanced considerably in the last century. Throughout the history of the UK rail industry, train technology has changed, with increasing levels of surveillance and human factor devices that maintain driver presence and attention.

This long tradition of technological interaction between train drivers and their engines demonstrates a sector of the economy that remains resilient in the face of automation, defying notions that automation will give rise to self-driving trains and the obsolescence of this occupation. This study adds to Bucchiarone & Feldmann (2019) that demands for safety will ensure such operationally skilled work, such as driving a train, will defy trends towards obsolescence. While this occupational group will encounter future changes regarding their interactions with technology, this study shows how technology governs an occupational group

(see Bechky & Chung, 2018) to achieve levels of coordination to deliver demands for efficiency and safety (Catino, & Patriotta, 2013; Sutcliffe et al, 2017). When drivers attend to their bio-efficiency, they can optimize the safety of workers and passengers alike. The dynamics of bio-efficiency also illustrates how actors negotiate between institutions or structures, such as privatization, and actors, such as driver managers, the public or the state. Such dynamics maintain “organizational contours” (Barley 1986) by demonstrating the limitations that drivers also reach when pressed to address economic efficiency over safety, demonstrating how assumptions about privatization may not hold in certain occupations.

For example, if a driver determines that a train is unsafe to operate, they will hold that train at a platform. When that driver's train company causes a delay, they are fined. Avoiding these fines has meant huge teams of people (“delay attribution teams”) argue over whether, NR, or the privately-run train companies, are responsible for the delay. When a driver identifies safety issues and stops the service, they must report the delay to both the signaller (who works for NR) and the train operating company. Those I interviewed often felt pressure from the companies to keep the service moving – at times without attending to the safety issue because train companies wanted to avoid fines – a key input for their economic efficiency. While fines for delays are intended to incentivise good behaviour, my research suggests it can encourage irresponsible behaviour by prioritising profits over safety and even failing to run a service at all if the blame can be put on NR.

Future research could also examine similar occupational groups, such as airline pilots; however, the dynamics of bio-efficiency are transferable to many other settings. Scholars could zoom in on the implications highlighted in this discussion around the normative implications of bio efficiency by considering the moral dimension (see Schultz, 2001; Sloane, 2008). Unpacking the moral implications of efficiency-making is long overdue as assumptions about efficiency proliferate as being a stable that understanding of this conceptual chameleon is well

known. (i.e. Garvin, 1988; Harry and Schroeder, 2000; March 1991; Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Rosenkopf and Nerkar 2001). By dissecting the concept further and identify its implications for the body and mind, this research brings a refreshing a new lens to scholarship that examines efficiency in organizations. Efficiency is not a purely technical, amoral metric without normative weight; it involves human optimization and interaction. Efficiency is tied to human needs.

This study unpacks the various mechanisms that enable a train driver to be regulated but also how they regulate their own body and mind. Through this study it becomes clearer to understand how subjectivity works in concern and against one's own body but also how invisible forces such as bio-power are exerted externally and at times, overcome or resisted. Such resistance can at times conflict with managerial control as this crucial occupation overcomes various controls to prioritize safety over competitiveness and economic efficiency. Such priorities reveal a unique point of departure for values that go beyond the neoliberal values Foucault was concerned with.

This study joins a rich tradition of looking at range of unique occupations; from equipment manufacturers, film producers, doctors, nurses, designers, SWAT officers, software engineers and technicians (Betchky and Chung, 2018; Crowston, 1997; Faraj and Sproull, 2000; Bechky, 2003a, 2003b; Crowston et al., 2005; Okhuysen, 2005; Kellogg, Orlikowski, and Yates, 2006; Klein et al., 2006; Metiu, 2006; Vaast and Levina, 2006). Train drivers occupy a fascinating setting that is ideal for the study of efficiency. Bio-efficiency is an undeniably important and under-examined dynamic and contribution for organization studies. The interplay between bio-efficiency, organizational design and technology shows how an occupational group manages and navigates demands that are essential in the performance of their roles. This paper illustrates how the demands of the body and mind necessitate humane treatment when organizations make efficiencies in an operationally based setting.

## ARTICLE 3. The possibility of moral efficiency: implications for government outsourcing and social value

### ABSTRACT

Government outsourcing has been rationalized as an efficient way of delivering public services. Public services demand unique levels of social value which can create tensions with efficiency-making. Previous research on government outsourcing has failed to capture this tension, nor has it considered a form of non-technical efficiency - moral efficiency - which is inextricably tied to social value, impacting a firm's ability to reproduce social value and, ultimately, maintain legitimacy in the long term. Drawing on the ethics literature on government outsourcing, this article presents a conceptual process model that illustrates the importance of moral efficiency, defined as the balance between efficiency demands and social value demands. By examining high-profile scandals and failures in government outsourcing, this article demonstrates how scholars can uncover taken-for-granted social values tied to efficiency, contributing a new ethical lens in public-private spaces.

**Keywords:** moral efficiency, efficiency-making, social value, government outsourcing, failure in business ethics

### INTRODUCTION

*The prison officer story. In 2018, 21-year-old Ryan Goodenough started working at a young offenders' residential center run by the private security contractor G4S. His job was to supervise inmates during their outdoor time. The guidelines for inmate supervision stipulated*

*that the staff- inmate ratio in these cases should be 1:3. Goodenough, who had been in his role for three months and was still in his probationary period, was assigned six inmates to supervise on his own. When one of the children in his charge attempted to climb a border fence, Goodenough was assaulted by some of the inmates. There were no team leaders or assigned officers in charge at the time of the attack, which took place during a long 7.30am-10pm shift. Goodenough sustained a severe brain injury in the attack, and has been unable to return to work as a result. G4S admitted liability, agreeing to pay a settlement (see Grierson, 2019).*

The prison officer story exemplifies what has become a common phenomenon in government outsourcing - where social consequences are deprioritised in the interest of efficiency-making. This poses an interesting question: what patterns emerge when efficiency-making fails to consider the social consequences in government outsourcing? Government outsourced firms attempt to make efficiencies because efficiency is often a rationale for outsourcing to a competitive market (Berrios, 2006; Koppenjan and Enserink, 2000; Iossa and Martimort, 2015; Kwak et al, 2009). Yet government outsourced firms often impose efficiency-making measures or fail to deliver efficiency altogether (Sass et al, 2019) both resulting in poor social outcomes. In organizations, efficiency is often understood or defined as an input/output ratio or a comparison (Pennings and Goodman, 1977) with trade-offs in such comparisons (Mahoney, 1988). This article examines efficiency-making as trade-offs with implications for alternative conceptions of social value because social value is of importance to the UK setting, where government has introduced a Social Value Act, intended to inform procurement practices in government. Poor social value outcomes are considered alongside instances where there is too much efficiency-making, or where there is not enough efficiency, suggesting that a balance must be struck.

Efficiency-making that results in poor social outcomes often fails to impact profit margins, despite fines and the negative implications for stakeholders, which is why cases like

the prison officer story reoccur. For example, despite record breaking fines of £2.8 million in 2016/17 (Huffington Post, 2018), G4S made profits of £7.5 billion in 2018, increasing to £7.8 billion in 2019<sup>6</sup>. Such examples point towards the importance of examining government outsourced firms who perform public functions that can result in “private actions with public consequences”, enabling a unique opportunity for new organizational theories (Mahoney et al 2009: 1048). This article’s contribution, then, is to focus on the non-technical dimension of efficiency in government outsourcing to understand better the morally important social values that are produced by firms at the market-state interface (Smith, 2019). This is in contrast to social efficiency which seeks to metricize social outcomes of efficiency in welfare modelling (Lefebvre and Victorisz 2007). While both the moral efficiency and social efficiency approaches are concerned with the social – moral efficiency stresses the normative side of efficiency decision making and outcomes that are relevant in the pursuit imperatives that are important to citizens whose public services are outsourced by the state. This paper also contributes by addressing the concerns of Matten and Crane (2005) who call on scholars to improve our understanding of corporations who take up government functions and how their roles “could and should interlock” (Matten and Crane, 2005: 177). To address such normative concerns, this article argues, scholars must look to moral efficiency.

Moral efficiency is concerned with the balance between the demands for efficiency against the demands for social value. Social value demands are outcomes that go beyond the private gains of the market to address societal needs by producing benefits or reducing costs (Phills et al, 2008; Quelin et al 2017). While some see social value as a concept to be captured and measured (see Smith and Stevens, 2010; Halloran 2017), this article focuses on the elements of social value many view as standing “beyond measurement and quantification”

---

<sup>6</sup> G4S: revenue 2018. Statista.<https://www.statista.com/statistics/323193/revenue-of-g4s-worldwide/>

(Emerson 2003; 40). Still, an examination of social value here also accepts broader forms of understand social value. Drawing on the work of Schultz (2001) and Sloane (2008), this article further develops the concept of moral efficiency, detailing its relationship with social value by locating the moral in social norms linked with efficiency-making. Failures and disruption reveal social values we take for granted and by their absence can reveal dynamics linked with both efficiency- making and social value necessary for moral social value related outcomes. Taking this approach contributes to research that reconciles conflicts between efficiency and social purposes linked to efficiency-making (Ramus et al 2017) by focusing a lens on the balance between efficiency demands and social value demands.

By comparing these demands, tensions naturally conflict with traditional market-based logics of efficiency which stipulate conditions as amorally optimum. For instance, profitable outputs due to minimum inputs can motivate firms operating in this space. But what about the social costs linked to such efficiency-making? Indeed, generally we know that when firms set out to increase shareholder value through efficiency-making, this can impose efficiency costs on stakeholders (Sundaram and Inkpen, 2004). In public-private interactions, social value costs are incurred and are understood in different ways by stakeholders according to their social norms, prompting a key question: efficient for whom? Firm behavior could be efficient for an employee but inefficient for a user or vice versa. Such experiential notions of efficiency move beyond technicalities and instead rely on social groups or individuals. In particular, by focusing on individual understandings of efficiency, we can uncover real forms of social value that have been negatively impacted by efficiency-making. Such evaluations by individuals are centered on notions of what is morally just, leading us to examine what is actually at work: the poor social value outcomes of efficiency-making in relation to the normative implications for stakeholder interests. Such judgements are thus moral judgements seen through the lens of social norms located in social value outcomes.

The following section situates the ethics of government outsourcing with efficiency-making and social value. Reviewing literatures that emphasize the ethical implications of outsourcing demonstrates the motivation to better understand efficiency claims in public-private spaces. The next section seeks to build on the relationships between three key concepts: public- private interactions, moral efficiency and social value. To help illustrate these relationships, this article draws on two stories: the prison officer story (where efficiency-making goes too far) and the story of a train timetable change (where efficiency disappears). The relationship between these three concepts constitute this article's process model, which outlines the mechanisms that fail to attend to the demands of moral efficiency. This failure reveals particular responsibilities for firms working in public-private spheres and understanding the source of such moral responsibilities with reference to efficiency-making refers us to the kind of function a firm is delivering: public, private or both. Grasping this improves our understanding of firms' social value responsibilities in particular, the implications of which results in firm illegitimacy or even failure. I go on to discuss how future research might sharpen the moral efficiency lens and conclude by emphasizing the importance of moral efficiency in public-private interactions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Where the ethics of government outsourcing, efficiency and social value meet**

Because public-private collaborations aim to deliver social value with wider societal implications beyond traditional market incentives (Quelin et al 2017), and the rationale for outsourcing is often to increase efficiency, this space is the ideal setting to consider efficiency's relationship with social value. Moreover, in the UK context, such public procurements are required to deliver social value (Public Services 'Social Value' Act, 2012). While some

scholars argue that these collaborations can help protect society from market and government failures (Mahoney et al, 2009; Rangan et al, 2006) others point to research focused on the failures of such firms (Forrer et al, 2010). This paper is a timely examination of multiple recent failures - intensifying the scrutiny of government outsourced services (Sass et al, 2019). Such failures jar with arguments that outsourcing can increase efficiency (Opara and Rouse 2019; Boyne 2002; Engel et al, 2013; Kwak et al, 2009).

Often, however, the contractee has different motivations: for example, government outsourced firms seek to increase their profits by minimizing their operational costs (Jiang et al, 2007). Such operational costs are thus the minimized input and the profits are the maximized output of efficiency-making but there are other kinds of efficiency-making. In the context of outsourcing within the private sector, Abodor (2012) argued that these motivations result in a race to the bottom, increasing opportunities for unethical behavior. This article argues that public spaces are no different, which is why we are seeing more failures that facilitate a market environment resembling an “oligopoly” (House of Commons, 2018: 4), where private risk has been transferred to the public sector, competition has diminished and failures create instability.

The UK government spends one third of public expenditure (over £284 billion per annum) on outsourcing (Davies et al, 2018) making the stakes very high for business, government and society. Outsourcing has proved risky, with the government’s “top three suppliers in 2016-17 – Capita, Carillion and Amey – experiencing financial difficulties” and Carillion (a facilities management and construction giant) failing outright (Civil Service World, 2018). This prompted the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee to ask, “how appropriate is it for public services or projects to be run by the private sector?” (House of Commons, 2018: 8).

Other failures, such as the G4S prison in Birmingham, whose control was taken back by the state, (Birmingham Mail, 2019) or the failures of Interserve, Sodexo and Staffline to provide adequate probation services (Wright, 2018) uncover corporate irresponsibility that results in “harming ex-offenders trying to rebuild their lives” (Sass 2019: 7). Management journals have not widely considered the relationship between such failures with regards to efficiency-making and their social value outcomes. Despite the notable failures discussed above, some corporately irresponsible firms who deliver public functions can persist (see Learndirect example in House of Commons 2018: 33) and even avoid accountability altogether in the case of private military firms (Gilmour and Jensen, 1998). This underlines the importance of understanding these failures and, by angling our scholarly lens towards efficiency-making, we can examine key social value- related features previously underexplored.

### **Locating moral efficiency in government outsourcing**

This article examines the outcomes of such failures in moral terms by emphasizing the moral demands of efficiency that are guided by moral rules that sustain communal well-being (Schultz, 2001). As some have argued, such moral rules act as social institutions, enabling markets to exist in the first instance (Smith, 2018). Adhering to such moral rules can positively effect social value outcomes because social norms direct such rules. Social value is defined here as outcomes that go beyond the market’s private gains to address societal needs by producing benefits or reducing costs (Phills et al, 2008; Quelin et al, 2017), while moral efficiency considers such social costs related to economic or technical efficiency (see Schultz, 2001; Sloane, 2008). Societal costs are thus social value-related.

Moral efficiency, then, is first broadly defined as the balance between the demands of technical efficiency against the demands of social norms. We know that efficiency is important to social groups (Marti and Scherrer, 2016) and social groups’ perceptions of efficiency should

be important to companies who want to succeed (Fisher, 2019). This article further develops the concept of moral efficiency, first by considering a utilitarian approach which provides optimum levels of social value for individuals, and then by adopting an alternative approach which focuses on social value. This approach effectively renders efficiency demands subordinate to moral efficiency, contributing a new ethical lens to investigate the moral actions of firms who perform public functions. By illustrating moral efficiency, this article contributes to ethical questions around firms at the public-private interface, enabling new theories of accountability, responsibility and failure as called for by Quilen et al (2017). The following questions are explored: what patterns emerge when efficiency-making fails to consider social value demands? How does attending to the demands of moral efficiency address the balance of efficiency demands and social value demands?

### **Public-private dynamics in government outsourcing**

Government outsourcing is, in effect, a public-private interaction or collaboration whose responsibilities are tied to theories of ethics, because delivering on those responsibilities is unavoidably normative, given that outsourced firms are tasked with performing public functions. For this reason, previous research has argued that outsourcing contracts shifts moral responsibilities to the contractor (Adobor 2012). While moral implications are considered, a contractee's legitimacy is also potentially at stake. Governments and regulators can have pressure put on them by third parties to renegotiate contractual terms of government-outsourced firms (Guasch et al, 2008; Kivleniece, and Quelin, 2012; Moszoro, and Spiller, 2012) and in many cases such contracts can be terminated. The rationale to deliver more than just market objectives is that they obtain social value-related contractual terms.

In purely private markets, this same argument applies when considering a firm's political corporate social responsibility (PCSR) because firms can often obtain a state-like

status which endows corporations with particular social responsibilities (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; Scherer et al, 2006; Baur, 2012; Noland and Phillips, 2010; Smith, 2019). If firms outside of public- private collaborations obtain state-like responsibilities, so too do firms outsourced by the state to perform public services. This state-like status necessarily ties their activity to ethical imperatives traditionally considered imperatives of the state. This means that literatures on corporations' responsibilities in public spaces also contribute to literatures on the ethics of government outsourcing. While such responsibilities are not restricted to government outsourcing, firms can be considered political actors when they engage in activity that is for the common good (Crane et al, 2004; Neron, 2010).

When considering the basic structure of society and the decline of the welfare state, some have argued that the social position of firms demands that we consider not just their efficiency but also the implications for justice in society (Blanc and Al-Amoudi, 2013). Indeed, justice in the delivery of public or private goods has implicit social moral ramifications (Smith, 2018). For instance, literatures on public-private collaborations attempt to answer a range of ethical questions regarding firm responsibility and efficiency. Research has examined how the interweaving of public and private activity has challenged government's ability to govern, eroding accountability (Kettl, 2015; Gilmour and Jensen, 1998; Forrer et al 2010). In some cases, erosions in governance and accountability in outsourcing has damaged public confidence, resulting in both authorities and financiers violating "common-law duties of loyalty, competence and care they owe to taxpayers" (Kane, 2009: 1). One key argument against government outsourcing is that the logics of corporate capitalism center on private interests and rights to pursue them, as opposed to public or social purposes (Bishop, 2008). Such debates have led scholars such as Wayne Norman (2015) to remind us of John Rawls' conviction that markets fail, "altogether in the case of public goods" (Rawls 1999: 240; Norman, 2015).

These perspectives contrast with trends of increasing reliance on government outsourcing, largely due to the market logic that competition gives rise to positive economic performance (Berrios, 2006; House of Common, 2018) or efficiency (Kwak et al, 2009). For example, research has examined how public infrastructure projects have been taken over by private corporations due to public sector inefficiencies, but that this produces short-term benefits and is often unsustainable (Koppenjan and Enserink, 2009). Another notable study showed that the US government contracted out services to the private sector to achieve efficiencies and cost savings but often ended up awarding no-bid contracts with negative results and poor value for money (Berrios, 2006). When prospective contractees bid for government contracts, they cut their price to get the contract (Tulder and Mol, 2002) which can lead to the “winner’s curse” (Kern, Willcocks and Heck 2002). So by minimizing the bidding price, prospective outsourced firms will have harder trade-offs in minimzing their operational costs. Other negative outcomes arise when stakeholder groups become suspicious of private companies investing in public goods on the grounds that such goods are traditionally the state’s responsibility, leading to companies’ illegitimacy (Bhanji and Oxley, 2013).

Because of differing theories on efficiency in public-private interactions, theory cannot wholly rely on the value of efficiency, “without a grasp of the behaviors that also support the social outcomes that market arrangements enable” (Smith, 2019: 139). Therefore, efficiency-making ought to be considered a social behavior and such behavior in a public-private setting is uniquely placed to come up against social value demands. Singer (2016) argues that normative theories about firms should seriously consider the context in which corporate actors operate, raising the importance of situating efficiency-making around public-private interactions. Singer distinguished between government failure and justice failure. Government failure is when government action results in suboptimal efficiency (Le Grand, 1991; Singer, 2016) while justice failure is failure to achieve morally desirable outcomes (Singer, 2016).

Singer, however, is concerned with macro failures, such as market failure and welfare state failure. Conversely, this article zooms in on government outsourced firms' failure to meet the moral demands in efficiency-making.

We know that when governments fail, this imposes, “economic as well as social costs” (Jennings and Velasquez, 2015: 469) but management journals have paid little attention to government outsourced failures. Firms who perform functions of the state - what Ciepley (2013) refers to as “franchise governments” - assume a government-like status but, in practice, do not consistently deliver the responsibilities of the state. Unsurprisingly, the status of public-private collaborations and neoliberal market logics of efficiency have been uncomfortable theoretical bedfellows because much of the work considered thus far is either too market-centric or too focused on social outcomes. Moral efficiency provides a middle ground between social outcomes and efficiency-making by considering efficiency-making as a socially grounded phenomenon.

### **The ethics of efficiency-making in government outsourcing**

Market logics of efficiency are prominent in arguments both for and against government outsourcing. Research has challenged the idea that a Paretian approach is what makes markets moral, suggesting that business ethics is concerned with competing moral theories that address particular and sometimes conflicting concerns (Cohen and Peterson, 2017). Cohen and Peterson suggest that business ethics are about weighing up economic activity against other moral arguments - for instance, the ethics of market efficiency (Heath, 2014; Smith, 2018). Heath (2014) suggests that institutional norms within a market require business to behave efficiently, also benefiting society (Heath, 2014; Smith, 2018). This debate has examined the idea that markets demand efficient outcomes and are therefore normative. However, this article explores, not how normative behavior leads to efficiency outcomes, but

how efficiency-making is normative in the first place. Efficiency under this lens then becomes a social practice. Still, the implications of Heath's arguments clearly draw the link between ethics and efficiency.

Previous work on moral efficiency has stressed the need for managers to consider the ethical and the efficient (Sloane, 2008). Others have have adopted Heath's approach, suggesting that particular moral principles must be adhered to for efficiency to occur in the market (Schultz, 2001). Schultz's work is idealized and abstracted far away from the empirical repercussions examined here, while Sloane grounds moral efficiency to the individual. Neither approach addresses a broader understanding of moral efficiency that can be operationalized by both firms and individuals alike.

Reviewing the literature on government outsourcing and moral efficiency points towards several intersecting threads. First, the interface between the market and the state, public interests versus private interests, or private actions in public spaces. Second, that such firms are normatively good because they are efficient. Third, that there are social and societal consequences of firms operating in this space. This article sits where these three threads intersect. In the following sections, this article will demonstrate how moral efficiency helps scholars better understand social value outcomes in public-private interaction. The moral efficiency approach is one of many competing moral arguments (Cohen and Peterson, 2017) concerned with the social value outcomes of government-outsourced activity. In the following section, the relationship between three key conceptual pillars is explored to show how a lack of moral efficiency leads to important consequences for stakeholders and firms alike. It is through the absence of taken-for-granted social values that we can see various demands rise to the surface. Before detailing the mechanisms that unpack the relationships between public-private interactions, moral efficiency and social value, we must consider the second empirical story.

### THREE CONCEPTUAL PILLARS TO EXPLAIN MORAL EFFICIENCY

**The train timetable changes story.** *In 2018, several London train companies announced significant changes to their timetables. Govia Thameslink Railways (GTR) and Northern Rail services employed a number of tactics to advertize forthcoming timetable changes to train users, including leafletting commuters, tannoy announcements in train stations and putting up posters. The communications campaign highlighted change and disruption to services, recognizing the external effects on people's lives that would result. Despite the preparation and communications campaign, GTR failed in its rollout of the new timetable. The result was a scandal, with, "mass train cancellations and no information about why services were not running" (Brignall, 2018) and the BBC reported that, "over a period of several weeks, GTR and Northern cancelled up to 470 and 310 scheduled trains respectively each weekday". The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) stated that the timetable debacle was due to a lack of "responsibility and accountability" and criticized the bad treatment of users by train operators (BBC, 2018). It was reported that the thousands of trains cancelled between May and July 2018 resulted in "serious financial consequences" for rail users (Cook, 2018). Delays have since plagued the public transportation system.*

The prison officer story at the beginning exemplifies an instance where efficiency-making overrides the demands of moral efficiency, while the train timetable story exemplifies an instance where efficiency is absent, negatively impacting social value. Both stories illuminate the mechanisms that lead to a lack of moral efficiency, and are key to understanding the balance that must be struck between efficiency-making and social value-making. This article now turns to the first of our three key concepts, public-private interactions, followed by moral efficiency and, finally, social value. Each concept will be considered alongside both the prison officer story and the train timetable story.

## **Public-private interactions**

In the prison officer story, we can clearly assume that a private firm is performing a public function. But what does it mean for a firm to perform a public function and thus entail a public-private interaction? Globalization and privatization have made it increasingly difficult to distinguish between public and private interests (Cutler, 1997). Moreover, governments have sought to interweave public and private interests, resulting in complex interdependencies between the two (Kettl, 2015). It is therefore unsurprising that relationships between public and private sectors have frequently been debated (Boyne, 2002). Moreover, the importance of this trend is clear, as it “has become a very significant part of the delivery of central and local government services throughout the world” (House of Commons, 2018: 3).

A public function can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and therefore requires a broad conceptualization that allows for contextual investigations. For example, political corporate social responsibility (PCSR) in particular has debated the political responsibilities assigned to firms who take on a state-like role with expectations that they obtain the responsibility to engage in democratic deliberations with stakeholders (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; Scherer, Palazzo and Baumann, 2006; Baur, 2012; Noland and Phillips, 2010). While political CSR recognizes both purely private state-like firms and those contracted out by the state, this article confines this debate to government outsourced firms who obtain the responsibilities as the state rather than instance where the state recedes and corporations then address state-like responsibilities. Banerjee (2008) has cogently written on the historical, cultural and economic development of corporations whose legal status developed to the point where “legislative requirements were designed to protect private interests, often at the expense of the public” (Banerjee, 2008: 55). I adopt Banerjee’s perspective but zoom in on public-private interactions, suggesting that we consider what a state has already outsourced on behalf of its citizenry.

Hence, the most obvious public function is any service which a domestic audience deems to be a public one.

Such a broad and pluralistic approach to what it means to perform a public function enables explorations which develop contextually meaningful theoretical explanations of public functions by attending to cultural contexts. One helpful route towards better understanding public functions could consider Habermas, who also strongly supported a pluralistic approach towards democratic deliberative processes that considers conflicting views of what is deemed good for society - highlighting the importance of different cognitive interests (Habermas, 2003). Such cognitive interests can be understood as people having similar agential needs, such as healthcare, transportation or security. Such cognitive interests reveal even more nuanced considerations that underpin other similar agential needs. For instance, an examination of cognitive interests recognizes that people are concerned with questions of efficiency and stability (Willmott, 2003). This article takes up such cognitive interests in a pluralistic way and considers a public function by acknowledging competing values and world views (Larmore, 1994).

Thus, a public function is dependent on contextual circumstance but is also conceptually understood as something broadly supported by democratic values, while also being subject to the actions of government outsourcing. This prompts scholars to question: if a firm is performing a public function, what are its state-like responsibilities? Indeed, it appears that identifying such responsibilities would be key to understanding how firms may fail in delivering on those social responsibilities. Empirically, there are social responsibility features uniquely associated with firms who perform public functions (but not associated with governments) as they are “not subject to the same constitutional, statutory and oversight restrictions as governmental actors” delegation of public functions outside the bounds of government” which “profoundly challenges traditional notions of accountability” (Gilmour

and Jensen, 1998: 248). I therefore refer to such firms as working in the domain of public-private interactions. Such accountability concerns with public-private interactions necessarily point towards explicit responsibilities to which we can turn when considering the social implications of efficiency-making against the demands of social value.

### **Public private interactions and efficiency**

Being efficient is important for outsourced firms like those running private prisons or train services because efficiency is generally a key rationale for contracting out such activity to private firms. An Institute for Government report emphasizes that the rationale to outsource has depended on the idea, “that applying market mechanisms and private sector experience to the work of government can reduce costs and raise quality by improving efficiency” (Sass et al, 2019: 15). Firm efficiency can, in some instances, meet social norms in society: for instance, when train services efficiently run on time, they meet the established expectations of commuters of getting to work on time and back home at a time of their choosing. In other words, they are meeting social value demands.

When moral efficiency is attended to, it can bring about individual social value-related outcomes for stakeholders, as can ensuring that efficiency-making does not take precedence over the demands of social value. In the prison officer example, had G4S prioritized both efficiency- making and social value demands by ensuring their staff were well trained and provided an appropriate guard-inmate ratio, in an environment where officers worked standardized hours, negative social outcomes would be reduced, improving the lives of both the staff and the inmates, benefiting society as a whole. When firms do meet social norms at the expense of efficiency-making measures that benefit few, we can observe how social expectations arise, demonstrating the importance of attending to moral efficiency. But this

article focuses *on the lack of moral efficiency* to argue that social value implications are more easily observable when moral efficiency is absent, especially so when the absence is sustained.

#### **Four efficiency-making measures in the prison officer story**

Public-private interactions are the best settings to investigate how efficiency-making influences firm behavior and why some firms who operate within public-private interactions seek efficiencies by, for example, paying lower wages, providing less training (Sass et al, 2019). The prison officer story offers us insight into four efficiency-making measures that resulted in a violent outcome for the employee. First, the employee was made to guard twice the number of inmates as stipulated by the company's own guidance. Secondly, he was working extremely unstandardized hours, from 7:30am - 10:00pm. Thirdly there were no team leaders or assigned officers on duty at the time. Fourthly, this public-private interaction resulted in G4S paying a settlement. Each measure is common, as such efficiencies are cost-cutting ones.

The fourth one is perhaps not obviously an efficiency measure. Fines and penalties are often considered a slap on the wrist relative to the government contracts they hold (Mason, 2016). But perhaps more importantly, such settlements are perceived as the price of doing business, rendering such financial penalties ineffective in demonstrating effective accountability or motivating more responsible behavior. In other words, paying such settlements in comparison to their operations is widely considered as an efficient use of operational costs in comparison to hiring more well-trained staff who work fewer hours. Moreover, as paying penalties, fines or settlements does not overly impact profit margins in the case of G4S, firms are incentivized to engage in efficiency-making that endangers employees and prisoners alike, providing poor social value outcomes.

While some might present this as an isolated case of corporate incompetence, I would highlight other high-profile G4S cases involving negative outcomes. These include their two

detention centers where prisoners were abused by poorly trained staff, their failure to employ an adequate number of security staff for the 2012 Olympics (BBC, 2017) and the poor conditions in Birmingham prison which resulted in G4S paying a £9.9 million settlement, after the Ministry of Justice returned it to public control (Rodger, 2019). Examples like the prison officer story show that prioritizing cost-cutting efficiencies that efficiently delivers profits, is bound up with a disregard for the social value implications for employees, detainees and the general public. As the next section outlines, moral efficiency, which weighs up human well-being “rather than the utilization of a measurable resource” traditionally considered by efficiency arguments (Sloane, 2008: 621) can help explain an over-reliance on efficiency-making within the domain of public- private interactions. The next section explicitly focuses on current theories of moral efficiency and how, going forward, the concept can be better understood for management scholarship.

### **Moral Efficiency**

This paper is the first to define moral efficiency as the balance between the demands of efficiency and the demands of social value. To better understand the relationship between efficiency and what is moral, we can look to the past 60 years of economic thought on efficiency in the form of the efficient market hypothesis (Read, 2012). Such considerations concentrated on optimum market conditions, leading to the efficiency market models which became prominent in the 1970s (Shiller 2003) and played a central role in neoliberal policies subsequently pursued by many governments. Nevertheless, Shiller (2003) reminds us that sociology has played a key role in helping scholars to distance themselves from the presumption that markets always work well, contradicting much of the efficient market theory. Traditional economists and sociologists continue to differ in their respective approaches to questions of efficiency: for instance, “financial economists mostly explore macro-level efficiency measures and sociologists of finance look at the micro-dynamics of stability” (Marti

and Scherer, 2016: 314). The questions raised by Shiller and others are concerned with the social dynamics involved in economic activity. As Marti and Scherror (2016) point out, social groups value efficiency and, depending on what is at stake, may focus on efficiency above all other considerations. This highlights that market objectives are not purely based on Paretian objectives, but also serve a “plurality of other valuable ends, such as knowledge, public health, national defense, transportation, education, ecological integrity, social mobility, opportunity, and justice” (Smith, 2019: 137). These interests in efficiency are influenced by individual conceptions of social value. Indeed, as Jeffrey Smith (2019) points out, scholars should further consider the institutional permissions that necessitate the very existence of markets, “that provision various morally important social values” (Smith, 2019: 138).

One of the more notable contributors to the concept of linking the moral with efficiency is Shultz (2001) who wrote about the moral conditions needed for efficiency to occur. While Shultz focuses on a Smithsonian idealized market place, he makes crucial distinctions between normative and moral constraints, moving the discussion beyond contract theory (for examples see Makadok and Coff, 2009; Zenger and Hesterly, 1997) by focusing on these exchanges as a social practice and arguing that such conditions contain essential normative social practices (Shultz 2001: 106). As Quilin et al (2017) and Kim and Mahoney (2010) point out, the interdependencies between public, social and private actors suggest that there is a need for more scholarly work to, “move beyond contractual considerations to accommodate broader organizational, relational, and contextual factors that may promote social value” (Quilin et al, 2017: 765). To do this, this article borrows Shultz’s definition of moral as, “a social practice guided by moral rules, which in turn are identified as such by virtue of how compliance achieves and sustains communally defined well-being” (Shultz, 2001: 6). This approach to efficiency- making, as a social practice, allows us to re-examine the demands of efficiency and social value because government outsourcing intends to meet both on behalf of the state. For

example, commuters demand a certain level of efficiency for social value outcomes that must be balanced against each other.

In comparison to Schultz (2001), Sloane (2008) juxtaposes moral efficiency with the idea of managerial efficiency. The morally efficient manager “gauges the expenditure of the life force of his followers as a human cost” rather than a human resource to be bureaucratically exploited (Sloane, 2008: 621). Sloane challenged the notion that efficiency can be ammorally enacted when considering the social and moral demands a manger must engage when managing other people. For Sloane, a key output for efficiency was happiness - a social value considered here. Moral efficiency is thus linked to social value because efficiency-making has a direct impact on social value as demonstrated by both the prison officer story and the train timetable story. This is also the case for Schultz and Sloane, whose examples and theory weigh up social practices or the human toll in relation to efficiency-making.

To better articulate moral efficiency we can borrow the language of technical efficiency and consider the inputs and outputs of moral efficiency. Moral efficiency’s input is attending to social norms by weighing up the optimum social value outcomes against efficiency-making measures. Rather than minimum input for maximum output, we might consider this as appropriately attending to social inputs to maximize social value outcomes. Such an approach entails a utilitarian approach, which has the potential to sacrifice key stakeholder interests but could be explored by future research.

This article takes an alternative approach, by considering two key inputs: firms’ efficiency-making alongside social value-making; essentially limiting efficiency-making by balancing efficiency demands and social value demands (see process model). An example of a firm’s efficiency-making meeting social value demands is when train services efficiently run on time, enabling a host of social norms to be met and resulting in social value outcomes. As

this paper argues, when social norms are met in this way, they can be taken for granted and only recognized by their absence. In other words, commuters only noticed the social value impact of a regularly disruptive and inefficient service to their personal lives when that disruption occurred; getting to work on time, picking kids up from school, receiving the service for which they have paid and other taken-for-granted social value outcomes. This example also illustrates that a certain level of efficiency is necessary to meet social value demands. This second key input, social value-making, could take the form of private security firms avoiding the temptation to make dangerous efficiency costs due to the potential violation of social norms - even at the expense of their profits. For instance, had another prison guard been present and had Goodenough supervised the appropriate number of inmates, he may not have been attacked or sustained a serious injury. When both inputs are considered and those demands balanced in public-private interaction, then a firm will be attending to moral efficiency's demands. In public- private interactions, efficiency and social values are inextricably linked, making the outsourced firm a social actor.

Because a firm is a social actor who must meet societal expectations (Banerjee, 2010) moral efficiency is a social performance indicator which is heavily influenced by the nature of a firm which performs a public function. Firms working in public-private interactions are actively aware that they must serve both private and public interests (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2011) but service users also require both economic and social value-related benefits (Harrison and Wicks, 2013). We can therefore see how our second concept, moral efficiency, works in relation to social value demands.

### **A lack of moral efficiency and social value**

So far this article has argued that moral efficiency is a conceptual bridge which balances the demands both of efficiency and of social values. By focusing on the absence of moral

efficiency, we can observe the loss of taken-for-granted social value outcomes. I have illustrated the failure of G4S to protect internal stakeholders adequately and how train services failed to efficiently run on time. Previous research has examined how relational coordination between employees with similar goals creates social value (Caldwell, Roehrich and George, 2017) but their setting was a, “formalized, stable and regulated” form of public-private collaboration. The cases examined here occur in persistently unstable and under regulated contexts, revealing a lack of moral efficiency. What exactly is lacking will be best understood by attending to social values that are imperatively linked to public function firm efficiency. When such moral considerations are actively and continuously ignored, social value deteriorates, making it difficult to reverse its effects - the negative feedback loop. To illustrate this, consider the train timetable change story, perhaps one of the best illustrations of a lack of moral efficiency leading to produced and reproduced negative social value outcomes.

The social fallout of the train timetable rollout was widespread. Neena Bhati, head of campaigns at the consumer advocacy organization Which?, highlighted that,

*“It’s not just that commuters can’t get home in time to put their children to bed, they have to leave so early the next day so they don’t even see them wake up. It is grinding people down on a daily basis”* (Cook 2018).

As Which? later pointed out after an investigation of the timetable rollout, “the impact of these months has stayed with many. Melissa March was five months pregnant when her commute from Cambridgeshire to London went into meltdown. With a young daughter to pick up from nursery, Melissa found it difficult to navigate the overcrowding. “I didn’t want to damage my baby” she said. “I had panic attacks about catching the train” (Crowe, 2019). Such examples show how the continued absence of trains efficiently running on time compounds the absence of social value, making it more difficult to meet social value demands like getting home to put

children to bed or collect them from school. Examples like these illustrate a sustained depletion of social value by highlighting what is lacking in key stakeholders' lives.

Since May 2018, calls to nationalize train services have intensified. The UK government made GTR invest £15 million in improvements for passengers. Nevertheless, the company has retained its routes and has raised fares annually since the 2018 timetable change rollout. Like the G4S settlement, the consequences for the rail providers were marginal, as it was difficult for commuters to claim compensation and the £5 million fine was seen by many, including the then- Shadow Transport Secretary as a "slap on the wrist" (Kollewe, 2019). Again, such fines are considered the price of doing business. Subsequent actions like raising fares demonstrate a disregard for key stakeholders, despite the company's recognition that before, during and after, it maintains particular public-private responsibilities - notably to passengers' social value demands (meeting social norms) - as originally signaled by its timetable changes campaign.

Therefore, understanding the relationship between public-private interactions and social value not only uncovers outsourced firms' social value responsibilities, but is also a good boundary exercise on where private profit ends and social value begins. Another key distinction of public-private interactions is that government outsourced firms tasked with state-like responsibilities can often be monopolistic, without alternatives for key stakeholders, violating taken-for-granted market norms. In the case of a train monopoly, stakeholders are often left without any alternative transportation provider and can therefore continually experience corporate irresponsibility or failure.

The next section of this paper highlights how, as the train timetable rollout continued, stakeholders grew increasingly morally outraged as social value demands were continually unmet. As this trend compounds, there is a reversal in social value reproduction, creating a

negative feedback loop between a firm's behavior and stakeholder expectations and attitudes. A firm which continues to fail to deliver social value demands is behaving corporately irresponsibly if it fails to rectify the situation and goes on to abuse its key stakeholders. In this case, corporate irresponsibility is understood as events that "are temporally defined organizational actions that cause harm to stakeholders" (Mena et al, 2016). The longer moral efficiency is absent and the more social value deteriorates, the harder it is to reverse the effects on individuals. Thus we can see how a lack of moral efficiency works on social value which no longer can create benefits or reduce the social and financial costs to stakeholders.

### **Social Value**

Generally, social value here has focused on individual level social value examples such as working conditions or being able to get to work on time. At the macro-level, social value can be understood as being "something of value for society" (Dietz, and Porter, 2012; 23). Still, the origins of social value have been debated and it is still a contested concept. Adam Smith was among the first to elaborate the more modern notion of value, arguing that people generally know what is best for them (Smith, 1776) and that value is, "something that individuals should define themselves and not allow governments or others to choose their stead" (Harrison and Wicks, 2013: 99). Understanding social value at the individual level is important because it is more easily observable when considering the social value impact of public-private interactions. Nevertheless, social value is defined as outcomes that go beyond the private gains of the market to address societal needs by producing benefits or reducing costs (Phills et al, 2008; Quelin et al, 2017).

Indeed, documentary evidence bears this out, with train users reporting social value related propositions such as this: "Trains are delayed every single day. It affects my job, my

health and my social life” (Kollewe, 2019). As Hope Brotherton, another London commuter recounts, her anxiety was heightened by the GTR timetable rollout.

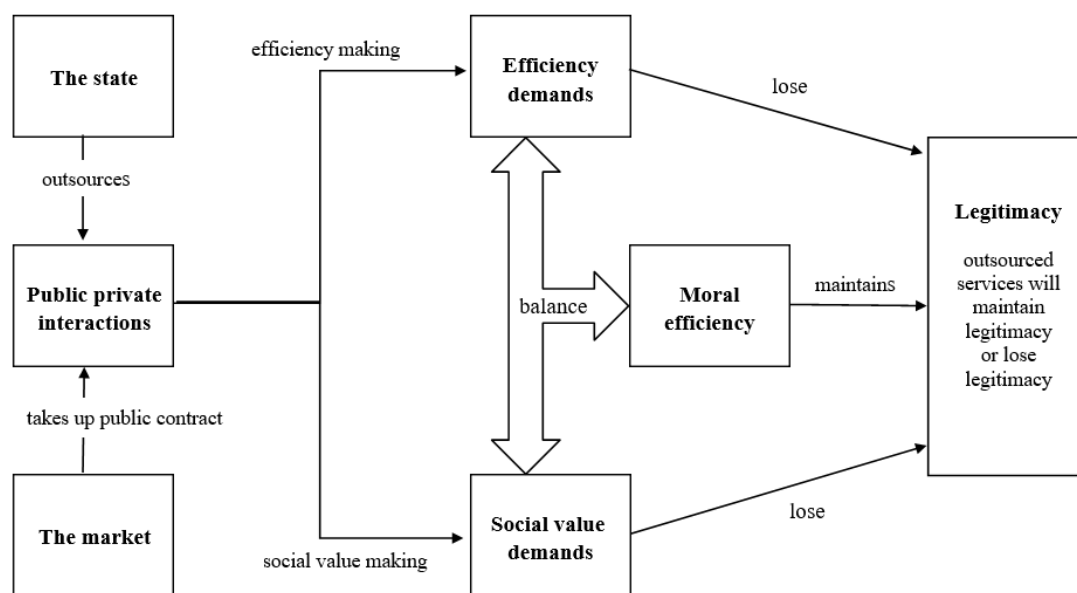
*“I was stuck in a never-ending cycle of despair. Regularly, I would silently emit tears of frustration as another orange pixel would flash delayed across a vacant screen. In a vain attempt to manage my soon-to-be delayed journey, I obsessively followed Great Northern and Thameslink on various social media channels. However, none of this helped ease my concerns about arriving into work on time or being home for dinner at a reasonable hour. Socializing with friends became impossible, too”* (Brotherton, 2019)

### **Violating four social norms**

Hope Brotherton’s anxiety became normalized as trust eroded over the continued failure of the service where her social life was eventually rendered “impossible”. Such reductions in individual social, economic and environmental spheres of life are often framed by social values and understood by stakeholders’ moral perceptions. At this juncture, normative responsibilities become most clear - namely, how a firm which performs a public function ought to operate. Such judgements are not only normative, but also become moral when social values go unmet. For instance, the financial consequences mean that when users pay for a service, they expect that service to run. When that service fails to run, this violates transactional social norms. Market norms are also violated, as the train services effectively run a monopoly, without alternative options for commuters. There is also a violation of accountability norms, with the train company retaining control of the service after operating irresponsibly for an extended period of time, harming key stakeholders.

Finally, there are violations in government responsibility norms, causing stakeholders to criticize the private company and also the government, as many view such services as being government’s responsibility. When such services continually fail, to the point of corporate

malfeasance, the user believes that she is a victim of social and economic injustice. Such violations of social norms are violations of accepted moral rules in society. In order to make sense of stakeholders' social practices of using a public function service, we should consider how users understand public functions within the sphere of public-private interactions. By understanding internal and external individual evaluations of public-private interactions and the violation of social norms we can understand the outcomes of a lack in moral efficiency and the social value feedback loop which follows.



Government outsourced firms are encouraged to deliver both efficiency and social value when contracted out by the state. Figure 1 illustrates how efficiency-making and social value-making must be balanced with their corresponding demands in order to be morally efficient. If firms over rely on efficiency demands or social value demands, they will lose legitimacy with key audiences. However, when both efficiency and social value demands are adequately balanced, legitimacy can be maintained.

Figure 3.1: Balancing the Demands for Moral Efficiency

## What is at stake

Stakeholders are key in understanding moral efficiency because it is their taken-for-granted social value demands that are being considered in these public-private interactions. Stakeholders in this case are individuals affected by a firm achieving their objectives (Freeman

1984: 46). Government outsourced firms operate in spaces where affected stakeholders include service users, employees, tax payers and the state. Such perspectives are important in understanding stakeholder value (Harrison and Wicks, 2013) but more importantly, such stakeholders are key in understanding their efficiency demands alongside their social value demands. Perhaps this is why stakeholder literatures have previously focused on public policy or health (see Harrison and Wicks, 2013) as such services are inherently public related.

## DISCUSSION

This article has focused on two key stakeholders: internal employees of a government outsourced firm (the prison officer story) and external users of train services (the train timetable change story). Employees are key to understanding moral efficiency as outsourced firms often make efficiencies through firings, resulting in an overstretched, under-resourced workforce (see House of Commons, 2018) as well as many other efficiency-making practices intended to maximize profit by reducing operational costs (Jiang et al, 2007). Other forms of efficiencies can be the hiring of poorly skilled employees who are paid less than the previously state-run workforce. The negative implications for stakeholders of the failures mentioned in this article show that a lack of moral efficiency is not only detrimental to individuals but to society as a whole. It is for this reason that previous research suggests that value for money (Kane, 2011) and social value (Quelin et al, 2017) should be key drivers in outsourced activity.

Stakeholders' experiences shape their views of firm efficiency-making, which are therefore social constructions. Social constructions encourage management scholars to, "do more than explain how theories shape social reality" but seek, "to develop theories that enhance rather than diminish social welfare" (Marti and Scherror, 2016: 298). As this article argues, failures in public-private interactions diminish social welfare due to a lack of attention to moral

efficiency. This article therefore reveals social value demands by their absence, addressing the concerns raised by Marti and Scherror (2016) that scholars should enhance social value research. Moreover, a lack of social value can uncover a firm's social responsibilities. It is therefore essential to examine stakeholder understandings of efficiency-making in the delivery of public functions and social value outcomes. That is why attending to social value demands has very real implications for the legitimacy of a government outsourced firm. Indeed, stakeholder perceptions should be important such firms if they want to succeed in the long term (Fisher, 2019). This article therefore suggests there are some notable social value related consequences which result from a lack of moral efficiency.

### **Social value related consequences**

In the train timetable example, we observe three stages in public-private interaction: how train operators prepared for the timetable changes; how the timetable changes were rolled out; and the subsequent impact on stakeholders. As this article shows, the train timetable failures resulted in social value-related consequences: social, professional, governmental, and family related. People stopped socializing with friends, were late to work and failed to get home to put their children to bed and the government was forced to review the franchises. Other consequences were incurred, such as extra financial costs for passengers, or commuters continuing to experience heightened anxiety almost a year after the event. Such experiences culminate in moral injustices for stakeholders because such firm behavior violates taken-for-granted social values. Additionally, train users are held to ransom by a monopoly and, because they do not get what they paid for, the transactional relationship is broken. This same concern applies to tax payers who enable the government to subsidize and contract out the transportation service, creating poor value for money for government and taxpayers.

The social value negative feedback loop ensues and we can see empirical implications for firm legitimacy, with train services in danger of being nationalized or in some cases losing their control over a franchise (Topham, 2019). In other cases, we see services renationalized, such as the G4S prison in Birmingham which was taken back under government control. This article therefore suggests that moral efficiency impacts on the legitimacies firms can obtain - particularly because such legitimacy coheres with Shultz's moral notions of social norms and values. For instance, the much-cited definition of legitimacy can be understood as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574).

### **Losing legitimacy in public-private interactions**

We know "a business firm's legitimacy stems from both its economic function as an efficient producer of goods and its ability to generate wealth for its shareholders" (Banerjee, 2010: 267) but as stated above, by examining the moral demands tied to efficiency I am asking: efficient for whom? And for which audience is legitimacy sought? As Cederstrom and Fleming (2016) point out, "Suchman is keen to highlight how organizational legitimacy is socially constructed rather than a natural attribute of institutions. This makes the socio-cultural context crucial since legitimacy is dependent on what he terms an "audience's changeable perceptions" (Cederstrom and Fleming, 2016: 1581). Firms performing public functions obtain degrees of legitimacy that are necessary in obtaining a license to operate, and such legitimacy is continually evaluated when a contract ends and whether or not a new one begins.

Moral efficiency, then, has very real implications for legitimacy in government outsourcing. Because firms who perform public functions have to regularly bid for contracts, they could also regularly lose their legitimacy with government or taxpayers. Whether a firm

obtains or is denied legitimacy is a consequence of whether they are meeting or disregarding moral efficiency's demands. In other words, fulfilling the needs of affected audiences as well as their adherence to socially accepted norms and values holds their success to ransom. If a train timetable is continuously violated to the point of negligence without accountability, then the service is failing to fulfill the need it was intended to provide - namely, delivering social value and corresponding demands for efficiency. When high levels of moral efficiency are produced, normative efficiency is at work as affected stakeholders evaluate the firm's behavior against their expectations. It is therefore not surprising that the UK government conducted a thorough review of the train services following the timetable rollout. Equally, in the G4S case, we have seen not only scandal resulting in fines and settlements but the actual requisition of one of their prisons back to the public sector, also resulting in a failure. Such failures demonstrate the loss of legitimacy on multiple fronts. Had G4S focused less on the demands of efficiency and more on the demands of moral efficiency, they would have been more likely to succeed. Had the rail companies delivered efficiency that positively affected social value, they would likely not be facing such public resentment and calls to renationalize the service.

### **Sharpening the moral efficiency lens further**

This article's focus on moral efficiency is a part of an emancipatory research agenda aimed at re-energizing scholars to what is and what is possible (Willmott, 2003). Moral efficiency provides new, exciting opportunities for future research. For instance, the moral efficiency approach sits comfortably alongside Ebrahim's (2003) notion of social auditing, where stakeholder views are considered by a firm to develop or revise their "organizational values and goals", "designing indicators for assessing performance" (Ebrahim, 2003: 822). Moreover, like social auditing, moral efficiency can help to develop better long-term social performance because consciously attending to the balance between efficiency and social value demands would improve social value reproduction by reinforcing positive stakeholder

perceptions of efficiency. A moral efficiency approach also helps to address normative questions of how, “researchers support a process in which social groups themselves define social welfare?” (Marti and Scherer, 2016:302) or in this case, efficiency balanced with social value.

It also addresses concerns about the need for a more focused understanding of stakeholder value by attending to stakeholder perceptions (Harrison and Wicks, 2013) of firm efficiency-making. The logical conclusion, and what has been previously argued by Jennings and Velasquez (2015), is that when firms consider their ethical values seriously, then government failure and corruption could be avoided. Exploring moral efficiency within management studies at the individual level of analysis enables scholars to understand new forms of responsibility, mechanisms for accountability and evaluate firms’ social value outcomes.

Other opportunities to sharpen our understanding of moral efficiency could be addressing the institutional complexity that arises from a lack of moral efficiency because accounting for stakeholder views can be deemed too challenging. Indeed, this article’s pluralistic approach paves the way for individual case studies that can reveal the dynamics between institutional practices and stakeholder evaluations as well as violations of social norms. Indeed, simply by identifying the violations of social norms linked to efficiency-making is enough to explore a lack of moral efficiency. Moral efficiency could also be examined by literatures on power, as stakeholders can sometimes be held hostage by a monopoly and thus rendered powerless when efficiency is absent. Moreover, a focus on power in relation to moral efficiency could also be considered in the context of institutional logics - another neglected route within the literature on power (Fleming and Spicer, 2014).

From an institutional perspective, as with financial innovations, the moral efficiency approach outlined in this article could “help reshape the institutional design, social norms, and language” (Marti and Scherror, 2016: 315) in the context of public-private interactions. Institutional logics also posit that market logics suggest that efficiency in profit making is a norm (Thornton et al, 2013) but moral efficiency opens up the possibility of examining the norm of efficiency further. Moral efficiency could be considered against the logics and norms of market efficiency to better understand moral dimensions in strategy. Another approach could be to explore the commensurability of moral efficiency with technical efficiency as, in some contexts, they could be considered incommensurable. Also, moral efficiency provides a fascinating exploration for scale development in public-private spaces and could be examined by quantitative scholars who seek to measure and capture the concept. Indeed, there are many fascinating roads ahead and this article contributes a new ethical lens in public-private interactions and business ethics.

## CONCLUSION

While this article’s empirical focus has been on the UK, this is an international phenomenon. For instance, in California there is a private prison run by the Wackenhut Corrections Corporation. An inmate who had fled persecution and death threats in his homeland went on a hunger strike with fellow prisoners due to the poor conditions of the prison which included rotting food, poor healthcare, and guard violence due to efficiency-making measures. As their lawyer aptly put it, such situations arise because, “to maximize profit, you minimize expenditure” (The New York Times, 2018) and through such efficiency-making we can see how social value demands are ignored and how moral efficiency is therefore not attended to. Such stories abound in our society as the logics of private, for-profit organizations take over spaces that have traditionally sat within the remit of the state. Understanding this

international phenomenon is more important than ever as private companies assume responsibilities for delivering services in the military, healthcare, and prisons as well as even more hybrid spaces such as train services. Successful public-private interactions demand considerations beyond technical or economic efficiency-making and profit; they require a social balance between efficiency demands on the one hand and human costs and well-being on the other. If firms fail to consider such costs, they can ultimately lose their legitimacy and fail. This article is clear, the demands of moral efficiency do matter to internal and external stakeholders alike.

This article presents a process model to explain how the demands of moral efficiency can fail to be met and how a lack of moral efficiency influences firm legitimacy, helping scholars better understand government outsourced failure due to either a lack of efficiency or an over-reliance on efficiency. Attending to the demands of moral efficiency not only provides a unique stakeholder perspective for practitioners and government, but also suggests a genuine ethical concern for taken-for-granted social values. The UK's 2012 Social Value Act is an interesting development in government procurement as it empirically stresses the importance of social value for public-private collaborations. This article extends our understanding of the relationship between public-private interactions by angling our attention through the moral efficiency lens. Given that governments around the world increasingly rely on the outsourcing of public functions (House of Commons, 2018), investigations of moral efficiency are essential for scholars to better identify and understand taken-for-granted social value demands alongside efficiency demands in government outsourcing.

## ARTICLE 4. Piracy as Organizational Wrongdoing: from Public-Private Partnerships to Public-Private Pirates

### ABSTRACT

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have enjoyed growing support as legitimate and efficient arrangements for providing public goods and services. Nonetheless, mounting theoretical and empirical evidence challenges the positive aura surrounding such arrangements, as private entities have often demonstrated behaviors antithetical to partnerships designed to serve the public. Yet, to date, there is a dearth of empirical research that examines the forms of wrongdoing such organizational arrangements entail, leading to an under-theorization of how and why wrongdoing persists so close to the State. To address this, we take the case of the UK, and code official Parliamentary committee reports and inquiry documents concerned with PPP wrongdoing. We observe that, while the state outsources to PPPs, it also allows regulatory voids that invites bad practices. We empirically identify five such practices that underpin PPP wrongdoings, most notably fraud. Observing persistent PPP wrongdoing led us to coin the term ‘Public-Private Pirates’ to explain unsuccessful partnerships that sustain wrongdoing and undermine public services. Our empirical study contributes to the wrongdoing literature by demonstrating processes, mechanisms and structures that enable normal wrongdoing in government outsourcing.

**Keywords:** public-private partnerships, wrongdoing, pirate organizations, piracy, public management

### INTRODUCTION

Scholars have observed that PPPs have become a legitimated tool to outsource government activities, under the assumption that market forces would provide efficiency (Opara and Rouse 2019; Boyne 2002; Engel, Fischer and Galetovic 2013; Kwak, Chih, and Ibbs 2009) and innovation (Kivleniece and Quelin 2012). Nonetheless, research has also focused on the disadvantages of PPPs: Opara and Rouse (2019) suggest that the culture of ‘new public management’ can explain why, despite mounting negative evidence, the trend of employing PPPs continues to grow. Critical literatures have acknowledged problems involving highly normative accounts of partnership ideologies and how they serve as a device for financialization or neoliberalization, despite evidence that market-based solutions might not produce desirable outcomes (Scheyvens, Banks and Hughes 2016). Indeed, PPPs can sometimes disregard the public side of such arrangements (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2011). Although PPPs are now an established type of hybrid organization (Villani, Greco, and Phillips 2017), recent failures and scandals have regularly resulted in fines and/or the state taking such services back under public control.

Proof of the many problems involving PPPs can be observed in the extensive media coverage spanning the last decade, with a steady series of scandals involving companies contracted to provide public services. Examples of fraud and mismanagement have emerged in various settings, from facilities management to private prisons to the Covid pandemic (The Guardian, 2019, 2020, 2021). The scale of such failures is remarkable because states like the UK spend £251.5 billion per year on outsourcing - roughly 13.7% of GDP<sup>i</sup>. While this amount is comparable to other states’ spending on outsourcing, the UK exemplifies a pattern of PPP failures and associated scandals. For this reason, we investigate PPPs, which can be defined as “long-term contracts between a private party and a government agency, for providing a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk and management responsibility” (World Bank Institute 2012: 11; see also Roehrich, Lewis and George 2014).

In the UK, concerns about whether PPPs actually deliver an equivalent public service while providing ‘value for money’ for government and taxpayers<sup>ii</sup> has prompted calls to better understand the ‘nature and functioning’ of PPPs (Andon 2012).

Given the amount of money at stake and PPP scandals occurring in close succession, we decided to analyze PPPs through the wrongdoing lens, chiefly to capture the practices and mechanisms that enable them. Professional wrongdoing involves, “violations of criminal, civil, and administrative law; transgressions of explicit industry and professional codes; and contraventions of less codified organizational rules, social norms, and ethical principles” (Palmer 2012: 1), many of which are observed in the empirical material analyzed hereafter. We were also motivated to examine whether PPP wrongdoing has become normalized (see Palmer 2013). Our study contributes to these debates by identifying three loopholes which enable five piratic practices of wrongdoing, challenging the notion of PPPs as partnerships. We therefore suggest reconsidering the concept of PPPs to allow for a more nuanced perspective on these arrangements and the private organizations involved.

To demonstrate this, we examine the UK Parliament’s Public Accounts Committee (PAC) reports and evidence which highlight instances of wrongdoing in order to identify the mechanisms that enable public-private piracy’s raiding of the public purse through wrongdoing.<sup>iii</sup> Such public documents demonstrate key perceptions of actors, like government officials, ministers and CEOs, as these are, “constructed according to the conventions of public policy discourse” and “creating, clarifying, sustaining, and modifying this particular version of reality” (Brown 2004: 98). Such inquiries also help us examine the governance environment ex-post an event. We also analysed media articles on each case discussed, as encouraged by Clemente and Gabbioneta (2017). After we coded and analyzed the Parliamentary reports, we gained insights into the various hierarchical governance failings, regulatory voids and accountability vacuums necessary for a field of piracy to develop. This work addresses whether

information flows in PPPs serve public accountability and corporate governance (Shaoul et al., 2008) but suggests existing hierarchical PPP structures entail elements of piracy that offend public sensibilities (Parker, 2010). We therefore seek to understand what practices enable PPP wrongdoing.

This article starts by considering PPP and wrongdoing literatures to outline the need for a new critical examination of PPPs. The literature review comparison challenges what is meant by a ‘partnership’ in a PPP and reconfigures the concept of PPPs using the metaphor of the pirate to challenge existing theory. We then draw on wrongdoing literatures to highlight the importance of considering piracy as a form of wrongdoing perpetrated by PPPs. The next section details the methodology and data used to analyze the mechanisms that enable PPP wrongdoing. The cases examined reveal a range of wrongdoings resulting in scandal and/or failure. The next section unpacks the three types of loophole that invite PPP piratic practices: *structural loopholes*, *contractual loopholes* and *social loopholes*. We identify how each type of loophole invites piratical behavior and this leads to our analysis of the five practices identified in the empirical material: *bluffing*, *over-charging*, *pyramid management*, *efficiency-cost-cutting* and *workforce exploitation*. Following our analysis of the loopholes and practices we discuss their implications and conclude by outlining how future research could expand our understanding of public-private pirates. This phenomenon has relevance beyond the UK context, as a large number of governments around the world heavily rely on PPPs and have also been beset by similar scandals and failures and inadequate accountability measures.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### LINKING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND WRONGDOINGS

P3 literatures span a range of disciplines including public administration, sociology, legal and political literatures (Roehrich, Lewis and George 2014), the most relevant for our purposes have been undertaken in the fields of accountancy, finance, and public management. While research has examined the role of “public” in PPPs (Henjewe, Fewings & Rwelamila 2013), “non-profit” in PPPs (Mendel and Brudney, 2012), reinforcing the “P” in partnership (Domingues and Zlatkovic 2015), and even questioned the “partnership” in PPPs (Rotter, Özbek & Mark-Herbert 2012) there has been no alternative reflections on whether the conceptual framing of PPP as a partner is appropriate across a wide range of arrangements assumed to be PPPs. To interrogate this, we consider a different “P”. This literature review comparison challenges what is meant by a “partnership” in a P3, and reconfigures the concept of P3s by considering the metaphor of piracy alongside theories on wrongdoing. By drawing on wrongdoing literatures, we highlight the importance of considering piracy as a particular form of wrongdoing perpetrated by P3s. This involves merging core ideas from work on P3s and wrongdoing. We argue merging theories that are critical of P3s with wrongdoing literature demonstrates structures and mechanisms that enable normalized wrongdoing in P3s arrangements. This is the core contribution of this study.

Much has been centered on how to improve P3 arrangements. For example, some have looked at how gaming perspectives might enhance “fair play” (Scharle, 2002). Recent research on P3s has examined how the institutional environment might be leveraged to improve P3 arrangements (Devkar, Palliyagura and Oyegoke 2020) or how the interplay of institutional logics can resolve tensions in P3s (Bishop and Waring 2016). Other research has zoomed in on “relational contracting” to proactively improve relationship management and improve trust between partners (Smyth & Edkins, 2007). Such work exemplifies the challenging tensions

that result from P3 arrangements. Research that has examined P3 failure has explored how the “public” in public-private partnerships has been marginalized in P3 initiatives (Henjewe, Fewings and Rwelamila 2013) and how prisons that are run privately are justified on the basis that it is good value for money - observing how such VfM arguments are constructed and fail to attend to the social impact of this decision (Cooper and Taylor 2005). Other research has examined failures to provide VfM for taxpayers due by harming public transportation services (Soomro and Zhang 2016).

Our specific interest is in how P3s are enabled to engage in forms of wrongdoing characterized as corporate irresponsibility defined as ‘temporally defined organizational actions that cause harm to stakeholders’ (Mena, Rintamaki, Fleming and Spicer 2016). One way we consider this is by focusing on wrongdoings that benefits elites (e.g. executives, shareholders and other senior figures in P3 organizations) at the expense of the public and instances where companies benefited despite fines or the loss of control over a service. To merge existing work on P3s we consider work on wrongdoing. Organizational wrongdoing is conceived by Palmer (2012: 25) as "organizational behavior that can be considered wrongful by the criteria of the law, ethics, or social responsibility". It is identified as a key challenge for firms and their relationship with societies and the economy (Hersel et al 2019; Palmer 2012, 2017). Instances of wrongdoing are often regarded as abnormal, and attributed to “bad apples” in organizations. However, as Palmer (2012) argues, wrongdoing can become normalized, and even enforced, as rightdoing. Within the field of management and organization studies (MOS), Ashforth and Anand (2013) have considered how corruption is normalized; Greve et al (2010) pointed out the implicit role of misconduct in organizations; Shi et al (2007) have examined corporate fraud by managers and how external factors can increase the chances of corporate fraud; Earle et al (2010); Alcadipani and de Oliveira Medeiros (2019) have identified the harms resulting from corporate irresponsibility and corporate crime. Many studies suggest that

wrongdoing leads to reputation-based implications and legal penalties (e.g. Sullivan et al 2007). However, in the U.K we have observed heightened levels of wrongdoing that fails to lead to deleterious implications for preferred bidders and contractes in P3 arrangements. Hence, our focus is upon the perpetuation of normal organizational wrongdoing by P3s, despite the imposition of fines and its deleterious implications for corporate reputation. The persistence of wrongdoing that we observes leads us to identify an alternative framing borrowed from the concept of organizational piracy.

### **Organization Piracy**

Research on organizational piracy is largely restricted to the examination of entities outside the territory of the state (see Parker 2009; Johns 2009; Durand and Vergne 2012). Specifically, we draw particular attention to Durand and Vergne (2010) who conceive of the pirate organization as one that controls people, resources, communication channels and modes of transportation to promote public causes. Pirate organizations “worm their way into the sovereign state but navigate between borders” (Durand and Vergne 2012: 267). Examples include pirate radio stations, cyber-pirates and even bio-pirates. Such pirates are seen to fight monopolies - private firms as well as the state – and so may be positively regarded as “good guys”.

Durand and Verng’s conception of piracy can, we suggest, also be applied to P3s as they navigate between the borders of the market and the state, and challenge the latter’s monopoly. In the eyes of admirers of P3s, their captains are swashbuckling “rightdoers” who release the provision of public services from the dead, bureaucratic weight of the state by introducing, innovative, market-efficient modes of delivery. Here, in contrast, we emphasis the historical continuity with 17<sup>th</sup> century sea pirates that enjoyed partnerships with the state. Rather like those “licensed pirates” (2009; 170), P3s are seen to engage in professional wrongdoing as they exploit a series of loopholes in the architecture of regulation. It is through

these loopholes that P3s, as "licensed pirates" (Parker 2009; 170), work between borders worming their way into the sovereignty of the state (Durand and Vergne 2012). P3 arrangements continue to be contentious arrangements. In the U.K. we have observed persistent instances of wrongdoing by P3s. To this end we question the "P" in partnership to ask what are the wrongdoing practices in P3s and how are these enabled? To answer this question, we turn to Parliamentary reports and transcripts that detail, discuss and puzzle through instances of P3 and government wrongdoing. In the next section we detail the empirical settings and material. We then detail our methodological approach before presenting our findings.

To summarize, I consider the current state of government outsourcing, and we reveal loopholes that enable PPPs to test the weak links in the current system to maximize profit. We therefore introduce the concepts of piracy as organizational wrongdoing practiced in aid of raiding the state by engaging in professional wrongdoing. Such professional wrongdoing persists through a series of loopholes outlined in this study and is influenced by organizational culture, addressing the concerns of Greve and colleagues (2010) to address the mechanisms in which organizational cultural can lead to wrongdoing. While culture is a key driver of wrongdoing (Greve et al., 2010) we focus our attention on practices and the mechanisms (loopholes that enable those practices to persist). As we will show, these loopholes and practices enable PPPs to be "licensed pirates" (Parker 2009; 170) that worm their way into the sovereignty of the state (Durand and Vergne 2012).

## EMPERICAL SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

The UK represents an extreme case for the study of PPP as the provision of public services through private actors has reached one of the widest extensions in the world (Roehrich et al., 2014). Since our focus is upon wrongdoing, we address two of the most notorious PPP failures and scandals: the collapse of the facilities management giant Carillion (Civil Service

World 2018); a G4S and Serco accountancy fraud scandal involving electronic tag monitoring of prisoners (Guardian 2019) and other scandals highlighted in

To explicate the conditions that permit PPP wrongdoing practices, we examined three UK parliamentary inquiries, reports and media articles involving public-private scandals during the period 2014-19. This time period was a particularly fertile one for PPP wrongdoing in the UK, with regular scandals, fines and failure occurring in within UK public services. To better understand the mechanisms that enable wrongdoing we turned our attention to the key parliamentary documents that have explored PPP wrong doing in hearings and reports. The first three of the documents analyzed were prepared by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC documents). The fourth is a Parliamentary report detailing failures and scandals in government outsourcing between 2014-2019 (see data table: figure 1 in annex). The PAC is appointed by the UK Parliament to examine “value for money of government projects, programs and service delivery” with the aim of holding “government officials to account for the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of public spending” (PAC website 2021).

Examining parliamentary reports documenting a period of failure and scandal is useful to interrogate wrongdoing in government outsourcing for a variety of reasons. First, as the PAC proposes reforms, this shows where problems persist and require some form of accountability and positive change. For example, the Scottish Government introduced an improvement “*by having a public interest director serving on the board of the company delivering the project*” that would safeguard against risks, “*without the excessive private sector profits*” (inquiry D). Second, because the PAC is tasked with holding the government to account yet has little ability to enforce accountability on PPPs, PPPs actively participate in hearings at the executive and CEO level, providing a useful source of empirical material to analyze when confronted with wrongdoing knowingly perpetrated by their own companies. Third, PAC inquiries and hearings over time can reveal whether wrongdoing went unpunished. We also read media reports of the

scandals and failures both when they happened as well as after the PAC made recommendations for change. The absence or inadequacy of effective sanctions on PPPs is affirmed by the observation that “*Successive governments have contracted out public services to large private companies. The PAC has long been raising concerns about the state of Government contracting and its impact on public services*” (inquiry B).

To unpack these dynamics, we coded 218 pages of Parliamentary documents and 28 pages of notes. Using NVivo 12, we applied an axial coding approach to interrogate our central research question: what are the wrongdoing practices in PPPs and how are these enabled? Analysis of this material provided insights into the on-going “dance” between government, business and public procurement (see Brown 2014, 2015) and enabled us to identify loopholes that make wrongdoing practices possible. The coding processes involved Through the coding process, we were able to tease out the (“dance”) patterns that facilitated wrongdoing, resulting in the identification of three loopholes that enable five piratic practices (Figure 2).

As overall design of the study was a qualitative documentary investigation of PPP failure as discussed in public accounts committee transcripts and parliamentary report, we analytically focused on discussions of wrongdoing, coding each instance to theorize dynamics that enable instances of wrongdoing. As the documentary sources were read, re-read and analysed, themes that emerged were discussed between authors. Themes discussed were added to our process model, and at times relabelled or discarded based on discussions around whether the codes appropriately characterized excerpts. Originally, the inductive observation was that there were indeed a series of practices that enabled or led to wrongdoing. Through the coding processes however, the observations become richer and more complex. A key feature of this was identifying the conditions by which such practices are able to occur resulting in the crucial code of regulatory voids and the cultural, structural and contractual loopholes that sit within such regulatory voids. These observations emerged through our analysis and once these were

identified we were able to better articulate the dynamic interactions between the practice codes and the resulting wrongdoing by PPPs.

Discussions then followed between authors on how the codes relate to existing PPP theories, theories on wrongdoing as well as work on piracy to better understand how these codes are situated within existing theories. Through this process, we were able to better situate our contribution by focusing on PPP wrongdoing and normalized wrongdoing dynamics. Following this, iterative rewrites of this study led to a better articulation of the theories we are contributing to, the research design, our analysis and our findings.

By conducting a qualitative study of parliamentary inquiries, reports and media articles involving public-private scandals we identify the mechanisms that invite wrongdoing in government outsourcing. Through the coding process, we investigated the perception of authoritative actors (e.g., government actors and PPPs) and the evidence presented in a public inquiry to better understand the patterns that led to wrongdoing, failure and subsequent scandals. Our analysis of the empirical material suggests there are three loopholes that act as mechanisms enabling peripheral piratic practices. These concepts form the basic units of analysis (Corbin and Strauss 1990) using the software NVivo 12. We used an axial coding approach to the qualitative data to link (relate) key concepts (Allen 2017). Our conclusions aim to shed light on our key research question: what practices enable persistent PPP wrongdoing in government outsourcing?

This study examines the actors' beliefs alongside parliamentary evidence between 2014 and 2019. We are transparent about the empirical material that is publicly available. All of the public reports (see figure 1: data table) entail claims of wrongdoing and evidence in relation to regulatory and governance practices. We chose this material because it is where Parliamentary bodies interrogate PPP wrongdoing. We also chose this material because public inquiries help scholars to understand the subjectively constructed perspective of key actors – in this case, the

PPPs themselves – and governmental perspectives are examined. Such reports are not objective (Brown, 2004) but can still convey a “feeling of impartiality because it gives the impression of sticking to the facts” (Bourdes and Laroche, 2009).

The first three of the documents analyzed entail Public Accounts Committee (PAC documents). The fourth is a Parliamentary report detailing failures and scandals in government outsourcing between 2014-2019 (see data table: figure 1 in annex). The PAC is appointed by the UK Parliament to examine “value for money of government projects, programs and service delivery” with the aim of holding “government officials to account for the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of public spending” (PAC website 2021). As observed in the analyzed material, the PAC scrutinizes the state’s management of public funds. Such reasons motivated our search for antecedents of piratic behavior as wrongdoing. We were first guided by notable, high-level scandals in public procurement in the media followed by literature which analyzes public inquiries (Brown 2014, 2015). Secondly, because PAC inquiries as data sources often reveal wrongdoing, we were motivated to see if the material would demonstrate social practices that reveal a more nuanced understanding of both accepted wrongdoing in public procurement and unacceptable wrongdoing.

| Empirical material                                           | Type of source                                                       | Publication date | Page number |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Contracting out public services to the private sector</b> | Public Accounts Committee Inquiry Document ( <b>Ref: Inquiry A</b> ) | 26-Feb-14        | 70 pages    |
| <b>Strategic Suppliers</b>                                   | Public Accounts Committee Inquiry Document ( <b>Ref: Inquiry B</b> ) | 18-Jul-18        | 43 pages    |
| <b>Offender-monitoring</b>                                   | Public Accounts Committee Inquiry                                    |                  |             |

|                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                           |                      |                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>tags</b>                                                       | Document ( <b>Ref: Inquiry C</b> )                                                                                                                                        | 15-Jan-18            | 50 pages            |
| <b>After Carillion: Public sector outsourcing and contracting</b> | Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee Report ( <b>Ref: Inquiry D</b> )                                                                               | 03-Jul-18            | 55 pages            |
| <b>Media articles</b>                                             | <b>Financial Times</b> (24 articles), <b>Guardian</b> (30 articles), <b>Civil Service World</b> (8 articles), <b>BBC</b> (1 article), <b>Birmingham Times</b> (1 article) | Jan 2018 - June 2021 | Estimate: 128 pages |

*Table 4.1: Data table for empirical material*

Examining parliamentary reports documenting a period of failure and scandal is useful to interrogate wrongdoing in government outsourcing for a variety of reasons. First, as the PAC proposes reforms, this shows where problems persist and require some form of accountability and positive change. For example, the Scottish Government introduced an improvement “*by having a public interest director serving on the board of the company delivering the project*” that would safeguard against risks, “*without the excessive private sector profits*” (inquiry D). Second, because the PAC is tasked with holding the government to account but has little ability to enforce accountability on PPPs, PPPs actively participate in hearings at the executive and CEO level, providing a useful source of empirical material to analyze when confronted with wrongdoing knowingly perpetrated by their own companies. Third, PAC inquiries and hearings over time can reveal whether wrongdoing went unpunished. To reflect on this, we also read media reports of the scandals and failures both when they happened as well as after the PAC made recommendations for change. We therefore focus on the 2014-2019 period.

Moreover, observations in the empirical material further justified our analysis of PAC inquiry documents. *“Successive governments have contracted out public services to large private companies. The PAC has long been raising concerns about the state of Government contracting and its impact on public services”* (inquiry B). To unpack these dynamics, we read news reports, coded 218 pages of Parliamentary documents and 28 pages of notes (12,982 words). The empirical material was useful to examine the social dynamics involved in PAC members questioning of business leaders whose companies were involved in wrongdoing but also revealed the social “dance” between government, business and public procurement. Research on public inquiries suggests that they act as a way to maintain the status quo, revealing a careful dance-like exchange between actors (see Brown 2014, 2015). Between these social interactions and the PAC’s recommendations, we were able to uncover mechanisms that lead to a series of interconnected piratic practices.

The first PAC document featured details evidence from key witnesses in – what the PAC refers to as “the big 4” outsourced firms: Capita, G4S, Serco and Atos. The second PAC document we analyzed considered more broadly 27 strategic suppliers in UK government outsourcing, following one of the largest scandals in UK procurement history - the fall of the construction giant Carillion which also motivated this study. Here we identified the same mechanisms and practices observed elsewhere but also new paths that enable piratic practices in government outsourcing; this both extends and broadens our analysis. The third document details the outsourcing of offender-monitoring tags and services which resulted in a repayment of £179 million by the outsourced firms Serco and G4S. The PAC document details the beginning of a long investigation by the UK’s Serious Fraud Office (SFO). The SFO eventually fined G4S £44 million in 2020 for “dishonestly misleading” government to boost profits and Serco was fined £22.9 million for false accounting involving charging the government for people who were dead, in jail or left the country (Guardian 10 July, 2020). This document

helped us drill down into a specific case which motivated our analysis of our fourth committee document: *After Carillion*. The *After Carillion* report was published by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee in response to Carillion's collapse and the wider debate in the state about government outsourcing. In the report, the committee posed fundamental questions about the appropriateness of the private sector running a public service? In this inquiry, the same cases, mechanisms and practices were identified and we considered this broad investigation to be a conclusive point at which we could see a saturation point for certain mechanisms and practices that lead to piratic behavior in government outsourcing.

Within the Parliamentary documents, several empirical examples of wrongdoing reveal a series of practices that interweave with each other to enable a PPPs to raid the state. Each actor engages in some form of wrongdoing practice. Our coding and analysis of documents helped us to pinpoint three loopholes that act as mechanisms for five piratic practices. The three loopholes act as antecedents for wrongdoing in PPPs to raid the state and become public-private pirates. The next section of this article unpacks three loopholes that exist in regulatory voids.

## FINDINGS

### THREE TYPES OF ENABLING LOOPHOLES IN REGULATORY VOIDS

Regulatory voids are understood as spaces in which regulation is perceived as being inadequate (see Sahramäki and Kankaanranta 2021; Short 2013; Banerjee 2008). Residing in regulatory voids are loopholes. Loopholes are usually characterized by ambiguity that allows for interpretations that benefit a private individual or entity. Such loopholes happen in regulatory voids and are regularly exploited by corporations (e.g., Banerjee, 2008). A good example is large-scale corporate tax avoidance (Reinecke and Ansari 2016). For example, legal loopholes in tax codes can benefit individuals who want to aggressively avoid tax (Payne and Raiborn 2018). There are different types of loopholes. For example, corporations often use the

“check-the-box loophole” and the “looking through rule” to avoid tax: the former refers to taking advantage of different tax jurisdictions (Slemrod and Yitzhaki 2002) while the latter is concerned with passing income between corporate entities to avoid tax (Hickey 2013).

In this paper, we identify three loopholes in government outsourcing that sit within regulatory voids: *the structural loophole*, *contractual loopholes* and *social loopholes*. Such loopholes act as mechanisms by which firms exploit the state, enabling a range of piratic practices to continue without effective accountability. Such loopholes are consistent with the pirate organization in a capitalist system that relies on a “give-and-take relationship between the pirate organization and the sovereign state” (Durand and Verge 2010: 3). This is normally through forms of implicit cooperation that are structural, contractual and social.

### **Structural loopholes**

Structural loopholes are stable institutional arrangements between the state and PPPs that enable piratic wrongdoing. Perhaps the most obvious can be observed in tax systems which allow PPPs to take taxpayer money as profit without paying taxes in the country in which they’re contracted. For example, in the empirical material we identified instances where key contractors, like G4S, paid no tax. This loophole enables these companies to take their £700 million in taxpayer money in full without giving back to the state. This is expressed well by one PAC member. There is a clear remit for you to ensure that, quite apart from my personal view and that of some others round the table that, if people are going to take the taxpayer’s penny to make some money out of it, they have a duty to pay their fair contribution according to the profits they have made in the business they undertake in this jurisdiction (inquiry A). Other structural loopholes were the PPPs’ assessments that they were too-big-to fail, which for a time became a stable taken-for-granted norm that is rationalized throughout the system of government outsourcing; indeed, most of the PPPs criticized, fined and prosecuted remain key

contractors for UK public services. However, this norm has been challenged by the biggest failure considered in this study: the collapse of the outsourced company Carillion, which was considered a case in point in the analyzed material.

*Government maintains that the collapse of Carillion was managed successfully and demonstrates that no company is too big to fail. But it was clear that Carillion believed until the end that it was too big to fail.” (inquiry B)*

The too-big-to-fail code was not purely restricted to Carillion but to other PPPs:

*The capital structure of many of the large companies involved in public sector services means that it was increasingly likely a company would fail. The increased concentration in the market meant that when a company did fail, it was more likely that it would have a major impact. Companies in this case may become too big to fail.” (inquiry B)*

Structural loopholes like this cohere with the pirate organizations’ desire to normalize business and economic activity that is outside the natural laws of economic selection (Durand and Vergne 2010: 132). Being too-big-to-fail enables a common feature in PPP literatures - a monopoly - which a pirate organization can exploit to re-establish what constitutes legitimate profit.

A further key feature of structural loopholes noted in the 2014-19 documents is the code of preferred bidders. This hampers the competition further, enabling the too-big-to-fail culture identified in the material. Such preferred bidders are usually associated with PPPs that are already established winners of government contracts. *“The process of tendering for Government work has also favored companies with a track record of securing public sector contracts.” (inquiry B)* Following an illegal scandal involving two key government outsourced firms (Serco and G4S) the government attempted to hire Buddi to help them take up the

offender tagging contract awarded to Serco and G4S. As one PAC member observed, “*they were the preferred bidder*” (*inquiry C*) but they failed to sign an agreement. In another instance where there were contract failures linked with wrongdoing the contract was given to a large PPP - Capita. According to PAC documents, there was a “*conflict of interest*” with the preferred bidders’ various other contracts with the state (*inquiry C*).

The structural loophole is one in which forms of inequality persists without resistance because, as Bourdieu suggests, “cultural resources, practices and institutions function to maintain unequal social relations” (Swartz 1997; 285). Such structural environments that produce stable institutional arrangements between the state and PPPs and often favors the needs of the PPP over the needs of the state enable two other loopholes: contractual loopholes and cultural loopholes.

### **Contractual loopholes**

Contractual loopholes reside in contract texts and in the state’s management of contracts. Previous research has uncovered how states’ low contract management capacity affects how they aim to achieve equity in their contracting (Huizinga and de Bree 2021). Our study reveals similar patterns – the most prominent being a lack of both expertise and oversight by the state of outsourced contracts. Such a lack of oversight translates into a lack of expertise, capacity, and capabilities on the part of the state which tends to lead to focusing on the lowest price, preferred suppliers or monopolies, as opposed to the experience or deliverability of a public service. A 2014 internal review found that 40 out of 73 government contracts were not managed by an adequately staffed team. The PAC highlighted “*instances where the Government has contracted with the private sector without knowing key data about the services it was asking companies to bid for*” (*inquiry D*). The lack of state capability and expertise to manage contracts and their negotiation has meant that PPPs can and do exploit a system that

does not hold them accountable - like a pirate ship in a vast ocean, for a time, raiding goes unnoticed.

Another consequence of this lack of capability and expertise is an awarding contracts based primarily on price. Without an adequate understanding of the service, the state assumes the PPPs are experts when often, they can be entering a market for the first time and/or intent on raiding. This has led to a reduction in the quality of public services; *“The Government appears to focus unduly on cost in its contracting decisions, with a detrimental effect on service quality”* and as one PAC member observes, this quickly can become a *“race to the bottom” (inquiry D)*. Arrangements that focus on price can be undeliverable where *“quality is squeezed to such an extent that those reliant on the service will be negatively affected” (Inquiry B)*. As one professor who advised the PAC states in the material, *“competitive tendering [is] being actively used to drive down prices, with the fees paid for some mature contracts reduced by 25–30%” (inquiry D)*. This lack of expertise endures throughout the life of the contract and enables further piratic practices.

In the material, early on in 2014, the PAC was keen to pressure PPPs to have open book accounting on their contracts. The PPPs enthusiastically agreed, but regularly claimed confidentiality (patient or commercial) when faced with successive requests on accounting disclosures. In other words, piratic behavior takes advantage of both commercial confidentiality but also a lack of expertise and capability on the part of the state. For instance, Serco was contracted to run an out-of-hours doctor service in Cornwall, where they underbid and understaffed doctors. Following a forensic review of their accounts, Serco claimed they couldn't share important information based on patient confidentiality. As one PAC member puts it, *“Serco in Cornwall wouldn't provide information due to 'patient confidentiality' though they said they wanted more transparency” (inquiry A)*. Claims of confidentiality however were often linked with commercial confidentiality that is both claimed by PPPs but also by the ruling

government which is distinct from the state. As one PAC member noted, this culture on commercial confidentiality is a part of “*the machine hides behind this to cover up their [PPPs and Dept.] mistakes*” (*inquiry A*). Such mistakes examined in the material, more often than not, reveal wrongdoing in some form.

Together, the contractual or legal loopholes enable pirates to practice wrongdoing and raid the state but cultural and contractual loopholes are supported by a complex structure of tax arrangements, policies and ideas that are taken-for-granted to the extent that they are stable features of the enabling mechanisms for piratic practices. This restricts the reach of the state - a key feature of where the pirate organization operates (Durand and Vergne 2010; 149)

### **Cultural loopholes**

The cultural nature of PAC inquiries and the willingness of PAC members to softly scrutinize wrongdoing demonstrate a key element that enables continued piratic practices. In the transcripts and recommendations examined, the amiable dance between members of the PAC and outsourced companies when scrutinizing the outsourcers’ wrongdoing reveals give-and-take attitude that fails to adequately deal with PPP wrongdoing. We identified a willingness on both sides to often blame the state, rather than the outsourcers for wrongdoing directly linked to the behavior of the outsourced firms. This give and take enables what Brown has highlighted as maintaining the status quo through public inquiries (Brown 2012). This was not surprising as the PAC, like other Parliamentary select committees, relies on “good will, alongside political and reputational pressure, to compel witnesses to attend and request documents”<sup>iv</sup>. For this reason, the discourses used can both appear lovingly soft and at other times act like a parent scolding their child. For instance, the chair in a PAC hearing chided an executive: “*Ms. Morgenstern, you are next on the naughty step*” (*inquiry A* - see figure 1 for excerpt references). This light touch engagement enables the pirate organizations to exploit a

system's internal contradictions like the demands of the public versus the demands of a private entity because they are perceived as necessary actors rather than contingent ones. Indeed, the tensions of the state versus the market played heavily in the inquiry documents examined. Generally, the market was perceived ideologically as being able to provide the right solutions for government because it is assumed competition drives efficiency and innovation. This ideology persists in the cultural loophole as PAC members often times come from the business world and rely on market ideologies.

For example, a key senior civil servant in the inquiries, Bill Crothers, came to the civil service after roughly 25 years in business. The backgrounds of individuals involved naturally lead to a revolving door for many PAC members, civil servants and executives. These social arrangements allow the ideology that - *a competitive private market can more easily deliver public services than government* - to persist. The cultural loophole of give and take and the revolving door become a common features of government outsourcing, where such loopholes are utilized in a variety of ways and the PAC's reliance on good will and pressure enable such exploitative piratic behavior (Durand and Vergne 2010: 7). We consider such a situation has occurred over the course of successive decades where governments have increasingly relied on outsourced firms to perform public functions. This trend is consistent with the historical development of the pirate organization as it breaks existing codes to "create new ones, which will later be appropriated by legitimate governments and organizations" (Durand and Vergne 2010: 153). Such cultural loopholes allow PPPs to wriggle through accountability driven hearings unscathed and inadequately challenged.

Together, the loopholes invite PPPs to see if they can get away with wrongdoing with the aim of maximizing profit. When profits can be gleaned via these loopholes, it is because they act as territories not yet reached by the state, enabling piratic practices designed for raiding. In the next section we explore five piratic practices that are enable by these loopholes.

## FIVE TYPES OF PIRATIC PRACTICES IN GOVERNMENT OUTSOURCING

The three loopholes we have just identified can be seen as normal wrongdoing typified by a system that relies on mis-selling services when bidding for contracts (see Palmer 2012). This leads to a range of management practices that facilitate the raiding of the public purse, which has also been normalized with the rise of shareholder capitalism and the fall of Carillion (Wylie 2020; 165). Understanding these trends both dispels notions that much of what has happened in the last ten years of government outsourcing in the UK has been abnormal wrongdoing and provides a challenge to the PPP literatures. Loopholes reside in regulatory voids. Such voids invite particular kinds of practices by PPPs. In this section, we observe five of these practices that occur due to the three loopholes already identified leading a range of outsourced actors to raid the public coffers. These are: *bluffing*; *over-charging*; *pyramid management*; *efficiency cost cutting*; and *workforce exploitation*. Such practices are not exclusive to PPPs, but uncover the most prominent practices in the empirical material. While at times these practices are done independently the dynamics and practices can interweave to support the overall aim of raiding the state.

### **Bluffing**

At the beginning of the 2014 inquiry, the PAC chair asked the PPP contractor G4S CEO Ashley Almanza if the government was a good client. His reply set the tone for identifying bluffing codes in the inquiry: “*Principally, Government should continue to do what they have been doing*”<sup>v</sup> (*inquiry A*). For G4S, a continuation of current outsourcing would remain profitable but throughout the inquiry, the PAC criticized the PPPs. Quickly, those PPPs turned on the state, blaming outsourcing problems on how the government as a client handles their contracts. For example, switching tact, the G4S CEO blamed the government for increased competition and a lack of transparency on performance indicators. Throughout the material,

PPPs often flipped lines of questioning, blaming the government for wrongdoing. This puts the PAC in a position to criticize government - which is also in its remit - or to defend government's handling of procurement and contract management.

Bluffing is considered a lie and isn't necessarily wrongdoing (Carson, Wokutch and Murrmann 1982). In fact, bluffing can also be used for rightdoing, however, as Palmer (2013) points out, "wrongdoing is often not much different than rightdoing" and often can be perpetrated by "ordinary and even morally upstanding people and firms" (Palmer 2013; 9). However, in the empirical material, the key feature of bluffing was less about negotiating positive terms or being moral and more about manipulating PAC members and the state for wrongdoing purposes or piratic raiding through a continuation of current relationships between government and PPPs. In other words, a consequentialist perspective here considers bluffing as a form of wrongdoing that induces harm.

Bluffing is enabled via all three loopholes. Using the contractual loophole, PPPs claim they are willing to be transparent but also claim commercial confidentiality when accounts are being scrutinized by the National Audit Office (NAO). When observing an instance where transparency and open book accounting were required, wrongdoing was identified as stemming from the contractual loophole.

*"The contract was open book, so we should see the gross margin. I looked at the gross margin, and they had deducted depreciation to get to gross margin. You just don't do that. My point is that the relatively junior officials did not have the accounting experience to understand that that was a bad thing. The supplier was saying it had been fully open, but in my view, it was being somewhat disingenuous. You do not deduct depreciation to get to gross margin. My point is that we need open book, and some*

*standards and capability, so that we know what we are doing and we are able to use the information (inquiry A)”*

Other types of bluffing also help raid the state. Perhaps the most salient feature of bluffing is the practice of underpricing bids; what is known as the “winner’s curse” (Roehrich, Lewis and George 2014). In some cases, underpricing became an actual lie motivated by the desire to obtain more state funds. As the contractual loophole highlighted, the focus on price shows a decrease in the quality of the service but we found more instances of growing profits by PPPs. As one PAC document highlights PPPs are, “*underbidding for contracts, recklessly acquiring other businesses and maintaining high bonuses and dividends*” (inquiry D).

Bluffing becomes a danger to the state. It is practiced to help PPPs maximize profits for their bonuses and dividends with detrimental consequences for the service. As one PAC member has put it when confronting a PPP, “*so what you are really saying is, ‘We ripped you off in the past, but we won’t do so in the future’*” (inquiry A). Our analysis shows that most of the scrutinized PPPs are still securing government contracts, enabled by the structural loophole of being too big to fail. Bluffing interweaves with other practices like over-charging.

### **Over-charging**

Over-charging is the practice of billing the state more than standard market prices for an item or a service. Over-charging can also involve charging for a non-existent service or item. All four PAC documents identified instances of PPPs overcharging for deliverables, including Serco and G4S charging the state for services they failed to provide for an electronic tagging program. This piratic behavior was enabled by the contractual loophole whereby the state lacks contract management expertise while the cultural loophole enabled PPPs to evade scrutiny of this practice. Additionally, the PAC found that weak state management of the contracts meant that there was a “*fundamental lack of knowledge of electronic monitoring services or how they*

*operated” and the state “lacked the capacity and capability to manage the difficulties and delays that it created (inquiry C)”.* Over-charging was perceived as stemming from a lack of governance over specific teams. For instance, a PAC member asked the CEO of G4S about over-charging from a team that *“had got used to working a certain way”* when over-charging. She suggested this was a governance issue and the CEO of G4S replied, *“precisely (inquiry A)”*.

This admission served to move the discussion on via the cultural loophole while revealing a lack of oversight over key areas of business where wrongdoing was practiced. The CEO of Serco admitted they had acted *“unethically”* while the CEO of G4S suggested it was down to *“poor judgment” (inquiry A)*. This demonstrates instances where wrongdoing was caught out. Still, the practice of overcharging can interweave with the practice of bluffing. As one PAC member pressed the CEO of Serco, *“earlier you denied profiteering. Was there profiteering in this example”(inquiry A)*. He bluffed his way to denying clear wrongdoing which years later was prosecuted and led to fines: *“No, there was not. It was the genuine view of our management that that was the way in which it was intended to be billed under this contract” (inquiry A)*.

This demonstrates how the loophole invites an environment where CEOs can simply reframe wrongdoing, further perpetuating bluffing and over-charging. While this instance led to a loss of the contract, prosecutions and fines, the next example of piratic behavior was not necessarily caught out but led to the collapse of an entire business, heavily impacting whole industries. Nevertheless, Serco and G4S remain highly profitable companies with continued state support in winning and running public service contracts. Though these public-private pirates remain afloat, when a ship goes down, individual pirates can still get away with raiding the state while their ship is sunk. Something that is explored in the next section.

## Pyramid management

A key PPP practice is outsourcing their government contracts to other suppliers. This both expands business and adds perceived legitimacy to a wider variety of expertise throughout a market by enabling contractors to bid for government contracts more widely. However, such a structure can be challenging to control. As one PAC member observes, *“I just wonder how you maintain control of a contract through the myriad of subcontracting”* (inquiry A). As a PPP, Carillion hosted a wide range of contracts that went far beyond their expertise in construction.

Carillion managed £510 million in defense contracts, half the prisons in England and Wales, 25 NHS contracts worth £287 million, 312 contracts in school services, and 22 contracts in transport worth £372 million (Wylie 2020: 148-149). Its entry into a wide variety of contracts was facilitated by people at the top, most notably its executives and CEO, John McDonough (Wylie 2020: 146) who this paper considers worthy of being called a legendary pirate (like Blackbeard, taking £11.33 million personally over the course of ten years as CEO (Wylie 2020: 154). Carillion’s diversification facilitated a pyramid structure of management subcontractors who helped manage its public services.

Winning contracts funneled money down this wide-ranging structure, while also enriching shareholders and the CEO. As time moved on, Carillion’s pyramid of 30,000 subcontractors become more difficult to fund. Gradually, its reputation for being a late payer grew. It had payment terms of 120 days for its suppliers and engaged in a myriad of accounting tricks agreed with banks that would maximize settling payments resulting in £498 million in debt, misclassified through such tricks. Unsurprisingly, this debt drove Carillion to underbid in order to win contracts - a key feature of our loophole mechanisms - the winner’s curse or as others have put it, “suicide bidding” (Wylie 2020: 155). When Carillion’s pyramid structure

collapsed it owed £2 billion to its subcontractors and suppliers. In the empirical material examined, the demise of Carillion led to £148 million in net costs or losses to the state with the public sector losses being “slightly higher”.

Such high stakes must be considered alongside the overall system of PPPs and their ability to build up expertise the state has relinquished to the market. This practice was not restricted to Carillion. Indeed, PPPs were encouraged by the state to practice variations of pyramid management structures. The problems with governance however are easily summed up well by one PAC member.

*“I wonder if you are not all too big. With your scale now, you really are the new oligopoly. You have grown like Topsy over the past decade. You are covering too wide and multifarious an area, from Boris bikes and Grimsby schools to prisons or whatever—anywhere you can make a bob or two. This wide coverage of issues—the scale—must mean, to me, that the structures are not adequately controlled from the centre. The centre does not always know what is going on in an organization that is so big in scale and so wide ranging. That is a weakness when it comes to accountability and ensuring that we get the best possible terms out of contracts (inquiry A)”*

One way the state hoped to ensure good terms for the taxpayer was the practice of subcontracting out to SMEs. Subcontracting to SMEs was considered a way of diffusing social value throughout the government outsourcing system but the practice also serves to transfer risk. This risk transfer to SME’s and charities enables contractors to “take a cut” according to one PAC member.

*Both of you have Work programme contracts and all the evidence we had was that the risk was entirely transferred to the local voluntary provider who had been doing*

*welfare to work advice for ever and ever, and you had none of the risk: you just took the top 10% (taking a cut) (inquiry A).*

The code of pyramid management is recognized by the PAC members as this is a logical ideology of corporate behavior generally, “*from a company’s point of view, if you continue to acquire companies, you have issues spreading the control environment that lead to issues associated with contract management, ethics and all that sort of thing*” (inquiry A). Nevertheless, despite the obvious rationale to spread costs and risks it is a regularly practiced form of raiding the state - something that is unique to the PPP case as opposed to a purely private actor. Via pyramid management, other cuts can be made.

*Too often suppliers will also pass cost-cutting down the supplier chain without due regard for long-term implications. Government has to be an intelligent customer and be clearer about the impact of pricing models on the long-term delivery of a project. A saving today can simply shunt costs into the future (inquiry B)*

As one PAC observation noted, such strategy in PPP outsourcing leads to “*a loss of focus on the companies’ core expertise in favor of concentrating on winning contracts to maintain sufficient cashflow to offset balance sheet debt*” (inquiry B). Pyramid management can interweave with other market practices designed to funnel money to the top when raiding the state. Pyramid management as a piratic practice can interweave with other market practices designed to funnel money to the top when raiding the state. Another practice is efficiency-cost-cutting.

### **Efficiency-cost-cutting**

The emphasis on price in government outsourcing means that winners who underbid and win contracts have to strip out the costs elsewhere. This results in efficiency-costs-cutting that can come in the form of low wages, fewer personnel, cheaper items poor training, or further

subcontracting to more inexperienced bidders. When the object is to raid the state, this practice is often employed alongside many of the other practices identified in this study. For instance, through a vast array of sub-contracts, Carillion was able to outsource expertise in a PPP contracted service they ran to a smaller organization while skimming profit off the top of the already underpriced bid. As one PAC member aptly puts it, *“you win your contract because your price is low (bluffing). You start implementation, but you have to do various things because your price is low (pyramid management, efficiency cost-cutting). You sometimes damage services, such as Serco in Cornwall, or you cut wages” (inquiry A)*. While such a practice goes unrecognized, it is also a legitimate tool for maximizing profits. This enable PPPs to dangerously expand efficiency-cost-cutting, like the aforementioned Serco out-of-office hours doctor contracts where only one doctor was put on duty despite many more being needed for medical emergencies.

This proved quite dangerous and harmful for Cornish taxpayers: *“I think that what they do is come in low on price, get the contract and then, to try and get the profit, they damage the service rather than get efficiency savings” (inquiry A)*. For example, paying lower wages than the state-run equivalents facilitate the kind of efficiency-cost-cutting that aids in the raiding of the state by paying lower wages and providing economic efficiency for shareholders. This practice is also related to the last and perhaps more historically recognized piratic practice identified - workforce exploitation.

### **Workforce exploitation**

Workforce exploitation is nothing new for organizations but continually featured as a key practice in government outsourcing that can help PPPs to raid the state. The most common form is simply not paying a living wage, and PAC members raised this specific concern in 2014<sup>vi</sup>, with one PAC member referring to Serco taking over a particular contract and

subsequently transferring existing employee salaries of £26,000 over while advertising new jobs at £17,000.

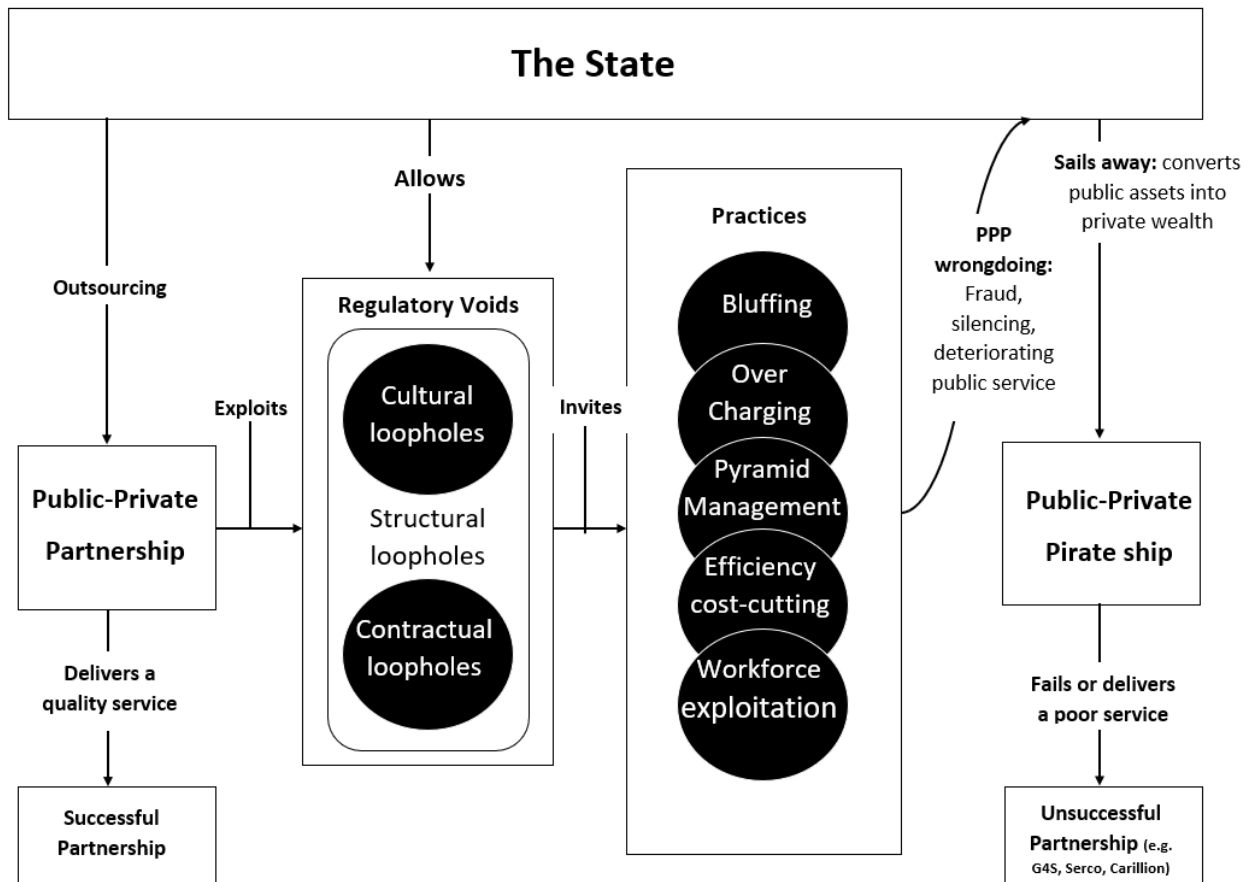
*The Financial Times said that that was the same as stacking shelves in Tesco [UK supermarket chain]. I do not know whether that is right, but that was the comment. You want efficiencies, but... you do not necessarily want to get them simply through cutting wages, do you? (inquiry A)*

This demonstrates how workforces are exploited by low pay – maximizing profit for the public-private pirate – but also serves to show how this code interweaves with efficiency-cost-cutting.

As a PAC member observed, however, at times the efficiency-cost cutting can backfire: *“I think that what they [Serco] do is come in low on price, get the contract and then, to try and get the profit, they damage the service rather than get efficiency savings” (inquiry A)*. This also serves to demonstrate how the contractual loophole of over-optimistic bidding that leads to the winner’s curse enables such piratic behavior.

For this reason, the PAC material cited a critique that the drive to reduce costs comes from *“driving lower pay, worse terms and conditions”* for employees with unions saying PPPs *“offer worse terms to workers than the public sector for similar jobs” (inquiry D)*. Such practices interweave with efficiency-cost cutting, over charging and pyramid management. For example, in May 2021, Serco outsourced ran a track and trace contract on behalf of the UK government – a contract which they outsourced to a call center firm that paid their employees £9.50 per hour while charging Serco £21.50 an hour (Guardian May 30, 2021). Serco’s profits on the track and trace contracts were limited to 4% while the same profit obligations did not apply to the call center. This enabled them to both pay non-living wages to agency staff while taking half of the profit from their wages, over-charging Serco and the government as well as propping up Serco’s pyramid management structure.

Ultimately, the three enabling loopholes and five practices examined in this study demonstrate how PPPs can be contracted out by the state, exploit particular loopholes to engage



in practices that enable them to raid the state (see figure 2 in annex).

Figure 4.2: Theorized practices model

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As discussed earlier in this article, work on P3s has examined the “public” element entailed in P3 arrangements, (Henjewe, Fewings & Rwelamila 2013), non-profit (Mendel & Brudney, 2012) and partnership roles of P3s (Domingues & Zlatkovic 2015; Rotter, Özbek & Mark-Herbert 2012). Given the P3 wrongdoing observed in our study, we depart from this literature to consider an alternative understanding of P3s by doing away with the idea of a “partnership”. Rather than assuming all of these organizations as partnerships, we consider piracy as a stronger metaphor that reflects particular arrangements between public and private

actors. While normalized corruption has been examined (Ashforth and Anand 2013), such normalized corruption has not yet been unpacked by work on P3s. Moreover, while research suggests normalized wrongdoing can lead to reputation-based implications (Sullivan et al 2007), our study unpacks how reputation implications do not impact the continuation of P3 wrongdoing and the ability of such firms to continually win contracts. For this reason, a key contribution of this study is to challenge the “partnership” so often taken for granted in PPP literature, but also to unpack the structures and mechanisms that lead to PPP wrongdoing and thus pointing out that a certain kinds of PPP wrongdoing could be considered, namely, public-private piracy.

This paper opens the black box of normalized PPP wrongdoing that is sustained over a long period of time through a variety of loopholes that exist in a regulatory void which point to practices that help PPPs raid the state and convert public assets into private wealth. Taken together, the theoretical constructs emerged from the data analysis gesture towards a symbiotic relationship between the state and PPPs. Far from the beatific image of efficient private providers of public services, these outsourcing exercises can lead to nefarious scenarios, entailing fraud, poor working conditions, waste of public funds, and above all, deteriorating or sub-par public services. As showcased in Figure 2, we acknowledge that PPPs can be successful under certain conditions. Yet, what we have theorized here may apply in many other contexts, where PPP arrangements raid the state - making the most of regulatory voids: hence, the label pirate.

Overall, this work shows that PPPs can exploit regulatory voids when these create structural loopholes, further identified in our analysis and cultural and contractual. Hence, loopholes represent the holistic sum of practices, legal arrangements and cultural habits that underpin capitalist neoliberal ways of organizing the commons. What is more, we have shown (again, see figure two) that such regulatory voids invite wrongdoing practices. Our argument

here is that loopholes do not imply an automatic and inevitable exploitation (or raid of the state). However, they create the conditions of possibility for wrongdoings to both proliferate and go unpunished – as widely portrayed in the section above. Building on these insights, we argue that these organizations are best captured as ‘pirates’ because they work in the shadows of the state, with an original mandate from it yet acting against the public interest. Pirate organizations, and chiefly Public Private Pirates convert public assets in private wealth not against the state but against the public: this is because the neoliberal state both empowers them with a mandate and allows regulatory voids that invite (that is, creates the conditions of possibility for) wrongdoings to proliferate and go unpunished.

More theoretically, as called for by Palmer (2013), our study on government outsourcing demonstrates how wrongdoing is normalized through mechanisms, structures and processes. Previous research on wrongdoing has failed to appreciate how professional wrongdoing might lead to the expansion of corruption and wrongdoing in organizations (Gabbioneta et al., 2019). This study outlines how these piratic practices persist and continue to do so in light for ongoing scandals by the actors examined here. This further outlines the normalization of wrongdoing by showing how such practices are recognized as being a continuous feature of government outsourcing.

Loopholes act as mechanisms inviting piratic behavior that seeks to raid the state. The pirate organization of yesterday is not the pirate organization of today and outpaces attempts at categorization (Durand and Verge 2010: 151, 154). Research on organizational piracy is largely restricted to the examination of entities outside the territory of the state (see Parker 2009; Johns 2009; Durand and Vergne 2012). However, as Durand and Verge state, "the pirate organization outpaces our attempts at categorization. Are they simple bandits or counterfeiters? Enemies of humanity? Defenders of a public cause? Agents of capitalist normalization? Often times, they are all of those things together" (Durand and Vergne 2010; 154). In the same

seminal book they suggest pirate organizations act like trolls and exploit a system's internal contradiction (Durand and Vergne 2010; 7). Durand and Vergne (2010) conceive of the pirate organization as one that controls people, resources, communication channels and modes of transportation to promote public causes. Pirate organizations Durand and Vergn (2012: 267) contend “worm their way into the sovereign state but navigate between borders”. Examples include pirate radio stations, cyber-pirates and even bio-pirates. Such pirates are seen to fight monopolies - private firms as well as the state – and so may be positively regarded as “good guys”. Durand and Vergen’s conception of piracy can, we suggest, also be applied to P3s as they navigate between the borders of the market and the state (regulatory voids), and challenge the latter’s monopoly.

In the eyes of admirers of P3s, their captains are swashbuckling ‘rightdoers’ who release the provision of public services from the dead, bureaucratic weight of the state by introducing, innovative, market-efficient modes of delivery. Here, in contrast, we emphasis the historical continuity with 17th century sea pirates that enjoyed partnerships with the state. Rather like those “licensed pirates” (2009; 170), P3s are seen to engage in professional wrongdoing as they exploit a series of loopholes in the architecture of regulation. It is through these loopholes that P3s, as “licensed pirates” (Parker 2009; 170), that worm their way into the sovereignty of the state (Durand and Vergne 2012). Our analysis shows that just like in historical periods when pirates worked on behalf of the state as corsairs, certain PPPs are engaged in a dangerous game for gold, in which some pirates fall while others move on to raid again after incurring meager setbacks. Historically, states and pirate organizations have both been in conflict but often have also cooperated. For example, Iceland and Wikileaks have partnered up to design laws that protect freedom of speech (Durand and Vergne 2010: 146). Our study shows how a drive for partnerships might actually be something entirely different and largely defined by conflict rather than cooperation.

Analyzing PAC documents has been useful in both unmasking piratic practices with the state and in showing how the state fails to meet the challenges of professional wrongdoing in government outsourcing. Indeed, as Durand and Vergne aptly point out, it is difficult for states to conquer, map and normalize territory which leads to governments leasing or selling sovereign territory as a tradeable good (Durand and Verne 2010: 149). We argue this is precisely where government outsourcing currently sits: where PPPs take over territories of the state but can be revealed as public-private pirate ships.

While organizational wrongdoing as piracy can focus on the piracy itself, our study also reveals how the state fails to assert the same ethical standards between the public and private actors. As highlighted in 2014, a recommendation was made to government to ensure PPP standards are the same as the public sector standards by being honest, fair and transparent in how they adhere to ethics, users and employees. It's not surprising to conclude the study with the final government document, 'After Carillion', which observes that PPPs are "*driven by their need to generate returns for shareholders and business growth*" paying out "*£333 million more in dividends than it generated in cash from its operations in the five-and-a-half-year period from January 2012 to June 2017*" (*inquiry D*). The motivations behind PPPs paints a stark picture of 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalism, where the private actors take on the responsibilities of the state but are motivated by quick returns for the pirates at the top. This is consistent with the pirate organization which, "does not aim for the long term but replicates normative capitalistic patterns, therefore modifying the direction of capitalism" (Durand and Vergne 2010: 150-151). Our study reveals the patterns in a great shift between public-private partnerships of the past and public-private pirates of the present.

To reiterate for emphasis, the word pirate means "to put to the test" (Durand and Vergne 2010: 9). We consider the present moment to be one where the test has proved fruitful for PPPs, less so for the state and more importantly for the public. For example, pirates have been able

to test the limits of monopoly under regimes that ostensibly discourage monopolies through regulations. This is consistent with the pirate organization who breaks existing codes, “and create new ones, which will later be re-appropriated by legitimate governments and organizations” (Durand and Vergne 2010: 153). For instance, a legitimate way public-private pirates persist is because they can save the government money by making cuts by stealth. For example, one of the outsourcers working for the Ministry of Defense saved the taxpayer 50% of the costs but also failed to deliver their contract to recruit troops, with a 35% drop in the number of recruitments.

For these reasons, the challenges for addressing public-private pirates are manifold as these organizations band together. They have “specific goals, forge alliances, negotiate with enemies and engage in conflict” (Durand and Vergne 2010: 2). The wide use of PPPs has legitimated the process of raiding the state. What is clear from our research is that closing the loopholes could help stop piratic practices. The implications of this study are stark for shareholder capitalism: when a loophole exists in government outsourcing, private for-profit entities will seek to exploit that loophole - what we call the Public-Private Pirate Rule.

The phenomenon of public-private pirates is not restricted to the UK context. The treasure these pirates seek is available in many economies around the world. The UK’s 13.7% of GDP spent on outsourcing is comparable to Germany (15.05%) and Denmark (14.16%)<sup>vii</sup>. The loopholes and subsequent piratic practices explored can be even more serious than the wrongdoing explored in this study. Such public-private pirates, with the help of the state, can even traffic human beings for profit. For example, many of the 200 immigration detention centers in the US are run by private companies and are filled by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, which pays several hundred dollars per detainee, per day - funneling billions of taxpayer dollars into the coffers of public-private pirates (Kassie 2019). The practice of human trafficking by ICE and for-profit PPPs is especially concerning in light

of reports that ICE is disappearing homeless, undocumented individuals into a vast detention system that moves individuals around - stripping out the quality of the “service” and making profits at the expense of human lives (Emmons 2017).

Pirates working close to the state is nothing new (see Parker 2009; Durand and Vergne 2010) but as our analysis shows, the implications for society are serious. As a PAC excerpt aptly points out, “*the public sector can outsource the service but it cannot outsource its responsibilities*” (*inquiry D*). In other words, it does not matter who is running a public service because public services demand unique responsibilities on the part of society. As Martin Parker has pointed out, pirates “thrived in the cracks that ran through states” (Parker 2009; 172). The crack between what is public and what is private is the route these pirates take by exploiting regulatory voids. Ultimately, contracting out can be viewed as an ideology that has taken hold following decades of the practice which has impacted states’ ability to provide the expertise necessary to run a service.

The loopholes identified and examined in this study reveal the antecedents to piratic wrongdoing. It also reveals that the state’s ability to turn the current system around is highly limited – which goes to further enable the raiding of the state by public-private pirates. Wrongdoing can hurt those perpetrating it, but usually only when they are caught (Palmer 2013; 6). Yet, in the case of public-private pirates, even when they are caught, they have more gold than they did before engaging in wrongdoing. As Parker has observed, like any other kind of pirates, public-private pirates are economic outlaws (Parker 2009).

In conclusion, we suggest a new age of piracy began with the rise of PPPs. PPPs do not become public private pirates unless/until they are prosecuted, fined or found guilty of misconduct while also reaping substantial financial rewards. By drawing on Durand and Vergne (2012) we expand their definition of pirate organizations, which “act in defiance of the

state apparatus to control human endeavor with the help of monopolies” but can also fulfil the role of a corsair working on behalf of the state (Parker 2009; Durand and Vergne 2012: 268). We therefore argue that modern PPPs act on behalf of the state but seek to raid the public purse by engaging in wrongdoing. These practices enable a form of piracy that straddles boundaries of legitimate and illegitimate behavior in government contracting.

Consider this: following the scandals and failures of Serco in our study, the company is still winning government contracts and failing to deliver the services they are paid handsomely to operate. For example, despite a recent failure in Covid-19 track and trace contracts with the UK government, the two executives at the top of the company received bonuses of £7.4 million and £5.5 million in 2020 (Guardian March 10, 2021). Serco also paid out £17 million in dividends to shareholders (Guardian Feb 25, 2021). Additionally, despite the G4S fraud inquiry considered in this article, they won £25 million in government contracts (Guardian July 10, 2017) and in 2020 won a £333 million contract to run a mega prison (Independent October 06, 2020). In the run up to Carillion’s collapse, director rewards were not dependent on the company’s survival as £776,000 in shares were dumped by the finance director months before the collapse (Financial Times, July 16 2018). Public-private piracy continues despite ships like Carillion being sunk or prosecutions for fraud – often, companies that survive scandal keep winning contracts, delivering a poor-quality service and raiding the coffers of the state. It is time to close the loopholes.

Future research ought to examine other piratic practices utilized to raid the state. Our list of practices is not definitive; there may well be others that have not yet have been uncovered. The implications of our study shine a light on practices that are also normalized in business more generally. For example, the drive for efficiency is a key feature of late capitalism - where cost-cutting that leads to low wages, poor training and conditions is a persistent feature of organizational life. A part of this may be due to what economists refer to as “efficiency

breach”, the idea that a service provider contracted out finds it cheaper to pay fines or damages rather than perform the conditions of a contract. However, this article goes beyond theories around efficiency breach to detail multiple practices utilized to make private profits at the expense of the state rather than providing an efficient service for the state. Therefore, this work challenges some of the basic tenets of capitalism in our societies. While organizations that operate away from the state may engage in similar practices, the overall normalization of harm or wrongdoing those practices incur can have similar outcomes to our PPP study. However, the key for our study is to show how PPPs are uniquely placed to raid the state’s gold.

Previous research has shown that the decision to contract public services out to PPPs is not objective but socially constructed (Opara and Rouse 2019). This paper challenges the notion that PPPs are ‘partners’ but instead are pirates who fail to serve social and public needs. In other words, PPPs are often pursuing their own market interests. As James Scott has aptly put it, “a market necessarily reduces quality to quantity via the price mechanism and promotes standardization; in markets, money talks not people” (Scott 2020, 8). We argue that the friction between the demands of the state and of the market introduces a variety of public-private forms, one of which may be a partnership, while others may entail piracy. It is time for PPP literatures to dissolve into a spectrum of conceptual categories to allow for a more critical exploration of these types of organizations. Such a nuanced view will enhance scholarship and inform policy makers on regulations that are fit for purpose.

## THESIS CONCLUSION

In 2018 I set out to interrogate questions around the argument that public services ought to be contracted out to private actors because private firms are more able to provide efficiency. In doing so, I decided to explore the idea of efficiency from a qualitative perspective to interrogate the many guises this word takes on in particular settings. So, what are the key takeaways from this thesis?

The first take away is that what is deemed commensurate with efficiency in narratives can change through disruption. But also, that social value is important for efficiency-making. Possibly more important than prioritizing efficiency. This first study was largely motivated by a desire to understand organizational perceptions of efficiency. Through the scholarly processes of presenting this work, I was drawn to work on commensuration but became interested not so much in what is being commensurated, as how perceived commensurables are narratively discussed and importantly, assumed. By analysing an efficiency strategy documents before a literal breakdown of efficiency and the subsequent reconstruction involved in the post-inquiry stage, I was able to show how the commensurability assumed in narratives between efficiency and social value breakdown. This breakdown allowed me to interrogate assumptions around social value further but also to detail empirically how key actors engage in a process of assuming differing commensurables are determined by empirical events. I consider this a key contribution for commensuration research that seeks to be understand processes of de-commensuration as well as a process of re-commensuration.

A key limitation with this study is that I do not drill down into the granularity the metrics assumed in the narratives but I believe how we talk about more metricized concepts is important to understand if we are to better understand the metrics that underpin such narratives. In this way, I hope this study is seen as novel. But this study wasn't just about commensurable

narratives – it was also about sensemaking pre and post a disruption. Sensemaking was also a theoretical lens that kept being suggested by scholars at conferences and other presentations. I was very sceptical, but as I delved into the literature, my attitude towards this theory shifted and I could see how a narrative analysis of commensuration dynamics could only be enhanced by a sensemaking lens, as it is about understanding “order, interruption, recovery” (Weick, 2006: 1731) which paralleled perfectly with the strategy document I analysed which seeks to give some order, the disruption, which interrupted that order and recovery which is exemplified by the post-inquiry stage. Indeed, commensuration’s aims are similar as commensuration seeks to compare and legitimate sources of order (e.g. Richards et al., 2017).

Moreover, the empirical material, because they are public documents, contain narrative sensemaking (Barley & Kunda, 1992; Khaire & Wadhwani 2010). These are among several reasons outlined in the study why a new lens is considered; namely, commensuration-sensemaking. Understanding commensuration-sensemaking as a process, therefore contributes to both commensuration and sensemaking literatures (e.g. Dwyer et al., 2021; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011). My hope is that this paper moves theory forward and helps scholars examine how commensurables are talked about by organizations and how those commensurables are made sense of through differing organizational episodes. I also hope that it helps scholars further interrogate concepts that can be fetishes or politicized. I regard efficiency in this way and believe that this descriptive study carries with it some implications for managers and policy makers alike which I discuss in the next section.

The second key take-away of this thesis is that efficiency-making involves biological trade-offs between the body and the mind of workers. While there has been a significant amount of work on the body in organization studies (Amsterdam, Eck, and Kjaer, 2022; Burchiellaro, 2021; Chang, Milkman, Chugh, and Akinola, 2019; Michel, 2011; Alvesson and Robertson, 2006; Harding et al 2021) work has not explored the various ways in which organizational

designs and technology mediate worker's body's and minds alongside individual ways in which workers manage the demands of their own bodies and mind. This second study examined this complex array of organizational dynamics to uncover how bio-efficiency is accomplished by an occupational group but also how the invisible forces of bio-power exert influence but also can be resisted by prioritizing safety over organizational pressures and demands. This study therefore illuminates the invisible subjectivity of an occupation alongside more visible forms of organizational life through the lens of what I call, bio-efficiency. Bio-efficiency involves the perceived energy trade-offs workers must manage in their work and requires degrees of subjective management as both the body and the mind can operate independently of worker's subjectivity. This dynamic is important for scholarship because so much of the modern workplace is returning to highly regimented forms of organizational control through technology; from Amazon warehouse workers, to uber drivers.

I consider this study key for organizational scholarship because it seeks to better understand how the mind and body exert influence over our subjectivity but also how it is overcome heterogeneously by this particular occupation. Foucault's concept of bio-power and governmentality acts as a useful opening point to understand these dynamics. While bio-power exerts an influence that benefits managerial controls, to "get things done" (Fleming 2022; 2), train drivers occupy a uniquely empowered occupation that can override neo-liberal demands of for-profit franchises on the railways. This is often expressed in moments where pressure to prioritize economic efficiency is subordinate to drivers' bio-efficiency. This resistance is subtle, and often expressed in micro-resistant techniques such as not rushing to meet organizational timelines by deferring to the demands of the body or mind of the drivers. Or in instances where drivers intend to hold a train at the detriment of an efficiency service by valuing safety above all other demands. These dynamics can help future research uncover similar micro-resistant techniques that can show how occupations both manage their bio-efficiency but

also can uncover how empowered occupations may exert some resistance to the forces of bio-power.

Ultimately the governmentality of bio-power remains a difficult social force to both recognize and overcome. While train drivers' organizational lives are still dominated by bio-power, we can see some small instances of resistance. They deserve to be highlighted and debated. For this reason my hope is that bio-efficiency becomes a central feature of organizational research that is concerned with the body and mind. Bio-efficiency inextricably links subjectivities with organizational design and technology. It also illuminates the human body and mind as an organizational input when considering organizational efficiency. These inputs suggest there is an important normative angle to consider when engaging in efficiency-making. Efficiency in organizations require trade-offs (Mohony, 1998) and this work shows that there are important bodily trade-offs to consider. This normative feature suggests there could be a moral angle to efficiency worth considering. In other words, efficiency cannot be the amoral concept it is so often assumed to be in research and academic literature - bringing me to my third key takeaway. Because organizational or economic efficiency can be tied to the social there is the possibility of a moral efficiency which balances demands for efficiency with demands for social value. This theoretical paper considers a different take on the relationship between what is morally required when engaging in efficiency-making. Inspired by debates in economics around efficiency, moral outcomes and moral decision making, moral efficiency considers a dynamic that is particular to government outsourcing in the UK.

Empirically, in the U.K., there is an act known as the Social Value Act which is intended to mandate that companies outsourced by the state consider the non-market benefits they deliver. In this paper, I consider certain social value demands, such as safety in the workplace of a private security firm or the social values that are necessitated by an efficiently run rail service. By considering when social values are met and when they are not met, we can

theoretically consider how efficiency-making is related to such social values. I consider this in this third article by examining when efficiency-making goes too far in a privately-run prison and when there isn't enough efficiency-making on the railways. By considering these various vignettes I suggest that there is a balance to be struck by considering efficiency-making and social value making. The balance between the two suggest that while there can be tensions involved with efficiency-making there can also be degrees of harmony between the two. I consider this article to be a step towards considering the moral implication of efficiency-making but also the moral implications of efficiency's absence in certain contexts and settings. While this article is theoretical, I believe it departs from previous work on both efficiency and government outsourcing by considering a model for balancing two very important demands in the context of the UK; namely, efficiency demands and social value demands. The implication is that if the right balances are struck between the two, public services would better meet the needs of society.

In the course of working on article 3, which was originally the first paper I worked on for this thesis, I was drawn to an empirical puzzle around why so many of the UK's public services that are outsourced result in scandal and wrongdoing. This observation led me to conduct an inductive study of wrongdoing by UK firms outsourced by the state which challenges that argument that private firms provide public services more efficiently than the state. Because much of my thesis was overshadowed by the covid-19 pandemic of 2020/21, I had to be instrumental about the empirical material I collected. For this reason, this final chapter examines an accessible and appropriate source of empirical material – Parliamentary Reports and Minutes detailing transcripts where wrongdoing is discussed. Through my analysis, I uncovered much more than I expected.

A key feature of this study was the identification of three loopholes which sit within regulatory voids: contractual, cultural and structural. Such loopholes lead to five practices that

allow public private partnerships to engage in wrongdoing and raid the state for profits. Previous research has considered many dynamics around such partnerships going wrong (Henjeweile, Fewings & Rwelamila 2013; Mendel & Brudney, 2012; Domingues & Zlatkovic 2015; Rotter, Özbek & Mark-Herbert 2012) but yet, the conceptual category of PPPs continues to be the favoured concept. This paper explicitly brings into question the notion of a partnership by first linking work on PPPs with wrongdoing literature and then looking for an alternative metaphor; namely piracy. Piracy as a confrontational metaphor works to detangle and dissolve what has become an a largess conceptual framing for a wide variety of organizations that work at the interface between the market and the state. We argue that some PPPs may in fact be public-private pirates that work within such regulatory voids, what Durand and Vergn (2012: 267) would consider as “navigating between borders”. This is akin to the framing of Bob Wylie who refers to Carillion as a bandit (Wylie 2020).

I consider this final article of my thesis to be a step towards dissolving the concept of PPPs in favour of a wider array of organizational categories that can better illustrate the different types of organizations that sit between the market and the state. Ultimately this study contributes by merging theories that are critical of PPPs with wrongdoing literature and demonstrates structures and mechanisms that enable normalized wrongdoing in PPPs contributing to both PPP and wrongdoing literatures. The loopholes and five practices theoretically detail how certain practice that would normally be acceptable in purely private market contexts are rendered unacceptable in public-private contexts bringing into question those practices scholarship so often accepts as acceptable market behaviour. For me, this is an important challenge to overcome. Reducing the quality of an organization has become normalized to the extent that business school educated students are now more likely to pay their employees less than those without a business school education (Acemoglu, He, and Maire 2022). Costing cutting by reducing labour costs is a normalized practice and somehow

institutionally encouraged by business schools. I consider this thesis to challenge the fetishization of efficiency. By taking away, our trade-offs lead to serious consequences for workers and society. These are not merely externalities. They are within the decision-making framework of organizations. They are instated by managers and they are resisted by workers.

My hope is that this thesis opens up the efficiency black box with a clear agenda for future research. Efficiency is not just economic or technical. Efficiency is social. Efficiency is constructed. There are narratives that underpin how we understand efficiency in different contexts. Efficiency relies on biological trade-offs. Efficiency has moral sides and efficiency is a practice. Future research must interrogate claims of efficiency further. Too often in our field efficiency is invoked without considering these important dimensions – something scholarship should address given efficiency's centrality as a concept in business and management studies.

## **IMPACT IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS RESEARCH**

Maximizing the potential for impact is increasingly important and I consider that my thesis has a number of important contributions to offer that could help improve public services in the UK and around the world. A key implication from my research on commensuration following a train disruption is that often, assumptions around what we deem to be commensurable can shift when trying to make sense of that disruption. Such shifts are key to understanding the core reasons why we need reliable public services in the first place but also what managers of those services decide to prioritise. Rather than focusing narratives on efficiency, managers and policy makers should instead think more about broader social value outcomes alongside efficiency objectives. Doing this could align policy and delivery more effectively towards social value outcomes by mitigating the risks associated with an

excessively efficiency-centric narrative. Shifting this narrative is key for UK PPPs because much of the rationale in the UK to outsource public services is often predicated on the idea that PPPs deliver efficiencies that the state alone cannot deliver.

My second paper, on bio-efficiency, carries a great deal of relevance not only for public services but also for business more generally, with the rise of automated and real-time tracking of employee movements such as Amazon's wristbands that track warehouse staff. My research uncovers that it is difficult to generalize efficiency practices when employee bodies and minds are involved, clearly detailing the various individual efficiency factors that must be considered when thinking about how a person's individual efficiency is balanced. This research also could impact how the rail industry will restructure the occupation of train drivers with the upcoming implementation of Great British Rail (GBR). It could help GBR think more carefully about the negative incentive structure for female train drivers to neglect their bodily needs and support a more robust system for human needs breaks on our railways. To maximize the potential for this, I will be discussing my findings with ASLEF, the train drivers' union, and applying for grants to work with government and private organizations in and around the UK railways.

As my paper on bio-efficiency clearly outlines, efficiency often can be explicitly tied to the social, suggesting that moral demands must be considered. The process model that outlines how a moral efficiency can be satisfied suggests that PPPs should be held accountable by the state to deliver, not just efficiency, but a moral efficiency that satisfies more than just market or technical gains. Moral efficiency could then be tied to the Social Value Act in the UK and help guide public procurement. I have several close contacts in Whitehall, one of whom works on public procurement for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). We have discussed my research and I intend to submit a white paper detailing how this research could help improve public procurement and government policy.

To that end, I consider that the final paper in my thesis clearly pinpoints where public procurement goes wrong by identifying loopholes that lead to practices intended to raid the state. The obvious thing to do is to close the loopholes through legislation and policy. This will be highlighted in a future white paper and be submitted to colleagues at BEIS as well as Parliamentarians and the Institute for Government. Doing this means that my research will have the best chance of, not only finding a home on a library shelf and a journal article, but also making a practical impact – something I consider to be of great importance for this project and my career beyond it.

## LIMITATIONS

I have thought a great deal about where the limitations of these studies sit alongside the transferable elements that make this thesis so important. First, it's clear that how efficiency narratives are constructed in the documents analysed in article 1 on commensuration is limited to the documents themselves. For example, the efficiency strategy document was influenced by a wide variety of actors in a particular place and time. These conditions meant that assumptions around efficiency may not be replicated today because they are bound by the organization's temporal position. Nevertheless, the key importance of article 1 was understanding how assumptions around efficiency can shift in response to a disruption. For this reason, I felt it important to include a temporal element in the analysis by examining narratives of efficiency before and after a disruption. I consider this to be a more transferable finding in demonstrating how commensurables may not hold given disruptive changes in time. Understanding this can help organizations prepare better for disruption by reassessing what they deem commensurable. For example, attending to averting particular risks alongside social value needs may be a better strategic choice for organizations than focusing on organizational efficiency.

Article 2 likewise, is a qualitative study involving interviews collected over a particular period of time and among a particular occupation that is currently undergoing significant changes. However, much of what was discussed with my participants is considered by industry members as being deeply embedded in the historic fabric of the UK rail industry. For this reason, there is a timelessness to the analysis of the body and mind of the driver that could be transferable to other settings such as lorry drivers, or operators of machinery in isolated settings. I consider this study to have a wide range of transferable elements; however, the generalizability is not statistically significant. Indeed, this is the core limitation of this entire thesis.

Article 3 is a theoretical contribution which considers the idea of moral efficiency and the balancing of social value demands with efficiency demands. To examine this, I consider instances of when there is too much efficiency and when there is too little efficiency. A clear limitation is that I do not explore the morality of inefficiency in depth, although this is implied by the nature of attending to social value demands which can curtail technical demands for efficiency and make those demands less efficient. For this reason, future research could consider this fascinating angle on the morality of inefficiency (something I may take up after the PhD). Nevertheless, what is clear from moral efficiency is that attending to some levels of efficiency is morally required in some cases. Another limitation is this paper's focus on public services: because the state and the public play such a strong role in this thesis and in this paper, purely private dynamics of corporations that are not contracted by the state are not considered. This limitation leaves open some exciting explorations of moral efficiency in private commercial settings.

Finally, article 4 contains the same limitations found in articles 1 and 2. The documentary evidence was collected at a certain point in the UK but the environment for wrongdoing remains today. For this reason, I consider the impact and transferability of this

article to be the strongest of the four articles. The structural loopholes that enable wrongdoing in PPPs continues in the UK but also elsewhere in the world as I outline in the paper. Although every country and how PPP dynamics unfold in that country will vary to some degree, the phenomenon of loopholes being exploited to convert public assets into private wealth nevertheless remains an outcome that can be observed throughout the world.

To conclude, much of what was done during this PhD is restricted to the time of the documents or interviews, limited by the methods that considered a particular dynamic from a particular theoretical perspective. I recognise that different theories could unpack additional findings from my empirics, and I consider to be a strength of my work. I've unpacked understandings of efficiency from a range of settings, behaviours and mechanisms, dissolving our understanding of such a key concept, so there is work ahead to build this construct back up from multiple perspectives. This is exciting – there is still more work to do.

## **RESEARCH ETHICS**

On October 4<sup>th</sup> 2019, I applied for research ethics approval from City, University of London. My application and proposal (Ethics application ETH1920-0259) was approved. In my proposal I confirmed that I would make all interviewees aware of their rights as participants and that I would receive written or verbal confirmation that they agreed to be interviewed and recorded. All 45 interviewees gave verbal confirmation that they were happy to participate in this study. I have also made considerable effort to store my interviews securely and ensure that my interviewees remain anonymous, as agreed before interviews commenced. A great deal of university research ethics infrastructure is designed to safeguard the university against various risks; the duty of care I owed participants was also a key motivation. I take this duty very seriously and was careful throughout the data collection phase to ensure that my participants

were comfortable, and always happy to proceed with each question I asked them. Moreover, I actively asked questions that were not leading to ensure the integrity of my research and to adhere to professional standards of research work. It is my view that I conducted my research responsibly, ethically and in line with City's Code for Good Practice in Research.

## **AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT**

I am the lead author on all four articles. Throughout my PhD my supervisors commented and provided feedback on all four articles. I am however working with three other scholars who have contributed feedback on two of my articles: (article 1) Commensuration Sensemaking and (article 4) Piracy as Organizational Wrongdoing. I emailed my co-authors before submitting this thesis to confirm and characterize their involvement accordingly, and all three responded. First, Dr Thomas Calvard is working with me on article 1 and we intend to submit this to a leading journal in Spring 2022. Dr Calvard has helped develop the theoretical framing of the paper and contribution in terms of making connections between sensemaking and commensuration literatures. He has not drafted anything on the current version included in this thesis, but has given me extensive suggestions for improvements, to which I have attended. He is currently reviewing the manuscript and will be re-writing sections for publication; that version will not appear in this thesis. I am working with Dr Alessandro Tirapani and Professor Hugh Willmott on article 4. The majority of the work, and contributions in the version of article 4 in this thesis have been made by me. I did all the data collection, thematic coding, analysis and write up. The core ideas are also mine – for example, the idea of linking conceptions of piratic practices and PPPs with wrongdoing was my original idea - an idea I first brought to my supervisors in 2019 and which they encouraged me to pursue. Alongside my supervisors, Professor Willmott has also actively helped guide the theoretical framing of the paper through

various meetings. My collaboration with Dr Tirapani has been more involved than my collaborations with Dr Calvard and Professor Willmott. Dr Tirapani has iteratively commented on the paper in the run-up to two conference submissions and more recently (Oct 2022 I worked on rewriting sections of the paper that have been commented on and changed by my co-authors. In the Autumn of 2021 Alessandro restructured some sentences and sections. He has given feedback to help refine both my original ideas and the interpretations of the data. For this reason, I have left in certain references in article 4 that refer to myself work with others (e.g. “we”, “our study” and so on).

I believe that co-authorship in our field enhances our research. Working with my supervisors and these colleagues has made me a better researcher, and I have also welcomed these opportunities to develop co-authorship skills for my future career in academia. I consider myself to be particularly lucky to be working with such high calibre supervisors and co-authors. Despite having pursued co-authors, I consider my thesis to consist of ideas that were solely pursued, and uncovered by me alone. To quote Professor Monty Python, “This is my theory, it is mine, and belongs to me and I own it, and what it is too”.

## REFERENCES

- Abolafia, M. Y. (2010) Narrative construction as sensemaking: How a central bank thinks. *Organization Studies*, 31(3), 349-367.
- Adobor, H. (2012) Ethical issues in outsourcing: The case of contract medical research and the global pharmaceutical industry. *Journal of business ethics*, 105: 239-255.
- Ahuja, G. (2000). Collaboration networks, structural holes, and innovation: A longitudinal study. *Administrative science quarterly*, 45(3), 425-455.
- Alcadipani, R., & de Oliveira Medeiros, C. R. (2019) When corporations cause harm: A critical view of corporate social irresponsibility and corporate crimes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-13.
- Allen, G. (2017) Axial coding. Sagepub.com. Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i2063.xml>
- Almarri, K. & Boussabaine, H. (2017) The influence of critical success factors on value for money viability analysis in Public–Private partnership projects. *Project Management Journal*, 48(4), 93-106.
- Alvesson, M. (2011) *Management of knowledge-intensive companies* (Reprint 2011. ed.). De Gruyter.
- Alvesson, M., & Robertson, M. (2006). The best and the brightest: The construction, significance and effects of elite identities in consulting firms. *Organization* (London, England), 13(2), 195-224.
- Alvesson, M., Hardy, C., & Harley, B. (2008). Reflecting on reflexivity: Reflexive textual practices in organization and management theory. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(3), 480-501.
- Amsterdam, N., Eck, D., & Kjær, K. M. (2022) On (not) fitting in. Fat embodiment, affect and organizational materials as differentiating agents. *Organization Studies*.
- Andon, P. (2012) Accounting-related Research in PPPs/PFIs: Present Contributions and Future Opportunities. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 25(5), 876–924.
- Arsel, Z. (2018) Asking Questions with Reflexive Focus: A Tutorial on Designing and Conducting Interviews, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44, 939-48.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Anand, V. (2003) The normalization of corruption in organizations. *Research in organizational behavior*, 25, 1-52.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Fried, Y. (1988) The mindlessness of organizational behaviors. *Human Relations*, 41(4): 305–329.
- Attala, L., & Steel, L. (2019) Introduction. In L. Attala & L. Steel (Eds.), *Body matters: Exploring the materiality of the human body*: 1–17. Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press.

- Banerjee, S. B. (2008) Corporate Social Responsibility: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly *Critical Sociology* 34 (1): 51-79.
- Banerjee, S. B. (2008) Corporate social responsibility: the good, the bad and the ugly. *Critical Sociology*, 34, 51–79.
- Banerjee, S. B. (2010) Governing the Global Corporation: A Critical Perspective *Business Ethics Quarterly* 20 (2): 265–74.
- Barley, S. R. (1986) Technology as an occasion for structuring: Evidence from observations of CT scanners and the social order of radiology departments. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 31(1), 78-108.
- Baumol, W. (1991) Perfect markets and easy virtue: Business ethics
- Baur, D. (2011) NGOs as Legitimate Partners of Corporations : A Political Conceptualization. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- BBC News (2017) “Detainees ‘mocked and Abused’ at Immigration Centre,” September 1, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41121692>.
- BBC News (2018) “Train Delays: ‘Lack of Accountability’ Led to Rail Timetable Chaos,” September 20, 2018. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-45572736>.
- Bechky, B. A. (2003a) “Object lessons: Workplace artifacts as representations of occupational juris-diction.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 109: 720–752.
- Bechky, B. A. (2003b) “Sharing meaning across occupational communities: The transformation of understanding on a production floor.” *Organization Science*, 14: 312–330.
- Bechky, B. A., & Chung, D. E. (2018) Latitude or Latent Control? How Occupational Embeddedness and Control Shape Emergent Coordination. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 63(3), 607–636.
- Beer, H. A., & Micheli, P. (2018) Advancing Performance Measurement Theory by Focusing on Subjects: Lessons from the Measurement of Social Value. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20(3): 755–771.
- Belk, R. W., Fischer, E. & Kozinets, R. V. (2013). Qualitative consumer & marketing research. SAGE.
- Benner, M. J., & Tushman, M. (2002) Process management and technological innovation: A longitudinal study of the photography and paint industries. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47(4), 676-706.
- Berggren, C., & Karabag, S. F. (2019) Scientific misconduct at an elite medical institute: The role of competing institutional logics and fragmented control. *Research Policy*, 48(2), 428–443. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2018.03.020>.
- Berrios, R. (2006) Government Contracts and Contractor Behavior *Journal of Business Ethics* 63 (2): 119–30.

- Bertels, S., Howard-Grenville, J., & Pek, S. (2016). Cultural molding, shielding, and shoring at oilco: The role of culture in the integration of routines. *Organization Science* (Providence, R.I.), 27(3), 573-593.
- Bhanji, Z., & Oxley, J. (2013) Overcoming the Dual Liability of Foreignness and Privatness in International Corporate Citizenship Partnerships *Journal of International Business Studies* 44 (4): 290–311.
- Bingham, C. B., & Kahl, S. J. (2013) The process of schema emergence: Assimilation, deconstruction, unitization and the plurality of analogies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1), 14-34.
- Bishop, J. (2008) For-Profit Corporations in a Just Society: A Social Contract Argument Concerning the Rights and Responsibilities of Corporations *Business Ethics Quarterly* 18 (2): 191–212.
- Bishop, S., & Waring, J. (2016). Becoming hybrid: The negotiated order on the front line of public–private partnerships. *Human Relations* (New York), 69(10), 1937-1958.
- Blanc, S. & Al-Amoudi, I. (2013) Corporate Institutions in a Weakened Welfare State: A Rawlsian Perspective *Business Ethics Quarterly* 23 (4): 497–525.
- Boltanski, L., & Thevenot, L. (2006) *On justification: Economies of worth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton
- Boudes, T & Laroche, H (2009) Taking off the Heat: Narrative Sensemaking in Post-crisis Inquiry Reports. *Organization Studies*, 30(4), 377–396.
- Bourdieu, P. (2010). Principles of an economic anthropology. In N. J. Smelser, & R. Swedberg (Eds.), *The handbook of economic sociology*, second edition (pp. 75-89). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400835584.75>
- Bowles, S. (2016). *The moral economy: Why good incentives are no substitute for good citizens*. Yale University Press.
- Boyne, G. A. (2002) Public and Private Management: What’s the Difference? *Journal of Management Studies* 39 (1): 97–122.
- Brighton and Hove Independent. (2018) Southern rail chaos: “Lives are being destroyed.” [online] Available at: <https://www.brightonandhoveindependent.co.uk/news/southern-rail-chaos-lives-are-being-destroyed-1016796>.
- Brignall, M. (2018) “Outcry over Mass Train Cancellations as New Thameslink Timetable Begins.” *The Guardian*. May 20, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/may/20/outcry-over-mass-train-cancellations-as-new-rail-timetable-begins>.
- Brinkerhoff, D. W., & Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2011) Public-private partnerships: Perspectives on purposes, publicness, and good governance. *Public Administration and Development*, 31(1), 2-14.

- Brotherton, H. (2019) Mental Health and Commuting: Hertfordshire Woman on Her Great Northern Commute The Comet. The Comet. 2019.  
<https://www.thecomet.net/news/hertfordshire-commuter-talks-mental-health-1-5998634>.
- Brown, A D (2002) Making Sense of Inquiry Sensemaking. *Journal of Management Studies*, 37(1), 45-75
- Brown, A D (2004) Authoritative Sensemaking in a Public Inquiry Report. *Organization Studies*, 25(1), 95–112.
- Brown, A. D., (2002) Making Sense of Inquiry Sensemaking. *Journal of Management Studies*, 37(1), no-no. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00172>
- Brown, A. D., Colville, I., & Pye, A. (2015) Making sense of sensemaking in organization studies.
- Bucchiarone, A., & Feldmann, P. (2019) The resilience of "planes, trains, and automobiles": Comment on "driverless cars will make passenger rail obsolete," by yair wiseman [opinion]. *IEEE Technology & Society Magazine*, 38(2), 32-35.
- Burchiellaro, O. (2021) Queering control and inclusion in the contemporary organization: On “LGBT-friendly control” and the reproduction of (queer) value. *Organization Studies*, 42(5): 761–785.
- Cabinet Office. (2016) Social Value Act: information and resources. [online] GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-value-act-information-and-resources/social-value-act-information-and-resources>.
- Caldwell, N. D., Roehrich, J. K. and George, G. (2017) Social Value Creation and Relational Coordination in Public-Private Collaborations *Journal of Management Studies* 54 (6): 906–28.
- Callon, M. (1998). An essay on framing and overflowing: Economic externalities revisited by sociology. *The Sociological Review*. 244-269.
- Canales, R. (2014). Weaving straw into gold: Managing organizational tensions between standardization and flexibility in microfinance. *Organization Science*, 25(1), 1-28.
- Carayon, P. (1994) Effects of electronic performance monitoring on job design and worker stress: Results of two studies. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 6(2): 177–190.
- Carruthers, B & Stinchcombe A., (1991) The social structure of liquidity: flexibility, markets and states. *Theory and Society*, 28, 353-382
- Carson, T. L., Wokutch, R. E., & Murrmann, K. F. (1982) Bluffing in labor negotiations: Legal and ethical issues. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 11, 13-22.
- Catino, M., & Patriotta, G. (2013). Learning from errors: Cognition, emotions and safety culture in the italian air force. *Organization Studies*, 34(4), 437-467.
- Cederström, C. & Fleming, P. (2016) On Bandit Organizations and Their (IL)Legitimacy: Concept Development and Illustration *Organization Studies* 37 (11): 1575–94.

- Chandler, A. D. (1977) *The visible hand: The managerial revolution in American business*. Belknap Press.
- Chang, E. H., Milkman, K. L., Chugh, D., & Akinola, M. (2019) Diversity thresholds: How social norms, visibility, and scrutiny relate to group composition. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62 (1): 144–171. Page 63 of 95 *Academy of Management Annals*
- Child, J., & Fulk J. (1982) Maintenance of occupational control: The case of professions. *Work and Occupations*, 9(2), 155-192.
- Christianson, M. K., Farkas, M. T., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Weick, K. E. (2009) Learning through rare events: Significant interruptions at the Baltimore & Ohio railroad museum. *Organization Science* (Providence, R.I.), 20(5), 846-860.
- Ciepley, D. (2013) Beyond Public and Private: Toward a Political Theory of the Corporation *American Political Science Review* 107 (1): 139–58.
- Civilserviceworld.Com (2018) One-Third of Government Spending Is with Outsourcers – and Four Departments Spend over 50%.” Retrieved from: <https://civilserviceworld.com/articles/news/one-third-government-spending-outsourcers-%E2%80%93-and-four-departments-spend-over-50>.
- Clemente, M., & Gabbioneta, C. (2017) How does the media frame corporate scandals? The case of German newspapers and the Volkswagen diesel scandal. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 263, 287-302.
- Cohen, M. A. & Peterson, D. (2017) The implicit morality of the market and Joseph Heath’s market failures approach to business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 159 (1), 75-88
- Cook, L. (2018) “Commuter Chaos: Know Your Rights to Rail Compensation.” *Financial Times*. July 20, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/5b0dc4a0-89aa-11e8-affd-da9960227309>.
- Cooper, C., & Taylor, P. (2005). *Independently verified reductionism: Prison privatization in Scotland*. *Human Relations* (New York), 58(4), 497-522.
- Cooper, D. J., Dacin, T., & Palmer, D. (2013) Fraud in accounting, organizations and society: Extending the boundaries of research. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 386-7, 440-457.
- Corbin, J. M & Strauss, A (1990) Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 131, 3–21.
- Cosenz, F., Rodrigues, V. P., & Rosati, F. (2020) Dynamic business modeling for sustainability: Exploring a system dynamics perspective to develop sustainable business
- Courpasson, D., & Monties, V. (2017). “I am my body”. physical selves of police officers in a changing institution. *Journal of Management Studies*, 54(1), 32-57.
- Crane, A., Matten, D. & Moon, J. (2004) Stakeholders as Citizens? Rethinking Rights, Participation, and Democracy *Journal of Business Ethics* 53 (1/2): 107–22.

- Cristea, I. C., & Leonardi, P. M. (2019) Get noticed and die trying: Signals, sacrifice, and the production of face time in distributed work. *Organization Science*, 30(3): 552–572.
- Cronon, W. (1991) *Nature's metropolis*. New York, NY: W W Norton
- Crowe, Vicki (2019, February) Why is our blighted railway system buckling under the pressure? And what is the human cost of its failures? *Which? Magazine*
- Crowston, K. (1997) A coordination theory approach to organizational process design. *Organization Science*, 8: 157–175.
- Crowston, K., Li, Q., Wei, K., Eseryel, U. Y., & Howison, J. (2007) Self-organization of teams for free/libre open source software development. *Information and Software Technology*, 49(6), 564-575.
- Culler, J., (1982) *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Cummings, S., & Bridgman, T. (2021) *The progressive roots of management science*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2011). *Crafting Qualitative Research*. *Organizational Research Methods*, 14(4), 647-673. doi:10.1177/1094428110373658
- Currie, D. & Teague, P. (2015) Conflict management in Public–Private partnerships: The case of the London underground. *Negotiation Journal*, 313, 237-266.
- Cutler, A. C. (1997) Artifice, Ideology and Paradox: The Public/Private Distinction in *International Law Review of International Political Economy* 4 (2): 261–85.
- D'Adderio, L. (2014) The replication dilemma unravelled: How organizations enact multiple goals in routine transfer. *Organization Science*, 25(5), 1325–1350.
- Danau, D. & Vinella, A. (2017) From fixed to state-dependent duration in public-private partnerships. *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy*, 263, 636-660.
- Das Aundhe, M. & Narasimhan, R. (2016) Public private partnership PPP outcomes in e-government – a social capital explanation. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 297, 638-658.
- Davies, N., Chan, O., Cheung, A., Freeguard, G. & Norris, W. (2018) “Government procurement: the scale and nature of contracting in the UK” Institute for Government. 12 December 2018.  
[https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/IfG\\_procurement\\_WE\\_B\\_4.pdf](https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/IfG_procurement_WE_B_4.pdf).
- Delaney, J. T., & Huselid, M. A. (1996). The impact of human resource management practices on perceptions of organizational performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(4), 949-969.
- Department for Transport. (2017, December 6) *Transport infrastructure efficiency strategy*. Retrieved December 5, 2019, from GOV.UK website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-infrastructure-efficiency-strategy>.

- Devkar, G., Palliyaguru, R., & Oyegoke, A. S. (2020). The effects of institutional frameworks on implementation of PPP projects: A comparative perspective in Australia and India. *International Journal of Construction Management*, 20(6), 720-736.
- Dietz, A.S. & Porter, C. (2012), "Making sense of social value creation: three organizational case studies", *Emergence: Complexity and Organization*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 23-43.
- Dijk, Teun A. van, 1943. (1988). *News as discourse*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- DiMaggio, P., & Powell, W. W. (1983) The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review* 48(2), 147-160.
- Domingues, S., & Zlatkovic, D. (2015). Renegotiating PPP contracts: Reinforcing the 'P' in partnership. *Transport Reviews*, 35(2), 204-225.
- Drucker, P. F. (1963). *Managing for business effectiveness*. *Harvard Business Review*, 41(3), 53.
- Du Gay, P. (2000). *In praise of bureaucracy: Weber, organization, ethics*. SAGE.
- Durand, R & Vergne, J. P. (2010) *The Pirate Organization: Lessons from the Fringes of Capitalism Editions*. Harvard Business Press.
- Durand, R., & Vergne, J. (2012). No territory, no profit: The pirate organization and capitalism in the making. *Management (Paris, France : 1998)*, 15(3), 265.
- Dwyer, G., Hardy, C., & Maguire, S. (2021) Post-inquiry sensemaking: The case of the 'Black saturday' bushfires. *Organization Studies*, 42(4), 637-661.
- Dyer, W. G., & Wilkins, A. L. (1991). Better stories, not better constructs, to generate better theory: A rejoinder to Eisenhardt. *The Academy of Management Review*, 16(3), 613-619. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258920>.
- Earle, J. S., Spicer, A., & Peter, K. S. (2010) The normalization of deviant organizational practices: Wage arrears in Russia, 1991–98. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(2), 218-237.
- Ebrahim, A. (2003) *Accountability In Practice: Mechanisms for NGOs* World Development 31 (5): 813– 29.
- Edgeworth, F. Y. (1923). Women's wages in relation to economic welfare. *The Economic Journal (London)*, 33(132), 487-495
- Edmondson, A. C., & S. E. McManus (2007) 'Methodological fit in management field research. *Academy of Management Review*, 32: 1155–1179.
- Ehrnström-Fuentes, M. (2015). Production of absence through media representation: A case study on legitimacy and deliberation of a pulp mill dispute in southern Chile. *Geoforum*, 59, 51-62.
- Emerson, J. (2003) *The Blended Value Proposition: Integrating Social and Financial Returns*. *California Management Review*, 45(4), pp.35–51.

- Emmons, A. (2017) “After ICE Stakes Out a Church Homeless Shelter, Charities Worry Immigrants Will Fear Getting Help” *The Intercept*. February 27th. Retrieved June 14, 2021, from <https://theintercept.com/2017/02/27/after-ice-stakes-out-a-church-homeless-shelter-charities-worry-immigrants-will-fear-getting-help/>.
- Engel, E., Fischer, R., & Galetovic, A. (2013) The basic public finance of public-private partnerships.
- Espeland, W. N., & Stevens, M. L. (1998) Commensuration as a Social Process. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 313–343. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.313>.
- Espeland, W., & Sauder, M. (2007) Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds. *American Journal of Sociology*, 113(1), 1–40.
- Etzion, D., & Ferraro, F. (2010) The role of analogy in the institutionalization of sustainability reporting. *Organization Science* (Providence, R.I.), 21(5), 1092-1107.
- Faraj, S., & Sproull, L. (2000) Coordinating expertise in software development teams. *Management Science*, 46: 1554–1568.
- Feldman, M. S. (2000) Organizational routines as a source of continuous change. *Organization Science*, 11: 611-629.
- Fernandez, R. N., Fernandez, R. N., Saulo, H., Saulo, H., Carraro, A., Carraro, A., & Hillbrecht, R. (2018) Public-private partnership contractual design: A computational model of the moral hazard with lotteries. *Public Organization Review*, 181, 39-51.
- Fisher, Daniel. (2019) “Train Services Are Very Efficient for Shareholders – Less so for Customers.” *The Conversation*. August 22, 2019. <http://theconversation.com/train-services-are-very-efficient-for-shareholders-less-so-for-customers-122165>.
- Fleming, P. & André S. (2014) Power in Management and Organization Science, *The Academy of Management Annals*, 8:1, 237-298
- Forrer, J., Kee, J., Newcomer, K. & Boyer, E. (2010) Public-Private Partnerships and the Public Accountability Question *Public Administration Review* 70 (3): 475–84.
- Foucault, M. (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*. London: Palgrave.
- Fraher, A. L., Branicki, L. J., & Grint, K. (2017). Mindfulness in action: Discovering how U.S. navy seals build capacity for mindfulness in high-reliability organizations (HROs). *Academy of Management Discoveries*, 3(3), 239-261.
- Freeman, E. R. (2018) *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 45-46.
- Freeman, J. (1999). Efficiency and rationality in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(1), 163-175.
- Gabbioneta, C., Faulconbridge, J. R., Currie, G., Dinovitzer, R., & Muzio, D. (2019) Inserting professionals and professional organizations in studies of wrongdoing: The

- nature, antecedents and consequences of professional misconduct. *Human Relations*, 7211, 1707-1725.
- Gallie, W. B. (1956) Essentially Contested Concepts. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 56, 167.
- Garvin, D. A. (1988) *Managing Quality*. New York: Free Press.
- Gephart, R. (1993) The textual approach: Risk and blame in disaster sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36, 1465–1514.
- Gibbons, R. (1999). ASQ forum: Taking coase seriously. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(1), 145-157.
- Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Gilmour, R. S. & Jensen, L. (1998) “Reinventing Government Accountability: Public Functions, Privatization, and the Meaning of ‘State Action’” *Public Administration Review* 58 (3): 247.
- Goergen, M. & Wood, G. (2022, January 11). The private equity deals that fail to justify 'fast buck' strategies. *The Conversation*. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://theconversation.com/the-private-equity-deals-that-fail-to-justify-fast-buck-strategies-34628>.
- Granovetter, M. S., & Swedberg, R. (1992). *The sociology of economic life*. Westview.
- Greve, H. R., Palmer, D., & Pozner, J. E. 2010. Organizations gone wild: The causes, processes, and consequences of organizational misconduct. *Academy of Management annals*, 41, 53-107.
- Grierson, J. (2019) “Prison Officer Gets G4S Payout for Brain Damage after Assault.” *The Guardian*. The Guardian. April 12, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/apr/12/prison-officer-gets-g4s-payout-for-brain-damage-after-assault>.
- Guardian News and Media. (2021, December 7). 'not great news': US boss fires 900 employees on a zoom call. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/dec/07/not-great-news-us-boss-fires-900-employees-on-a-zoom-call>.
- Guasch, J. L., Laffontt, J. & Straub, S. (2008) Renegotiation of Concession Contracts in Latin America *International Journal of Industrial Organization* 26 (2): 421–42.
- Haberman, C (1 October, 2018) “For Private Prisons, Detaining Immigrants Is Big Business,” *The New York Times*. October 1, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/01/us/prisons-immigration-detention.html>.
- Habermas, J. (1986) *Law and Morality Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Retrieved here: [https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/\\_documents/a-to-z/h/habermas88.pdf](https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/h/habermas88.pdf)

- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 16(2), 250-279.
- Halloran D. (2017) The Social Value in Social Clauses: Methods of Measuring and Evaluation in Social Procurement. In: Thai K. (eds) *Global Public Procurement Theories and Practices. Public Administration, Governance and Globalization*, vol 18. Springer, Cham.
- Harding, N., Gilmore, S., & Ford, J. (2021). Matter that embodies: Agentive flesh and working Bodies/Selves. *Organization Studies*, , 17084062199323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840621993235>.
- Harding, N., Gilmore, S., & Ford, J. (2022; 2021;). Matter that embodies: Agentive flesh and working Bodies/Selves. *Organization Studies*, 43(5), 649-668.
- Harley, B., & Cornelissen, J. (2020). Rigor with or without templates? the pursuit of methodological rigor in qualitative research. *Organizational Research Methods*.
- Harrison, J. S. & Wicks, A. (2013) Stakeholder Theory, Value, and Firm Performance *Business Ethics Quarterly* 23 (1): 97–124.
- Harry, M., & Schroeder, R. (2000) *Six Sigma: The Breakthrough Management Strategy Revolutionizing the World's Top Corporations*. New York: Currency.
- Healy, K., (2004) Sacred markets and secular rituals in the organ transplant industry. In F. Dobbin, *The sociology of the economy* (pp. 336–359). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Heath, J. (2014) *Morality, Competition, and the Firm : The Market Failures Approach to Business Ethics*.
- Heath, J. (2014) *Morality, Competition, and the Firm : The Market Failures Approach to Business Ethics*.
- Heath, Joseph. (2014) *Morality, Competition and the Firm: The Market Failures Approach to Business Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Henjewe, C., Fewings, P., & D. Rwelamila, P. (2013). De-marginalising the public in PPP projects through multi-stakeholders management. *Journal of Financial Management of Property and Construction*, 18(3), 210-231.
- Hersel, M. T., Helmuth, C. A., Zorn, M. L., Shropshire, C., & Ridge, J. W. (2019) The corrective actions organizations pursue following misconduct: A review and research agenda. *Academy of Management Annals*, 132, 547-585.
- Hickey, W. (2013) A tax loophole crucial to big tech companies was part of the Fiscal Cliff Bill. *Business Insider*. January 3rd. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessinsider.com/fiscal-cliff-apple-google-corporate-tax-dodge-2013-1>.
- House of Commons (2014) *Contracting out public services to the private sector Forty-seventh Report of Session 2013-14 Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence*. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubacc/777/777.pdf>.

- House of Commons (2014) Public Accounts Committee No - Minutes of Evidence: HC 777. Publications of the Parliament of the UK. Retrieved from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubacc/777/131120.htm>.
- House of Commons (2018) Strategic Suppliers Fifty-Eighth Report. Session 2017-19 HC 1031. Retrieved June 18th 2021: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/1031/1031.pdf>
- House of Commons (2018a) Offender-monitoring tags - Committee of Public Accounts. Publications of the Parliament of the UK. Retrieved from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/458/45806.htm>.
- House of Commons (2018b) Government risk assessments relating to Carillion - Committee of Public Accounts. Publications of the Parliament of the UK. Retrieved from [https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/1045/104503.htm#\\_id=TextAnchor000](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/1045/104503.htm#_id=TextAnchor000).
- House of Commons. (2018) “House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee After Carillion: Public Sector Outsourcing and Contracting Seventh Report of Session 2017-19 Report, Together with Formal Minutes Relating to the Report by Authority of the House of Commons.” <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubadm/748/748.pdf>.
- Huault, I., & Rainelli-Weiss, H., (2011) A Market for Weather Risk? Conflicting Metrics, Attempts at Compromise, and Limits to Commensuration. *Organization Studies*, 32(10), 1395–1419. <https://doi.org/10.1177/017084061142125>.
- Iossa, E. & Martimort, D. (2015) The Simple Microeconomics of Public-Private Partnerships *Journal of Public Economic Theory* 17 (1): 4–48.
- Jarzabkowski, P., Langley, A., & Nigam, A. (2021). Navigating the tensions of quality in qualitative research. *Strategic Organization*, 19(1), 70-80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127020985094>.
- Jennings, P. L. & Velasquez, M. (2015) Towards an Ethical Wealth of Nations: An Institutional Perspective on the Relation between Ethical Values and National Economic Prosperity *Business Ethics Quarterly* 25 (04): 461–88.
- Jiang, B., Reinhardt, G., & Young, S. T. (2007) BOCOG’s outsourcing contract: The vendor’s perspective. *Omega*, 36, 941–949.
- Johns, A. (2009). *Piracy: The intellectual property wars from gutenber to gates*. University of Chicago Press.
- Johnstone, R (12 December, 2018) “One-Third of Government Spending Is with Outsourcers – and Four Departments Spend over 50%. *Civil Service World*.” 2018. [Civilserviceworld.Com](http://Civilserviceworld.Com). 2018.
- Joutsenvirta, M., & Vaara, E. (2015). Legitimacy struggles and political corporate social responsibility in international settings: A comparative discursive analysis of a contested investment in latin america. *Organization Studies*, 36(6), 741-777.

- Kane, E. J. (2011). Unmet duties in managing financial safety nets. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 21(1), 1-22.
- Kassie, E. 2019, (September 24) “How the US built the world’s largest immigrant detention system” *The Guardian*. Retrived from: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/sep/24/detained-us-largest-immigrant-detention-trump>.
- Kees Huizinga, & Martin de Bree. (2021) Exploring the Risk of Goal Displacement in Regulatory Enforcement Agencies: A Goal-Ambiguity Approach. *Public Performance & Management Review*. Forthcoming, pages 1-31.
- Kellogg, K. C. (2009) Operating room: Relational spaces and microinstitutional change in surgery. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 115(3), 657-711.
- Kellogg, K. C., Orlikowski, W. J., & Yates, J. (2006) Life in the trading zone: Structuring coordination across boundaries in postbureaucratic organizations. *Organization Science* (Providence, R.I.), 17(1), 22-44.
- Kern, T., Willcocks, L., & Heck, E. (2002) The winners curse in IT outsourcing: Strategies for avoiding relational trauma. *California Management Review*, 44, 47–69.
- Ketokivi, B. M. (2021, November 23). Do you have an efficient organization? IE Insights. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.ie.edu/insights/articles/do-you-have-an-efficient-organization/>
- Kettl, D. F. (2015) The Job of Government: Interweaving Public Functions and Private Hands *Public Administration Review* 75 (2): 219–29.
- Khaire, M., & Wadhwani, R. D. (2010) Changing Landscapes: The Construction of Meaning and Value in a New Market Category—Modern Indian Art. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(6), 1281–1304. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.57317861>.
- Kim, J. & Mahoney, J. (2010) A Strategic Theory of the Firm as a Nexus of Incomplete Contracts: A Property Rights Approach *Journal of Management* 36 (4): 806–26.
- Kiviat, B. (2019) The Moral Limits of Predictive Practices: The Case of Credit-Based Insurance Scores. *American Sociological Review*, 84(6), pp.1134–1158.
- Kivleniece, I. & Quelin, B. V. (2012) Creating and Capturing Value in Public-Private Ties: A Private Actor’s Perspective *Academy of Management Review* 37 (2): 272–99.
- Klag M., & Langley A. (2013) Approaching the conceptual leap in qualitative research. *International Journal of Management Reviews* 15(2): 149–166.
- Klein, K. J., Ziegert, J. C., Knight, A. P., & Xiao, Y. (2006). Dynamic delegation: Shared, hierarchical, and deindividualized leadership in extreme action teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 51(4), 590-621.
- Knoll, M. (2009). From Kidd to Dewey: The origin and meaning of ‘social efficiency.’ *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 41(3), 361–391.
- Knorr-Cetina, K. D. (1981) ‘The microsociological challenge of macro-sociology: toward a reconstruction of social theory and methodology’. In Knorr-Cetina, K. D. and Cicourel, A.

- V. (Eds), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology*. Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1–47.
- Kollewe, J. (2019) “Govia Thameslink Faces £5m Fine over 2018 Timetable Chaos.” *The Guardian*. The Guardian. March 14, 2019.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/mar/14/govia-thameslink-faces-5m-fine-over-2018-rail-timetable-chaos>.
- Koppenjan, J. F. M. & Enserink, B. (2009) Public-Private Partnerships in Urban Infrastructures: Reconciling Private Sector Participation and Sustainability *Public Administration Review* 69 (2): 284–96.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002) The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities, *Journal of Marketing Research* 39.1: 61-72.
- Kwak, Y. H., Chih, Y. & William Ibbs, C. (2009) Towards a Comprehensive Understanding of Public Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development *California Management Review* 51 (2): 51– 78.
- Langley, A. (1999) Strategies for theorizing from process data. *Academy of Management Review* 24(4): 691– 710.
- Larmore, C. (1994) Pluralism and Reasonable Disagreement *Social Philosophy and Policy* 11 (1): 61–79.
- Lawrence, T. B., & Phillips, N. (2019) *Constructing organizational life: How social-symbolic work shapes selves, organizations, and institutions*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press
- Le Grand, J. (1991). The theory of government failure. *British Journal of Political Science*, 21(4), 423-442.
- Leavitt, K., Barnes, C. M., Watkins, T., & Wagner, D. T. (2019) From the bedroom to the office: Workplace spillover effects of marital sexual activity. *Journal of Management*, 45(3): 1173–1192.
- Lefebvre, L., & Viatorisz, T. (2007). The meaning of social efficiency. *Review of Political Economy*, 19(2), 139-164.
- Lemann, N. (1999) *The Big Test: The secret history of the American meritocracy*, 1st ed. Farrar, Straus and Girouz, New York.
- Levin P., & Espeland, W. N. (2001) Pollution futures: Commensuration, commodification and the market for air. Hoffman AJ, Ventresca MJ, eds. *Organizations, Policy and the Natural Environment: Institutional and Strategic Perspectives* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA), 119–150.
- Li, S. (2021, December 1). How leisure time became work. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2021/12/americans-tv-watching-job/620862/>

- Locke K., Feldman M., & Golden-Biddle K. (2020) Coding practices and iteratively: Beyond templates for analyzing qualitative data. *Organizational Research Methods*. Epub ahead of print 24 August.
- Locke K., Golden-Biddle K., & Feldman M.S. (2008) Perspective-making doubt generative: Rethinking the role of doubt in the research process. *Organization Science* 19(6): 907–918.
- Lonsdale, C. (2005) Risk transfer and the UK Private Finance Initiative: a theoretical analysis. *Policy & Politics*, 332, 231–249.
- Lounsbury, M., & Hirsch, P. (2010) Markets on trial: Toward a policy-oriented economic sociology. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 30A, 5–26.
- Lu, Benny C., Anita Koo, & Ngai Pun. (2019) Attempting to Transgress Neoliberal Value: Constructing a Micro-Foundation of Social Values of Working-Class Youth in Vocational Schools in China. *Sociological Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026119845552>.
- Mahoney, J. T. (1988) Productivity defined: The relativity of efficiency, effectiveness and change. In J. P. Campbell, R. J. Campbell, & Associates, *Productivity in organizations: New perspectives from industrial and organizational psychology*: 230-261. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mahoney, J. T., McGahan, M. A. & Pitelis, C. N. (2009) Perspective—The Interdependence of Private and Public Interests *Organization Science* 20 (6): 1034–52.
- Mahoney, Joseph T. (1988) Productivity defined: The relativity of efficiency, effectiveness and change. In J. P. Campbell, R. J. Campbell, & Associates, *Productivity in organizations: New perspectives from industrial and organizational psychology*: 230-261. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Maitlis, S., & Christianson, M. (2014) Sensemaking in organizations: Taking stock and moving forward. *Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1), 57–125.
- Maitlis, S., & Sonenshein, S. (2010) Sensemaking in crisis and change: Inspiration and insights from weick (1988). *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(3), 551-580.
- Makadok, R. & Coff, R. (2009) Both Market and Hierarchy: An Incentive-System Theory of Hybrid Governance Forms *Academy of Management Review* 34 (2): 297–319.
- March, J. G. (1991). Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning. *Organization Science* (Providence, R.I.), 2(1), 71-87.
- Marti, E. & Scherer, A. G. (2016) Financial Regulation and Social Welfare: The Critical Contribution of Management Theory *Academy of Management Review* 41 (2): 298–323.
- Marti, E., & Scherer, A. G. (2013) Financial Regulation and Social Welfare: The Critical Contribution of Management Theory. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2348602>
- Mason, R. (15 April, 2016.) “G4S Fined 100 Times since 2010 for Breaching Prison Contracts.” *The Guardian*. The Guardian. April 15, 2016.

- <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/apr/15/g4s-fined-100-times-since-2010-prison-contracts>.
- Matten, D. & Crane, A. (2005) Corporate Citizenship: Toward an Extended Theoretical Conceptualization *Academy of Management Review* 30 (1): 166–79.
- Matthews, C. (1981). Morality, competition and efficiency. *The Manchester School*, 49, 289–309.
- McDonough P.M., Lising A., Walpole A.M., Perez L.X. (1998) College rankings: Democratized college knowledge for whom? *Res. Higher Ed.* 39 (5):513–537.
- McGivern, G., Dopson, S., Ferlie, E., Fischer, M., Fitzgerald, L., Ledger, J., & Bennett, C. (2018). The silent politics of temporal work: A case study of a management consultancy project to redesign public health care. *Organization Studies*, 39(8), 1007-1030.
- Mena, S., Rintamäki, J., Fleming, P., and Spicer, A. (2016) On the Forgetting of Corporate Irresponsibility *Academy of Management Review* 41 (4): 720–38.
- Mendel, S. C., & Brudney, J. L. (2012). Putting the NP in PPP: The role of non-profit organizations in public-private partnerships. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 35(4), 617-642.
- Metiu, A. (2006). Owning the code: Status closure in distributed groups. *Organization Science* (Providence, R.I.), 17(4), 418-435.
- Meyer, J. W. & Rowan, B. (1977) Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony. In: DiMaggio, P. J. & Powell, W. W. (Eds.). *The New Institutionalism and Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 41-62.
- Michel, A. (2011). Transcending socialization: A nine-year ethnography of the body's role in organizational control and knowledge workers' transformation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 56(3), 325-368.
- Moszoro, M. & Spiller, P. T. (2012) Third-Party Opportunism and the (In)Efficiency of Public Contracts SSRN Electronic Journal.
- Néron, P. (2009) Business and the Polis: What Does It Mean to See Corporations as Political Actors? *Journal of Business Ethics* 94 (3): 333–52.
- Nickerson, J. A., & Silverman, B. S. (2003) Why firms want to organize efficiently and what keeps them from doing so: Inappropriate governance, performance, and adaptation in a deregulated industry. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 48(3), 433-465.
- Noland, J. & Phillips, R. (2010) Stakeholder Engagement, Discourse Ethics and Strategic Management *International Journal of Management Reviews* 12 (1): 39–49.
- Norman, W. (2015) Rawls on Markets and Corporate Governance *Business Ethics Quarterly* 25 (01): 29– 64.
- O’Connell, D. (2018, February 23) Should the UK renationalise the railways? BBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-43158919>

- O’Gieblyn, M., (2021, December 20). Routine maintenance, by Meghan O’Gieblyn. Harper’s Magazine . Retrieved January 21, 2022, from <https://harpers.org/archive/2022/01/routine-maintenance-embracing-habit-in-an-automated-world-meghan-ogieblyn/>
- O’Reilly & Chatman (1996) Culture as social control: Corporations, cults, and commitment. In B. M. Staw(ed.), *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 18: 157-200. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press
- Office for Rail and Road (2018) Office of Rail and Road: Independent Inquiry into the Timetable Disruption in May 2018. Retrieved from [https://orr.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/39917/inquiry-into-may-2018-timetable-disruption-december-2018-report-grayscale.pdf](https://orr.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/39917/inquiry-into-may-2018-timetable-disruption-december-2018-report-grayscale.pdf)
- Okhuysen, G. A. (2005) Understanding group behavior: How a police SWAT team creates, changes, and manages group routines. In K. D. Elsbach (ed.), *Qualitative Organizational Research*: 139–168. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Opara, M. & Rouse, P. (2019) The perceived efficacy of public-private partnerships: A study from Canada. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 58, 77-99
- Orlikowski, W. J. (2007) Sociomaterial practices: Exploring technology at work. *Organization Studies*, 28(9): 1435–1448.
- Oxford Mail. (2018, May 15th) “Train time changes” [online] Available at: [https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/news\\_bites/16227424.train-time-changes/](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/news_bites/16227424.train-time-changes/).
- Palmer, D. (2012) *Normal Organizational Wrongdoing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Palmer, D. (2013) The new perspectives on wrongdoing. *California Management Review*, 56(1), 5.
- Palmer, D. (2017) *Institutions, institutional theory and organizational wrongdoing*. Greenwood, R., Oliver, C., 1952, & Lawrence, T. B., 1964. (2017). *The sage handbook of organizational institutionalism* (2nd ed.). SAGE Inc.
- Parker, M. (2009) Pirates, merchants and anarchists: Representations of international business. *Management & Organizational History*, 42, 167-185.
- Parmigiani, A., & Howard-Grenville, J. (2011) Routines revisited: Exploring the capabilities and practice perspectives. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1), 413-453.
- Payne, D. M., & Raiborn, C. A. (2018) Aggressive tax avoidance: A conundrum for stakeholders, governments, and morality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 147(3), 469-487.
- Pennings, J. M., & Goodman, P. S. (1977). *New perspectives on organizational effectiveness*. (The Jossey-Bass social and behavioral science series). Jossey-Bass.
- Phills, J. A., Deiglmeier, K. & Miller, D. T. (2008) Rediscovering social innovation. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 6, 34–43.
- Pigou, A. (1920) *The Economics of Welfare*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pitelis, C. (2002). *On economics and business ethics*. *Business Ethics* (Oxford, England), 11(2), 111-118.

- Polanyi, K. (1944, 2001). *The Great Transformation: the political and economic origins of our Time*. Beacon Press.
- Porter, J. (1996) *Trust in numbers: the pursuit of objectivity in science and public life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology, Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Prasad, A. (2002). The contest over meaning: Hermeneutics as an interpretive methodology for understanding texts. *Organizational Research Methods*, 5(1), 12-33.
- Pratt MG, Kaplan S, & Whittington R (2020) Editorial essay: The tumult over transparency: Decoupling transparency from replication in establishing trustworthy qualitative research. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 65(1): 1–19.
- Pratt, M. G., Sonenshein, S., & Feldman, M. S. (2022;2020;). Moving beyond templates: A bricolage approach to conducting trustworthy qualitative research. *Organizational Research Methods*, 25(2), 211-238.
- Pullen, A., & Rhodes, C. (2014). Corporeal ethics and the politics of resistance in organizations. *Organization* (London, England), 21(6), 782-796.
- Qian, Y., Deng, X., Ye, Q., Ma, B., & Yuan, H. (2019). On detecting business event from the headlines and leads of massive online news articles. *Information Processing & Management*, 56(6)
- Quélin, B. V., Kivleniece, I. & Lazzarini, S. (2017) Public-Private Collaboration, Hybridity and Social Value: Towards New Theoretical Perspectives *Journal of Management Studies* 54 (6): 763–92.
- Quelin, B., Cabral, S., Lazzarini, S., & Kivleniece, I. (2019) The private scope in Public–Private collaborations: An institutional and capability-based perspective. *Organization Science*, 304, 831-846.
- Quinn, R. W., Spreitzer, G. M., & Lam, C. F. (2012). Building a sustainable model of human energy in organizations: Exploring the critical role of resources. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 6(1), 337-396.
- Quinn, S. (2008) The Transformation of Morals in Markets: Death, Benefits, and the Exchange of Life Insurance Policies. *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(3), 738–780.
- Rafaeli, A., & Vilnai-Yavetz, I. (2004) Emotion as a connection of physical artifacts and organizations. *Organization Science*, 15(6): 671–686.
- Ramus, T., Vaccaro, A. & Brusoni, S. (2017). Institutional complexity in turbulent times: Formalization, collaboration, and the emergence of blended logics. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60(4), 1253-1284.
- Rangan, S., Samii, R. & Van Wassenhove, L. (2006) Constructive Partnerships: When Alliances between Private Firms and Public Actors Can Enable Creative Strategies *Academy of Management Review* 31 (3): 738–51.

- Rawls, J. (1999). *A theory of justice*. Rev. ed. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press: 148-149.
- Read, C. (2013) *The Efficient Market Hypothesis: Bachelier, Samuelson, Fama, Ross, Tobin and Shiller (Great Minds in Finance)*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, Ny: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reinecke, J., & Ansari, S. (2016) Taming wicked problems: The role of framing in the construction of corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Management Studies*, 53(3), 299-329.
- Rerup, C., & Feldman, M. S. (2011). routines as a source of change in organizational schemata: The role of trial-and-error learning. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(3), 577-610.
- Rethinking public services in a time of covid-19. *Civil Service World*. (2020, November 20). Retrieved January 22, 2022, from <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/in-depth/article/opinion-rethinking-public-services-in-a-time-of-covid19>
- Richards, M., Zellweger, T., & Gond, J.-P. (2017) Maintaining Moral Legitimacy through Worlds and Words: An Explanation of Firms' Investment in Sustainability Certification. *Journal of Management Studies*, 54(5), 676–710.
- Rodger, J. (2019) "G4S to Pay Government £9.9MILLION over 'crisis-Hit' Birmingham Prison." *Birmingham mail*. April 2, 2019. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/g4s-pay-government-99million-over-16064852>.
- Rodger, J. J. (1985) Natural Justice and the Big Public Inquiry: A Sociological Perspective. *The Sociological Review*, 33(3), 409–429.
- Roehrich, J. K., Lewis, M. A., & George, G. (2014) Are public–private partnerships a healthy option? A systematic literature review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 113, 110–119.
- Rosenkopf, L., & Nerkar, A. (2001) Beyond local search: Boundary-spanning, exploration, and impact in the optical disc industry." *Strategic Management Journal*, 22: 287-306.
- Rotheroe, A. (2021) Impact measurement in social investment. In M. Salway, P. Palmer & P. Grant (Eds.), *Demystifying social finance and social investment*: 163–183. New York: Routledge.
- Rotter, J. P., Özbek, N., & Mark-Herbert, C. (2012). Private-public partnerships: corporate responsibility strategy in food retail. *International Journal of Business Excellence*, 5(1-2), 5-20.
- Russo, J. C., Dias, M. A. G., Barreira da Silva Rocha, André, & Cyrino Oliveira, F. L. (2018) Renegotiation in Public–Private partnerships: An incentive mechanism approach. *Group Decision and Negotiation*, 27(6), 949-979.
- Salvato, C., & Rerup, C. (2018) Routine Regulation: Balancing Conflicting Goals in Organizational Routines. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 63(1), 170–209.
- Samuelson, Paul A. (1960). "Efficient paths of capital accumulation in terms of the calculus of variations". In Arrow, Kenneth J.; Karlin, Samuel; Suppes, Patrick (eds.). *Mathematical*

- models in the social sciences, 1959: Proceedings of the first Stanford symposium. Stanford mathematical studies in the social sciences, IV. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. pp. 77–88.
- Sandberg, J., & Tsoukas, H. (2015) Making sense of the sensemaking perspective: Its constituents, limitations, and opportunities for further development. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36(S1), S6–S32.
- Sasse, T., Benoit, G, O'Brien, S. N. M., Pope, T. & Davies, N. (2019) "Government outsourcing: what has worked and what needs reform?" Institute for Government. 16 September 2019.  
<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/government-outsourcing-reform-WEB.pdf>
- Sauder, M., & Espeland, W. N. (2009) The Discipline of Rankings: Tight Coupling and Organizational Change. *American Sociological Review*, 74(1), 63–82.
- Savoie, R., & Payne, D. (2012) The 21st century technology-based regional economy: A roadmap for success. New Orleans: UNO Press.
- Scharle, P. (2002). Public-private partnership (PPP) as a social game. *Innovation* (Abingdon, England), 15(3), 227-252.
- Scherer, A. G., Palazzo, G. & Baumann, D. (2006) Global Rules and Private Actors: Toward a New Role of the Transnational Corporation in Global Governance *Business Ethics Quarterly* 16 (04): 505–32.
- Scherer, G. A. & Palazzo, G. (2007) Toward a Political Conception of Corporate Responsibility: Business and Society Seen from a Habermasian Perspective *Academy of Management Review* 32 (4): 1096–1120.
- Scheyvens, R., Banks, G., & Hughes, E. (2016) The private sector and the SDGs: The need to move beyond 'business as usual'. *Sustainable Development*, 246, 371-382.
- Schultz, W. J. (2001) *The Moral Conditions of Economic Efficiency*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Schumaker, R. P., Zhang, Y., Huang, C., & Chen, H. (2012). Evaluating sentiment in financial news articles. *Decision Support Systems*, 53(3), 458-464
- Schwartz, B. (2022, January 22). "Why efficiency is dangerous and slowing down makes life better: Psyche ideas" *Psyche*. Retrieved January 22, 2022, from <https://psyche.co/ideas/why-efficiency-is-dangerous-and-slowing-down-makes-life-better>
- Scott, J. C. (2020) *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. Yale University Press.
- Sethi, S. P. (1994). Imperfect markets: Business ethics as an easy virtue. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 13(10), 803-815.
- Shaoul, J., Stafford, A., & Stapleton, P. (2012) Accountability and corporate governance of public private partnerships. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 233, 213–229.

- Shi, W., Connelly, B. L., & Hoskisson, R. E. (2017) External corporate governance and financial fraud: Cognitive evaluation theory insights on agency theory prescriptions. *Strategic Management Journal*, 38(6), 1268-1286.
- Shiller, R. J. (2003) From Efficient Markets Theory to Behavioral Finance. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17 (1): 83–104.
- Shiller, R. J. (2020). *Narrative economics: How stories go viral & drive major economic events*, with a new preface by the author. Princeton University Press.
- Singer, A. (2018) Justice failure: Efficiency and equality in business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149 (1), 97-115.
- Sloane, S. B. (2008) Creative Rebellion and Moral Efficiency as Elements of Managerial Ideology *Journal of Business Ethics* 81 (3): 609–22.
- Smith, A. (1776) *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, A. (2010) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Vol. II. Charleston, Sc: Bibiobazaar.
- Smith, B. R. & Stevens, C. E. (2010) Different types of social entrepreneurship: The role of geography and embeddedness on the measurement and scaling of social value. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 22(6), 575–598.
- Smith, J. (2018) Efficiency and Ethically Responsible Management. *Journal of Business Ethics* 150 (3): 603–18.
- Smith, J. (2018; 2016). Efficiency and ethically responsible management. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 150(3), 603-618.
- Smith, J. (2019) Navigating Our Way Between Market and State. *Business Ethics Quarterly* 29 (1): 127– 41.
- Smyth, H., & Edkins, A. (2007). Relationship management in the management of PFI/PPP projects in the UK. *International Journal of Project Management*, 25(3), 232-240.
- Social Value Act (2012) “Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.”. Legislation.Gov.Uk. 2012. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/3/enacted>.
- Sonday, S. M., & Wilson-Prangley, A. (2018) Intermediary capabilities in the context of challenging state dynamics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 152(3), 667-682.
- Soomro, M. A., & Zhang, X. (2016) Evaluation of the Functions of Public Sector Partners in Transportation Public-Private Partnerships Failures. *Journal of Management in Engineering*, 32(1), 04015027.
- Spee, P., Jarzabkowski, P., & Smets, M. (2016) The influence of routine interdependence and skillful accomplishment on the coordination of standardizing and customizing. *Organization Science*, 27(3), 759–781.
- Stadtler, L., & Stadtler, L. (2016) Scrutinizing Public–Private partnerships for development: Towards a broad evaluation conception. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 135(1), 71-86.

- Stigliani, I., & Ravasi, D. (2012). organizing thoughts and connecting brains: Material practices and the transition from individual to group-level prospective sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(5), 1232-1259.
- Suchman, M.C. (1995) Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches *Academy of Management Review* 20 (3): 571–610.
- Suddaby, R. (2006) From the editors: What grounded theory is not. *Academy of Management Journal* 49(4) 633-642.
- Sullivan, B. N., Haunschild, P., & Page, K. (2007) Organizations non-gratae? The impact of unethical corporate acts on inter-organizational networks. *Organization Science*, 18(1), 55-70
- Sundaram, A. K. & Inkpen, A. C. (2004) Stakeholder Theory and ‘The Corporate Objective Revisited’: A Reply *Organization Science* 15 (3): 370–71.
- Sutcliffe, K. M., Paine, L., & Pronovost, P. J. (2017). Re-examining high reliability: Actively organising for safety. *BMJ Quality & Safety*, 26(3), 248-251.
- Swan, E., & Flowers, R. (2018). Lasting impressions: Ethnic food tour guides and body work in southwestern sydney. *Gender, Work, and Organization*, 25(1), 24-41.
- Swartz, D. (1997) *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Taussig, R. (2020). *Sitting pretty: The view from my ordinary resilient disabled body*. HarperCollins
- Taylor, F. W., 1856-1915. (1997). *The principles of scientific management*. Dover Publications.
- Teece, D. J., G. Pisano, & A. Shuen (1997) Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18: 509-533.
- The Financial Times (2018, July 16<sup>th</sup>) “Executive bonuses: Carillion shows why it pays to make them wait” Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/9b5aef02-88ff-11e8-bf9e-8771d5404543>.
- The Guardian (2017, July 10<sup>th</sup>) “G4S awarded £25m government contract despite fraud inquiry” Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/jul/10/g4s-awarded-25m-government-contract-despite-inquiry>.
- The Guardian (2019, July 3<sup>rd</sup>) “Serco fined £22.9m over electronic tagging scandal” Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/jul/03/serco-fined-229m-over-electronic-tagging-scandal>.
- The Guardian (2020, July 10<sup>th</sup>). “G4S fined £44m by Serious Fraud Office over electronic tagging” <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jul/10/g4s-fined-44m-by-serious-office-over-electronic-tagging>.
- The Guardian (2021, February 25<sup>th</sup>) “Labour calls Serco's decision to pay millions to investors 'outrageous’”. Retrieved from

- <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/feb/25/serco-to-pay-first-dividend-in-seven-years-after-profits-double>.
- The Guardian (2021, March 10<sup>th</sup>) “Serco's top two executives handed £7.4m in pay for 2020. 2021, March 10<sup>th</sup>. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/mar/10/sercos-top-two-executives-handed-74m-in-pay-for-2020>.
- The Guardian (2021, May 31<sup>st</sup>) “NHS test-and-trace workers are charged out at more than double their pay” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/31/nhs-covid-test-trace-workers-charged-double-pay-union>.
- The Independent (2020, October 6<sup>th</sup>) “G4S wins £300m government contract to run 'mega-prison’” Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/g4s-contract-hmp-five-wells-wellingborough-northamptonshire-b837495.html>.
- Thornton, P. H, Lounsbury, M. & Ocasio, W. (2013) *The Institutional Logics Perspective: A New Approach to Culture, Structure, and Process* Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Topham, G. (2019, August 19<sup>th</sup>) “FirstGroup Consortium to Replace Virgin on West Coast Mainline.” The Guardian. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/aug/14/firstgroup-consortium-to-replace-virgin-on-west-coast-mainline>.
- Tuan, M. T. (2008) *Measuring and/or Estimating Social Value Creation: Insights into eight integrated cost approaches*.
- Tulder, R. J. M. v., & Mol, M. J. (2002). Reverse auctions or auctions reversed: First experiments by philips. *European Management Journal*, 20(5), 447-456.
- Turner, S. F., & Rindova, V. (2012) A balancing act: How organizations pursue consistency in routine functioning in the face of ongoing change. *Organization Science*, 23(1), 24–46.
- Vaast, E., & Levina, N. (2006) Multiple faces of codification: Organizational redesign in an IT organization. *Organization Science*, 17: 190–201.
- Van Maanen & Schein (1979) Towards a theory of organizational socialization. In B. M. Staw (ed.) *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 1: 209–264. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press
- Van Maanen, J. (2010) “Identity work and control in occupational communities.” In S. B. Sitkin, L. B. Cardinal, and K. M. Bijlsma-Frankema (eds.), *Organizational Control*: 111–167. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Maanen, J., & S. R. Barley (1984) “Occupational communities: Culture and control in organizations.” In B. M. Staw and L. L. Cummings (eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 6: 287–365. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Vardi, M. (2021, October 25). Engineers and economists prize efficiency, but nature favors resilience – lessons from Texas, covid-19 and the 737 MAX. *The Conversation*. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from [https://theconversation.com/engineers-and-economists-prize-efficiency-but-nature-favors-resilience-lessons-from-texas-covid-19-and-the-737-max-152670?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=bylinetwitterbutton](https://theconversation.com/engineers-and-economists-prize-efficiency-but-nature-favors-resilience-lessons-from-texas-covid-19-and-the-737-max-152670?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=bylinetwitterbutton).

- Villani, E., Greco, L., & Phillips, N. (2017) Understanding value creation in Public-Private partnerships: A comparative case study. *Journal of Management Studies*, 54(6), 876-905.
- Walras, Léon (1969) *Elements of Pure Economics*. New York: A. M. Kelly.
- Watson, T. J., (1995) Shaping the story: rhetoric, persuasion and creative writing in organisational ethnography. *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies*, 1(2), 301–311.
- Wearmouth, R. (2018, April 12th) “Security Giant G4S Faces Record Fines Of Almost £3m For Breaching Government Contracts”. 2018, April 12. HuffPost UK.  
[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/4s-breaching-record-fines\\_uk\\_5aca2eb4e4b09d0a1194d648](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/4s-breaching-record-fines_uk_5aca2eb4e4b09d0a1194d648)
- Weick, K. E. (1990) Technology as equivoque: Sensemaking in new technologies. In P. S. Goodman & L. S. Sproull (Eds.), *Technology and organizations* (pp. 1–44). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Weick, K. E. (1993) The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: The Mann Gulch disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 628–652.
- Weick, K. E. (2006) The role of imagination in the organizing of knowledge. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 15, 446–452.
- Williams Rail Review (2019) *Britain Thinks: Trust in the Rail Sector*. Retrieved from  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/797926/trust-in-the-rail-sector.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/797926/trust-in-the-rail-sector.pdf)
- Williams Rail Review (2019) “The rail sector in numbers” Retrieved from:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/791893/rail-sector-in-numbers-print.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/791893/rail-sector-in-numbers-print.pdf)
- Williams Rail Review (2019) “The user experience of the railway in Great Britain” Retrieved from  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/788410/user-experience-railway-in-gb-evidence-paper.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/788410/user-experience-railway-in-gb-evidence-paper.pdf)
- Willmott, H. (2003) “Organization theory as a critical science? Forms of analysis and “new organizational forms.” In Knudsen, Christian, and Haridimos Tsoukas. 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- World Bank Institute (2012) *Public Private Partnerships e Reference Guide Version 1.0*. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/International Development Association or The World Bank, Washington, D.C., USA.
- Wright, R. (2018, July 26th) “UK Probation Service Contracts Face Early Cancellation.” *Financial Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ft.com/content/1cfe57f2-90cf-11e8-b639-7680cedcc421>.
- Zelizer, V. A. Rotman & Kieran J. H., (2017) *Morals and markets: the development of life insurance in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Zelizer, V. A. Rotman (1994) *Pricing the priceless child: the changing social value of children*. Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press.

Zenger, T. R. & Hesterly, W. S. (1997) The Disaggregation of Corporations: Selective Intervention, High-Powered Incentives, and Molecular Units *Organization Science* 8 (3): 209–22.

## END NOTES

<sup>i</sup> See House of Commons, (2018). Offender-monitoring tags - Committee of Public Accounts. Publications of the Parliament of the UK. Retrieved from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/458/45806.htm>

House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (2018) *After Carillion: Public sector outsourcing and contracting Seventh Report of Session 2017-19 Report*, together with formal minutes relating to the report by authority of the House of Commons. (2018). <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubadm/748/748.pdf>

House of Commons (2014) *Contracting out public services to the private sector Forty-seventh Report of Session 2013-14 Report*, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubacc/777/777.pdf>

Strategic Suppliers Fifty-Eighth Report of Session 2017-19 HC 1031. (2018) Retrieved June 18, 2021, from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/1031/1031.pdf>

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubadm/748/748.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> 'Value for money' is a term which appears recurrently in government documents and media coverage. It loosely refers to high performances provided at an acceptable price. See Private Finance Initiative and Private Finance 2 projects: 2018 summary data, 2019

<sup>iii</sup> See House of Commons, 2014; 2018a,b

<sup>iv</sup> Retrieved from website: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/select-committees>

<sup>v</sup> Exchange found on page EV2: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubacc/777/777.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Living wage discussion on pages EV14: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubacc/777/777.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> *House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee After Carillion: Public sector outsourcing and contracting Seventh Report of Session 2017-19 Report*, together with formal minutes relating to the report by authority of the House of Commons. (2018). <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubadm/748/748.pdf>

## Annex 1: nodes from Nvivo for paper 1

| Name             | Dimension | References |
|------------------|-----------|------------|
| Accountability   | 2nd       | 17         |
| Blame            | 2nd       | 56         |
| Capabilities     | 2nd       | 38         |
| Communication    | 2nd       | 99         |
| Disruption_ins E | 2nd       | 32         |
| E activity       | 2nd       | 5          |
| E beliefs        | 2nd       | 67         |
| E collaboration  | 2nd       | 11         |
| E culture        | 2nd       | 3          |
| E example        | 1st (DES) | 11         |
| E governance     | 2nd       | 7          |
| E innovation     | 2nd       | 7          |
| E lessons        | 2nd       | 9          |
| E productivity   | 2nd       | 2          |
| E regulation     | 2nd       | 5          |
| E savings        | 2nd       | 1          |
| E standards      | 2nd       | 6          |
| E strategy       | 2nd       | 10         |
| E targets        | 2nd       | 7          |

---

|                      |           |     |
|----------------------|-----------|-----|
| E trade-offs         | 2nd       | 9   |
| E value              | 2nd       | 6   |
| Employee experience  | 2nd       | 18  |
| IN-E belief          | 2nd       | 134 |
| Lessons              | 2nd       | 8   |
| Passenger experience | 2nd       | 53  |
| Passenger Impact     | 2nd       | 44  |
| PP Interaction       | 2nd       | 58  |
| Reform               | 2nd       | 1   |
| Reliability          | 2nd       | 11  |
| Resilience           | 2nd       | 11  |
| Risk_E               | Aggregate | 85  |
| Social value         | Aggregate | 29  |
| Stakeholder value    | 2nd       | 56  |
| Sub-contracting      | 1st (DES) | 9   |
| TIME                 | 2nd       | 1   |
| Transport value      | 2nd       | 23  |
| VfM                  | 2nd       | 14  |