
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Mark de Bruijne finished his PhD Thesis on reliability in critical infrastructure in 2006. His research describes how organisations in critical infrastructures deal with effects of institutional fragmentation. He wrote and contributed to various papers on this topic including some in *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* and *Journal of Public Administration Research*. His research interest is on the realisation of highly reliable infrastructures in networks of organisations.

Willemijn Dicke was attached to the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy. She was a Program Manager of the Public Values subprogram of the research program 'Next Generation Infrastructure'. In 2000, she defended successfully her PhD Thesis about an International Comparative Study on Water Management. She is currently working as an Associate Professor at Delft University of Technology.

After working in consultancy, Wijnand Veeneman is now attached to Delft University of Technology as an Associate Professor. He is researching and teaching on policy making and contracting in the public transport sector and the management of large engineering projects in infrastructure sectors. He is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Netherlands Institute of Government. He is also Program Manager of the Public Values subprogram of the research program 'Next Generation Infrastructure'.

Roads, dikes, energy supply and drinking water supply, to name a few infrastructures, are critical for the functioning of modern societies. They are not only key in delivering essential services. They are the precondition for wider development of a country or region. Without good infrastructures, regions will remain peripheral in economic, social and cultural terms (Van der Woud, 2007).

Public values are thus intrinsic to infrastructures. They are the vehicle through which important public values are delivered, e.g., public health (sanitation); safety (dikes) and mobility (roads and railways). And infrastructures are the precondition for the achievement of public values such as sustainability (e.g., green energy supply); economic and social development (roads, electronic communications, public transport etc.).

For the greater part of the last two centuries western societies are characterised by an increasing public involvement in the governance of infrastructure sectors. However, in the last three or four decades, public involvement in ownership forms of infrastructure industries in western societies has been under reconsideration and revision. It is currently estimated that roughly 70–85% of the infrastructure industries that are considered vital for the undisrupted functioning of society are owned by private entities (cf. de Bruijne and Van Eeten, 2007, p.23).

However, although assets may be held in private ownership, the services and functions that are provided through infrastructure industries are often considered ‘public’; in fact sometimes even increasingly so (cf. de Bruijn and Dicke, 2006). Public values have evolved as key determinants of the relationship between private infrastructure industries and public institutions. The question of course is how the recent changes in ownership structure affect the interdependencies between public and private interests and what the effects are on the safeguarding of public values in increasingly private infrastructure industries.

How can public values that are critical for the functioning of society still be achieved under these new conditions? How can public health still be guaranteed if drinking water is provided by private companies? Who will make sure that long term investments in roads and railways are made by private parties? How is long term reliability and availability guaranteed by private energy providers?

This special issue aims to analyse public values in infrastructure industries from the perspective of three disciplines that have a core interest in the study and analysis of the relationships between public and private stakeholders. Bozeman introduces the importance of the study of public values in infrastructure industries. Three papers emphasise public values from the perspective of respectively law (Stout), economics (Groenewegen and Correljé) and public administration (Veeneman, Dicke and de Bruijne). All three disciplines provide important contributions to our knowledge of public values and offer insight in the structure and form of the relationships between public and private stakeholders. The special issue further includes an intermezzo with lessons from professional experience (Jones) and an paper tying the various papers together (Beck Jørgensen). This special issue aims to explore these different scientific perspectives and analyse how recent changes in ownership structure have influenced the way in which public values are safeguarded. The editors feel that a fruitful combination of the three disciplines will lead to more resilient, adaptive capability of policymakers to develop institutional arrangements to safeguard public values in today’s infrastructure industries under conditions of liberalisation and privatisation.

References

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